BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY Volume 3: Job – Song of Solomon

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JOB

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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JOB CHAPTER 1

Job 1:1 There was a man in the land of Uz- Job was real, indeed "there was a man...", as confirmed by Ezekiel and James. But there are parts of the story which appear crafted, e.g. the way Job loses his children but then has new children to replace them and apparently the loss is thus easily compensated; and the way after each loss, one person survives and comes to tell him. As holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel observed, "Tragedies do not cancel each other out as they succeed one another". It is not fiction, but it is a poem [men don't talk amongst themselves in poetry] and story only based on fact; it could be called 'faction'. Later scripture assumes that Job was a real historical person (Ez. 14:14; James 5:11), although the entire book is poetry, and clearly isn't to be taken as real time recording of words spoken. It is a drama, concluding with a thunderstorm approaching and the revelation of God Himself. "The whole is divided into three parts—the prologue, poem proper, and epilogue. The poem, into three—(1) The dispute of Job and his three friends; (2) The address of Elihu; (3) The address of God. There are three series in the controversy, and in the same order. The epilogue also is threefold; Job's justification, reconciliation with his friends, restoration".

As will be noted further on this chapter, it would seem he lived in patriarchal times. This would explain why there is no reference to the exodus from Egypt, which is to be found in nearly all subsequent scripture apart from Job. Uz appears to be the relative of Abraham of Gen. 22:21. But much of scripture was rewritten under inspiration at the time of the restoration and also in Hezekiah's time. This explains why ancient Hebrew terms are used along with later Hebrew, with copious connections to the restoration prophecies of later Isaiah. And as noted on :7, there is allusion to Persian concepts too- appropriate if the book was reapplied to the Jews in Persia. Judah and Israel in captivity were struggling with the questions raised in the drama of Job; Job and his children become representative of God's people. His children suffered because of their sins. Job as the righteous remnant also suffered, but was restored. This speaks of the restoration from exile possible for Judah and Israel. They for the most part refused it. But the key was for the faithful remnant to appreciate that they too had sinned, as Job did, even though they were pleasing to God. All was under God's control; the book deconstructs the popular views of evil, a satan being, and suffering being a direct consequence of personal sin. This was required for the exiles. We note that Job is not presented as a Jew, but one of the surrounding peoples related to Abraham. The hero is not strongly Jewish and is presented without genealogy; and that was a lesson for the exiles too, for the prophetic intention was that Jews and Gentiles would repent and form a multiethnic people of God in the restored Kingdom. As we learn from Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews sought to redefine "Israel" as only those who could prove their genealogy and were strictly from the tribe of Judah. This created the 'Samaritans'; but the book of Job has a hero who was vaguely connected with the seed of Abraham, who didn't live in Canaan nor worship at the Jerusalem temple, but was set up as the representative of the exiles. The name of Yahweh is likewise barely mentioned until Yahweh is

revealed at the very end of the book. They had effectively forgotten His Name in exile, in real spiritual terms; but through their sufferings and repentance, His Name would be revealed to them at the end. One etymology of "Job" is 'the returning one', setting him up as representative of the exiles. And the Hebrew idea of 'returning' is 'repenting'. His repentance was and is his lead characteristic. The language of Job's restoration is that Yahweh 'turned his captivity' when he turned in repentance-language clearly connectible to the exiles.

Whose name was Job- He appears to be the "Jobab" of 1 Chron. 5, indeed the LXX states he is this person. "Job" may come from an Arabic word meaning 'repentance'; and that really is the appeal of the book, for the repentance of God's people, especially the exiles, so that God's saving purpose might be brought forward. The problem of suffering is secondary to this theme of the book.

That man was blameless- God's opinion of Job was that he was "blameless". But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt.

And upright- God's opinion of Job was that he was "upright". But as the drama progresses, the friends argue that if Job were in fact "upright" then God would not be afflicting him (Job 4:7; 8:6 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "upright" and therefore cannot find God (Job 23:7,8 s.w.). As discussed above, he absorbs false guilt and becomes influenced by the guilt placed upon him by his religion and "friends" amongst the "sons of God".

And one who feared God- A true son of Abraham and Joseph (s.w. Gen. 22:12; 42:18). It seems Job lived in the patriarchal age. The phrase is also used about the righteous remnant amongst the captives in Babylon / Persia, for whom this book was apparently rewritten to comfort them (Is. 50:10).

And turned away from the evil- Job begins the book by being described as a man who shunned [the Hebrew word is also translated “to be without” and “to reject”] *ra,* “evil”. Michel understands *ra* here to refer to ‘the evil *one*’, the Canaanite god of evil, whom Job disbelieved and rejected (W.L. Michel, *Job in the Light of Northwest Semitic* (Rome: Bible Institute Press, 1987) Vol. 1 p. 29). One of the many themes in Job is the deconstruction of the 'satan' myths of the time, many of which are alive and well today. See on Job 3:8. Job was aware that he had indeed "turned away from evil" and feared God; it was those things, rather than the traditional wisdom of the friends, which he came to see was the true "understanding" (Job 28:28 s.w.). The phrase is also used about the righteous remnant amongst the captives in Babylon / Persia, for whom this book was apparently rewritten to comfort them (Is. 59:15). See on Ps. 34:14.

The book starts with Job being presented as of perfect integrity in God's eyes. God and Elihu will however criticize him for being a terrible sinner; and then the book ends with Job again of perfect integrity before God. Working this through, the Divine criticisms of Job are therefore of his responses to the false accusations of the friends. The friends will accuse Job of having sinned prior to his disasters; and God

will confirm those accusations are false. We are left with the conclusion that the sins God condemns in Job are therefore committed by him after the disasters and before his final repentance. They occur during the dialogues with the friends. God's wrath with him was therefore 'only' because of his words and attitudes, expressed as he sat there scratching and scraping himself. Although Job does later reference 'sins of my youth', it's quite possible that God viewed this man as absolutely perfect at the point of the prologue. As perfect as His later Son. But Job messed up. That's how important are words and attitudes in God's book. Job's repentance in dust and ashes at the end is because he covers his hand with his mouth and admits he has spoken wrongly- during the dialogues. By the end of the dialogues with the friends, in Job 27, Job swears that he will never admit any of the accusations against him are true, and he goes on to basically say that he has not only been innocent in the past, but he will never be anything but innocent. This is the problem with false accusation. We may know that to be false, but that doesn't mean we never sinned or never will sin. We can be led to the very self righteousness of Job which God and Elihu will later rightly condemn. When challenged on this by Elihu, he is silent. When the same challenges are made by God, he repents in dust and ashes.

Job 1:2 There were born to him seven sons and three daughters- Having ten children may invite us to connect Job with the ten tribe kingdom of Israel; their sufferings in captivity, along with those of Judah, elicited the kinds of questions discussed in the book of Job. We note that Israelites from the ten tribe kingdom were excluded from Nehemiah's redefinition of "Israel" as being solely Judahites. But the hero of the story is Job, who was clearly not from Judah but loosely associated with Abraham, just as much as Horonites and Ammonites were, whom Nehemiah excluded.

Job 1:3 His possessions also were seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys and a very great household-

Connecting with :2, perhaps we are to assume that the boys had 1000 sheep each, and the girls had 1000 camels each. The lack of reference to horses would indicate that Job lived in patriarchal times, before horses were introduced to the Middle East from Asia. The huge number of camels suggests he lived near the desert, which corroborates with the reference to marauding Arab bands (:15) and a desert wind coming upon the tents (:19). This kind of internal harmony within the Biblical record is to me the greatest evidence of its veracity.

So that this man was the greatest of all the children of the east-

Job was the “greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:3), the Hebrew implying the eldest, the most senior. The friends were older than Job, and take pleasure in reminding him of the wisdom of the ‘elders’. He had risen above his place, got too great too quick, and therefore they were intent on proving to him that actually he was not so great, he had sinned, and they by their supposed wisdom and understanding were really greater than him. And they bent their theology, their guesswork as to his possible sins, to that subconscious end- of justifying themselves and pulling Job down beneath them by their interpretations of his misfortunes. What this indicates is that during their period of ‘friendship’ previously, they had nursed unconscious feelings of jealousy against him. The lesson for us is to re-examine our friendships, our loyalties, to see if they carry the same feature; a desire to ‘be in with’ the popular and the successful, to catch some reflected glory. The conversion of Job led him to understand the fickleness of his friends, and to pray for them in it.

Job was the wealthiest man of his time- but at the end, God makes him even twice as wealthy, giving him "twice as much as he had before" (Job 42:10). This is unimaginable wealth. And so the story returns to the question of whether Divine blessing is indeed associated with piety. From the end of the story, it would certainly seem so. Job was the wealthiest in the earth / land, but spiritually there was also none like him in the land (:8). And yet that connection between faith and blessing is not as simple as the satan imagined; it is nuanced, by the whole story of Job in between chapters 1 and 42. Massive wealth is usually vested in a company or at best a family. But the book of Job presents Job's amazing wealth as being personal to himself alone. The idea clearly is that in his time, or for him personally, Divine blessing was indeed related to his blessing of God. We see this likewise in the lives of those broadly contemporary with him, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In our days, "blessing" has been redefined and reapplied to a more spiritual definition. But the same correlation essentially holds true.

Job 1:4 His sons went and held a feast in the house of each one on his birthday; and they sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them- Seven times a year they had these feasts "on their day" (Heb.), i.e. their birthday (Job 3:1). They each had their own houses, admittedly on the edge of the desert (:19) and were not tent dwellers.

Job 1:5 It was so, when the days of their feasting had come to an end, that Job sent and sanctified them- Each child had a birthday at some point in the year, and when the last birthday in the year had been celebrated, Job did some kind of sanctification ceremony, hoping to get forgiveness for the sins of their wild parties throughout the year. Perhaps the idea is that he sent for them and sanctified them.

And rose up early in the morning- The characteristic of Abraham; Job is presented as Abraham's seed.

And offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all- There were 10 children, and he offered seven times / year (:4), meaning he offered 70 sacrifices / year for them all. He is presented as carefully and generously obedient to Divine principles of sacrifice, although all those sacrifices didn't save his children from a judgment which (we can infer) they deserved. We see developing the picture of God's people being judged by their neighbours for their sins, despite their receipt of great blessing from God and the existence of a righteous remnant amongst them, represented by Job. For Judah went into captivity because of their feasting (Is. 5:12 s.w.).

For Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and renounced God in their hearts- The same phrase used by his wife when she urged Job to renounce God (Job 2:9). It would seem that the family had indeed done this. The sons or children (s.w.) of Israel did indeed sin and therefore went into exile (s.w. Is. 1:4).

Job did so continually- "Continually" is Heb. 'all the days', i.e. the birthdays of the sons (:4 cp. Job 3:1). There is good reason, linguistically and theologically, to think that the events of Job occurred early in spiritual history (compare the mentions of "Jobab" and some of the friends in 1 Chron. 5). There are also many links with the early chapters of Genesis. We should therefore see Satan's description of himself as being in the context of Gen. 4:12-14, where Cain is made a wanderer in the earth because of his bitter jealousy against his righteous brother. So the satan may have been another believer who was in some sense 'out of fellowship', represented by an Angel before the court of heaven, who still came to the gatherings of the believers to

express his envy of Job. The reference to the sons of God coming together in worship before a priest or altar comes straight after the record of Job's children holding rather riotous birthday parties (1:4). "All the days", each day they did this, Job offered sacrifice for them; but then "there was a day" when the sons of God came to keep a feast to Yahweh. It seems that we are led to connect the keeping of days. It could be that the sons of God were in fact Job's children. They came together to party and kill their fatted calves, and then they came together to kill their sacrifices; like Corinth, they mixed the table of the Lord with the table of their own pleasure.

LXX adds "offered sacrifices for them, according to their number, and one calf for a sin-offering for their souls", as if they really had sinned.

Sanctified them- Job prayed God would forgive his children in case they sinned. The friends mocked this in Job 5:4; 8:4; 17:5 and 20:10, saying that the children of the foolish die for their *own* sins, whereas, by implication, Job had figured that *his* prayers and sacrifices could gain *them* forgiveness. Yet in the end, Yahweh stated that Job had understood Him and His principles right, whereas the friends hadn't. We wonder why we have this part of Job's life recorded at this point. Quite possibly it is presented as a cameo of what a truly righteous man is like- desperately concerned for the spiritual state of his family, worrying for them and seeking to get them right with God. That is hugely significant to God, and the epitome of Godliness. The story concludes with Job praying for his friends and also getting them forgiveness (Job 42:7-9). Intercession for others is again seen as the essence of an acceptable life before God. The satan says that Job will curse God if his wealth is removed, so he sees Job's concern about his children cursing God as being motivated by a desire to retain Divine blessings.

But it must be observed that his sacrifices for them didn't seem to work- because fire and whirlwind from Heaven is always Divine judgment. And it is impossible not to see the similarity with Aaron, a later priest- who offered sacrifices for his errant sons (Lev. 8-10), and then they were destroyed by fire from God (Lev. 9:22-10:3).

Job 1:6 Now it happened on the day when the sons of God- "Sons of God" can refer to God's people (Rom. 8:14; 2 Cor. 6:17-18; 1 Jn. 3:7). Angels do not bring false accusations against believers "before the Lord" (2 Pet. 2:11). It cannot be conclusively proved that Satan was a son of God - he "came among them". The "sons of God"- the believers at that time- presented themselves before a priest or angel, perhaps at a religious feast. Someone there, maybe one of the worshippers, reflected that it was not surprising that Job was such a strong believer, seeing that God had so richly blessed him. God gave that person the power to afflict Job, to demonstrate that Job's love of God was not proportionate to the blessings God had given him. Maybe the Satan was composed of Job's three "friends" - they are rebuked at the end of the book (notice that "satan" is not rebuked by name). They were these "sons of God" who heard the reasoning of the satan, and they take over from the satan after he disappears from the story at the end of Job 2. The satan morphs into the friends. Their discussions with Job indicate that they had their doubts as to his integrity and suspected that his faith was now weak because God had taken away the blessings from him - "But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest: it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled... who ever perished (which it looked as though Job was going to), being innocent?" Eliphaz pointed out (Job 4:5 ,7).

Came to present themselves before Yahweh- "Before Yahweh" doesn't mean 'in

Heaven'; the phrase is often used about appearing before Yahweh's representatives such as priests or Angels. The angel which led Israel through the wilderness was called “the Lord” because it carried God’s name (Ex. 23:20,21), but it was not God himself in person (Ex. 33:20 cp. :12). Similarly, priests represent God (2 Chron. 19:6) and to come before them was to come “before the Lord” (Dt. 19:17). Cain “went out from the presence of the Lord” (Gen. 4:16) - not out of heaven but probably away from the presence of the angel - cherubim. Jesus was presented as a baby “before the Lord” (Lk. 2:22)- i.e. before the priest. How can Satan be in heaven and also on the earth in Job’s time when, according to popular belief, he was thrown out at the time of Adam, or in 1914, according to the “Watchtower”? There cannot be sin or rebellion against God in heaven (Ps. 5:4,5; Hab. 1:13; Mt. 6:10; Ps. 103:19-21).

That Satan also came among them- Even if the “satan” (adversary) to Job was an angel, there is no reason to think it was sinful. An angel asked Abraham to offer Isaac to find out exactly how obedient Abraham would be, hence he said, “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me” (Gen. 22:12). Similarly the angel which guided Israel out of Egypt, “led thee these forty years in the wilderness to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments, or no” (Dt. 8:2). God himself knows all things, but the angels bring problems into the lives of their charges in order to see how they will respond. It may be possible to understand Job’s satan like this. Remember that an evidently righteous angel was called a “satan” in Num. 22:22. Much has been made of the fact that in Job 1 and in Zech. 3:1,2 we read of *ha satan*, *the* adversary. In Hebrew as in English, the definite article is significant. If I refer to myself as a personal, specific individual / being, I say "Duncan". To speak of "the Duncan" would be a description of a function, more than a reference to my personal name. Sitting at a restaurant table, you might call out: "Waiter!", intending a specific individual. You'd only speak of "*the* waiter" when describing his function- e.g. "The waiter served me badly". Hebrew and English operate in the same way here. So when we read in Job 1 and Zechariah 3 of *the* satan, *ha satan*, we're not reading of 'A specific person whose personal proper name is 'Satan". Rather we're reading of a person who *functioned as* a satan or adversary. Dianne Bergant makes the point: "The word 'satan' appears with an article indicating that here the word is a title or description and not a proper name" (Dianne Bergant, *Job, Ecclesiastes* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1982) p. 27). In other words, 'the satan' isn't the personal name of a personal being called Satan. It's a description of the function of a character, as an adversary. Note that the man Haman is called *ho diabolos* in Esther 7:4 LXX. The Russian literary analyst Vladimir Propp has shown that all stories, folklore etc. of that time contained characters with a set function- there was the hero, the companion, the friends / bystanders, and the adversary (Vladimir Propp, *Theory And History Of Folklore*, ed. Anatoly Liberman (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 1984); *Morphology Of The Folktale* (Austin: University Of Texas Press, 1968).). Whilst I accept that Job was a historical character, the way the book is written in such structured Hebrew poetry shows for sure that the events were 'written up' in story / ballad form. And so when the initial readership encountered "the adversary", *ha satan*, they wouldn't have thought of him as a cosmic being of evil. The presence of someone functioning as "the adversary" would've been quite normal to them. If we follow through the argument of the book, the logical answer of Job to the friends' allegations would have been "I'm suffering because Satan has it in for me! He's doing this, not God!". For the friends were reasoning that God was bringing such affliction into Job's life because Job was a sinner. The fact Job doesn't make this obvious retort

indicates to me that "the Satan" wasn't understood by either Job nor the friends as a personal supernatural being of evil.

It must be noted that the satan never occurs again, under that name. The real adversary of Job was his "friends"; and in God's final judgment, it is they who are condemned, not 'satan'. It is therefore reasonable to see a connection between the satan and the 'friends' of Job; they too walked to and fro in the earth in order to come to him, as it seems satan did at the beginning. And we pause here for another lesson. The great satan / adversary of Job turned out to be those he thought were his friends in the ecclesia. And so it has been, time and again, in our experience: our sorest trials often come from the words of our brethren. Without underestimating the physical affliction of Job, his real adversary was his brethren. Rather than bemoaning his physical affliction, he commented how his friends had become his satans (Job 19:19) And so with the Lord Jesus, whom Job so accurately typified. Again, without minimizing the material agony of His flesh, the essential piercing was from His rejection at the hands of those He died for. For other reasons to connect the satan with the friends, see on Job 6:19; 8:6; 12:6; 19:28.

But the "Sons of God" of Job 1:6 are interpreted as Angels in Job 38:7. There is nothing in itself wrong with an Angel being called a satan- we have examples of this in Num. 22:22 and 1 Chron. 21:1. We know that Angels can't sin: and yet they are limited in knowledge (e.g. Mt. 24:36). An Angel commented that now he knew that Abraham feared God, after he had seen his willingness to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:12); Israel's guardian Angel lead them through the wilderness in order to learn about Israel's spirituality (Dt. 8:2,3). God Himself, of course, already knew the hearts of men. The sons of God coming before Yahweh suggests a scene in the court of Heaven, similar to that of 2 Chron. 18:19-21, where the Angels appear before Yahweh to discuss the case of Ahab, and then one Angel is empowered by God to carry out his suggestion. Those Angels represented God's people on earth; this is why the interpretation of the Satan can equally apply to both the people of God at the time, gathering before a priest; and to their representative Angels gathered before the throne of God in the court of Heaven. Satan going out from the presence of Yahweh, empowered by Him to afflict Job, would correspond with other references to Angels 'going out' from God's presence to execute what had been agreed in the heavenly assembly (Ps. 37:36; 81:5; Zech. 2:3; 5:5; Lk. 22:22; Heb. 1:14).

In the same way as the earthly tabernacle was a pattern of the Heavenly system (Heb. 9:24), so it would appear that each of us has an Angelic representative in Heaven, appearing before the presence of God's glory in what we are invited to see as the court of Heaven. Angels can also represent a whole group – e.g., an ecclesia (Rev. 1:20). So closely identified with their charges are these Angels, that they themselves are rebuked (e.g. Rev. 2:5) – not that they sinned, of course, but because they represented those ecclesias in the Heavenly court.

Satan describes himself as going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it (1:7)- using exactly the language of Zech. 1:11 concerning the Angels. The way that the satan smote Job with a skin disease (Job 2:7) would suggest that he was not only a mere man; accepting an Angel-satan solves this problem. No unaided man could have brought a skin disease upon Job. If the satan refers to a righteous Angel, it is likewise easier to understand why all the problems which the satan brought are described as God bringing them (especially as Job may have conceived of God in terms of an Angel). It is also understandable why there is no rebuke of the satan at the

end. For other connections between the satan and Angels, see on Job 1:14,16,19; 4:5; 5:7; 6:9,10; 14:3; 16:9; 19:8.

It has been correctly observed that we don't read of 'Satan' after the prologue to Job. Instead we read only of God bringing the afflictions into Job's life. But the friends, and Job himself, struggle to explain those afflictions in terms of the current ideas in the surrounding world. This may not be immediately evident, because the Hebrew of Job is notoriously hard to translate. But closer attention to the text reveals that there is repeated mention of the various beings and forces of evil which were thought to be in competition with God. It seems that the story of Job originated very early in Biblical history, in the times of the patriarchs. And yet the book has many connections with the latter half of Isaiah – just take a glance down the marginal cross references in Job, and see how often the later chapters of Isaiah are referenced. My suggestion is that the book was rewritten and edited [under Divine inspiration] during the captivity in Babylon, as a message especially relevant for the Jewish exiles as they struggled with the temptation to accept Babylonian mythological explanations of evil. This would explain the allusions to both early Canaanite and later Babylonian views of the 'Satan' figure. And we recall from Is. 45:5–7 how Israel's God was at pains to remind the exiles of His omnipotence, that He is the only God and source of power in creation, and that both good and disaster, light and darkness, are ultimately His creation; and the surrounding Gentile myths about these things were totally wrong. This is in fact the theme of the book of Job. Susan Garrett points out how Babylonian views of a dualistic cosmos, with God creating good and the 'Satan' figure creating evil, began to influence Jewish thought. She shares my view that the purpose of the book of Job was to counter this: "The story of Job checked an escalation in the power and authority that were ascribed to the Satan–figure, by the repeated and unambiguous assertions in Job 1–2 that Satan had obtained the authority to test Job from none other than God" (Susan Garrett, *The Temptations of Jesus in Mark's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) p. 49).

The references to 'Satan'–like beings and related myths in the book of Job is in order to ultimately deconstruct them as false, and to re-iterate the utter omnipotence of Yahweh as the only source of power, the only God. And this of course we would expect from an Old Testament, God–inspired book. It's been suggested by literary critics that the prologue which mentions Satan (Job chapters 1 and 2) and epilogue (Job 42:7–17) were likely written before the poetic discourses – they appear to be "an Israelite revision of an older Canaanite or Edomite epic poem expressing their views on the age–old problem of evil" (Douglas Wingeier, *What About the Devil? A Study of Satan in the Bible and Christian Tradition* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006) p. 15. More documentation of this is to be found in *The Interpreter's Bible*, ed. George Buttrick, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1954) Vol. 3 pp. 878,879). Thus those ideas are alluded to and deconstructed – God is presented as all powerful, and the 'Satan' beliefs as untrue.

Theodicy, the problem of evil, our own struggles with God, seem to revolve around our difficulty in accepting three things simultaneously: i) God is the Almighty; ii) God is love / good; iii) there is evil. To simply avoid "there is evil" by blaming an external satan... is to miss the point. It is to refuse to engage with the God who causes evil and suffering, to paint a plastic picture of God that is neither Biblically faithful not true to real life. The book of Job engages with this issue, head on. And nobody gets it right, and every man struggles to humble himself beneath the answer. God's final response to Job's struggles will be that all human suffering, hurt feelings, hurt

bodies, lost families... is all irrelevant to the bigger picture. Something went on in heaven, and Job suffered on earth; and he is condemned for complaining or probing "why?". This is not at all a human-centred cosmos. But God does it all in such a way that His sensitive love to His creatures is shown. James got this, when he says that in Job we see the end of the Lord, we see His ultimate end- which is that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy to man. Man thinks that he is king of the planet, just as the lion is king of the jungle. The lion thinks he is king of the jungle and so do all the other animals. But I once knew a white African who did hunting trips for tourists who wanted to shoot lions or other big cats. He has a pack of rottweilers which he would release. And the lion, surrounded by the rottweilers [whom they feared] would beg for mercy like a pussy cat. The terrified leopard would run up a tree, with the rottweilers surrounding it. And the tourist, with multiple video cameras trained on him to show the folks back home, carefully not capturing the dogs, would shoot the terrified lion or leopard. Lion is not king of the jungle when some other factor is introduced. And neither is man king of the planet let alone the cosmos.

This approach explains the role of the Satan at the beginning. The scene is intentionally vague, defying systematic exposition. Because the point is that Job suffers for reasons other than his sin, other than 'because suffering makes you a better person', or all the other reasons the friends will claim. God Himself blandly states that Job suffers "without cause", for no reason (Job 2:3). There is no answer to human suffering. Job's sufferings were the result of some heavenly conversation, they were an outcome of a debate that was beyond man and in a way, does not concern man. See on Job 6:3. Once we get this, we will understand why the Heavenly court room scenario we are presented with at the start is intentionally impossible to understand, or expound word by word, verse by verse, with a clear 'this means that'.

Job 1:7 Yahweh said to Satan, Where have you come from? Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, From going back and forth in the earth, and from walking up and down in it- There is no implication that he was doing anything sinful. Zech. 1:11 implies that this is a Hebraism for observing. The references to 'wandering about on the face of the earth' have great similarities with the language used to describe the Persian empire's spies, called "The King's Eye"- a kind of agent of the King who wandered around picking up information and reporting back to him. But of course, "The King's Eye" was on the King's side and not working against him! (More documentation of this in Rivkah Kluger, *The Satan Of The Old Testament* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967). This view is confirmed in other research by Harry Torczyner, *The Book Of Job* (Jerusalem: Kiryat-Sefer, 1981) pp. 38-45. Note that Torczyner also interprets the Satan as being in God's service, and not in opposition to Him: "The figure and role of the Satan derives from the Persian secret service... We now understand that there are in God's service, as in that of any earthly king, secret roving officials, who go and come and report to him on the doings of his subjects"). Satan's walking / running "to and fro in the earth / land" and reporting back to God about an individual is thus very much taken from the Persian idea of the King's "evil eye", "the eye of the King", a kind of *agent provocateur*, a secret police-type agent, travelling around the Kingdom and reporting back to the King about suspect individuals. It also has an evident connection with the Zechariah passages which speaks of the Angels in the time of the exile and restoration from Persia "running to and fro in the earth" on God's behalf (Zech. 1:10,11; 4:10). The implication of course was that God and His Angels, and not the Persian King and his agents, were the ones really in control of the land. It's maybe significant that the

Septuagint translates "going to and fro" in Job 1:7 with the word *peripatei*- and we find the same word in 1 Pet. 5:8 about the adversary of the early Christians 'going about' seeking them- a reference to the agents of the Roman and Jewish systems. I have elsewhere demonstrated that much of the Hebrew Bible was rewritten [under Divine inspiration] in Babylon, to bring out relevant issues for the Jewish exiles in Babylon. This includes the book of Job. It can be understood as an allegory- Job, the suffering servant of the Lord, becomes a type of Israel, the suffering servant of Isaiah's later prophecies. There are many links between Isaiah's prophecies and Job- a glance down the margin of most reference Bibles will indicate that. Just as the returning exiles faced 'satans' in the form of local Arabic opposition, so did Job. The Zechariah 3:1,2 passage uses the word 'satan' to describe this opposition to the returned exiles. Note that both Zechariah 3 and Job 1 use the idea of a Heavenly court. As God put a fence around Job (Job 1:10), so He was a "wall of fire" to the returning exiles (Zech. 2:5). And his final triumph and restoration, by God's grace, was intended as a prototype for Judah in captivity. J.B. Russell mentions a Babylonian document consisting of a dialogue between a sufferer and his friend (J.B. Russell, *The Devil* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977) p. 87). Perhaps the re-writing of the book of Job during Judah's captivity in Babylon was intended as a counter to this, explaining Yahweh's perspective on suffering.

Eliphaz reminds Job that the wicked of Noah's time were destroyed by a flood, implying that the sudden calamities of Job's life were like the flood, thus equating him with the world at Noah's time. Jude, Daniel, Peter and the Lord Jesus all interpret that world as representing apostate Jewry in the first century, destroyed by the " flood" of AD70. It is therefore interesting that 1 Pet. 5:8,9, concerning the Jewish devil walking around seeking to draw away Christians, is quoting the Septuagint of Job 1:7, suggesting Job's satan is also to be linked with the Jewish satan.

Job's satan was perhaps not simply a sceptical worshipper who had these questions and was represented by an Angel in the court of heaven; but also an Angel wanting for himself to find out more about Job, not understanding how a man with all the blessings Job had could sincerely worship God. God therefore gave this Angel the power needed to try Job to see whether this was the case. The idea of an Angel being called a satan (adversary) is familiar to us in Num. 22:22 where the Angel stood in the way of Balaam for an adversary. The fact the Angel brought the trials would explain why all through the book the trials are credited to God. Satan coming "from going back and forth in the earth" (Job 1:7) would connect with the descriptions of the Angels being God's eyes going to and fro in the earth (Zech. 1:11). Job 1:16 describing God sending a flame of fire to minister one of the trials is understood in the Angel context when one recalls that He "makes His ministers a flaming fire" (Ps. 104:4). The series of "messengers" who come to Job announcing the trials (Job 1:14) may possibly also be Angels, or Angels controlling human messengers on earth. Job associates his trials with God's eyes being upon him (e. g. Job 7:8) and we have seen that the eyes of God seems to be a synonym for the Angels.

Job 1:8 Yahweh said to Satan, Have you considered my servant, Job? For there is none like him in the land, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God, and turns away from evil-

We note God's very high opinion of Job. Yet he was aware of sins of youth (Job 13:26) and in Job 9:20 he speaks of his imperfections: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse". But God

considered him "perfect", despite those imperfections. Job didn't get to read the prologue that we readers have read. He failed to know how high was God's opinion of him; just as we can labour under false guilt, and consider that because man no longer loves us, then neither does God.

Notice that Satan had to get power from God (Job 2:3-6); he had none in his own right, indeed, God brought Job to Satan's notice (1:8). Job comments about God being the source of his sufferings: "If it be not he, who then is it?" (Job 9:24 RV). Job didn't believe anyone apart from God was responsible.

God knew what the satan Angel's response would be to His question. Thus God guides an Angel to think about a believer- or person- in order to further that Angel's spiritual education. This is still necessary, despite them having "had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" previously. The knowledge of good and evil which the Angels have is exactly the same as we have- "the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" the Angels lamented in Eden (Gen. 3:22). Despite our experience of life, we appreciate pitiably little how God works through evil. Some can scarcely comprehend it, especially if they have no knowledge of the Truth. Yet by nature they have some dull concept of it- and it is this dim concept which the Angels possessed in Eden, which was shared with us by Adam's eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Thus we can understand why the Angels need to be educated like this.

The tragedy was that those taken into captivity weren't reformed by their sufferings, and now their children likewise refused to "take it to heart" and repent (Is. 42:25 s.w.). Here we have another connection between Isaiah and Job, the book which appears to have been rewritten for the exiles with Job as representative of both the exiles and the righteous servant. "Have you considered My servant..." (Job 1:8) is the same phrase in Is. 42:25 "take it to heart". The book of Job was therefore written as a way of appealing for the repentance of the exiles and for them to contextualize their own sufferings.

Job 1:9 Then Satan answered Yahweh and said, Does Job fear God for nothing?-

"For nothing" is 'without cause', and God uses this word in telling the satan that he is moving Him to destroy Job "without cause" (Job 2:3). The idea seems to be that Job has already proven that he does indeed serve God without cause, not in hope of any reward; Job serves for nothing, he serves because he is God's servant. There is no cause to slay or hurt Job.

The returned exiles refused to serve God for nothing (s.w. Mal. 1:10). But the final investigation of the book of Job revealed that Job was prepared to serve God for nothing, just because He was God and he was His servant; and not because he expected any reward or material advantage. Job is therefore set up to the exiles as the embodiment and personification of who they should have become. But they refused to respond. The sufferings which came upon Judah were to reveal whether they would serve God for nothing; and Mal. 1:10 makes it clear they didn't.

Job 1:10 Haven't You made a hedge around him and around his family, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land- LXX "blessed the works of his hands, and multiplied his cattle upon the land?"- an allusion to the promises of blessing and multiplication of Abraham's seed, of whom Job was presented as being representative. In Job 10:11,12 Job complains "Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews. Thou hast granted me life and favour, and Thy

visitation hath preserved My spirit". "Fenced" is the same word as "hedge" when satan complains that God has made a hedge about Job (Job 1:10). Job appears to be aware of the conversation between the satan and the Lord. It therefore makes sense to understand that the gathering of the sons of God and 'satan' was a gathering of the people of God, including the friends and Job, and the conversation was heard by all. Job is therefore saying that actually the only hedge or fence he has is his own physical body. Job seems to be saying 'You say I'm hedged about with blessings. But now the only hedge I've got is this sick body. The only help you give me now is to give me my spirit to keep me alive, only so you can torment me more'. Understandable, if faulty, reasoning in Job's situation.

Job 1:11 But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has, and he will renounce You to Your face- See on Job 30:24. The same phrase for putting forth the hand is used of how God put forth His hand against Judah and sent them into exile (Ez. 10:7; 14:13). The 'touching' of Job uses the word used of the 'touching' of Judah by their invaders and abusers (Is. 8:8; Jer. 4:10; 12:14; Ez. 7:12). And it is used of how the suffering servant of Is. 53:4 was considered "stricken" or 'touched' by God after the pattern of Job. That suffering servant represented the faithful remnant at the restoration, and then when they ultimately failed to be as intended, it was all more fully reapplied to the Lord Jesus. Several times the friends refer to how Job has been touched by God; the parallels between the Satan and the friends will be noted throughout the book. The Satan clearly influenced the friends to think likewise, and they effectively become the Satan. And it is therefore they and not 'Satan' who are rebuked at the end of the book.

"Touch" is the same Hebrew word used in :19 for the Divine wind 'touching' [NEV "struck"] the house and killing all Job's children.

We can too easily assume that the satan was proven wrong. Job did not curse God when all was taken from him (1:22). But that was only at the start. As discussed on Job 1:1, Job pretty much did curse God to His face in Job 9,10 and elsewhere, as the dialogues continue- and was condemned for it. Job is not at all the undefeated super-hero. He repented of it, finally. God never says 'No, Job will not curse Me'. It is totally wrong to think that God made a wager, a kind of bet, with the satan- and God won. God never says that He thinks Job will be steadfast to Him. But if there is no wager going on here, then why does God allow all this? Nothing is proved nor disproved, in terms of the Satan's questions. And that is the nub of the book. Job suffered "without cause" (Job 2:3). But despite all that- we see the end of the Lord, as James says, that He is very pitiful, and of tender, saving mercy.

Job 1:12 Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, all that he has is in your power. Only on himself don't put forth your hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh- See on Is. 37:36, where an Angel likewise goes forth from Yahweh. I have suggested above that the Satan refers to both one or some amongst the "sons of God", perhaps the friends; and also to the Angel who represented them in the heavenly throne room. For there is no indication that anything Satan did was sinful; Angels don't sin. Satan never actually says or does anything wrong; he simply makes the observation that there may well be a relationship between Job's service of God and the material blessing which God has given him. He is them empowered by God to bring calamities into Job's life. Time and again is it stressed, really stressed, that God brought the problems upon Job, not satan independently (Job 1:12,16; 2:3,10; 6:4; 8:4; 19:21; 42:18).

The going forth from the presence of Yahweh continues the allusion to the court of Heaven, which is implied by the sons of God, the Angels representing their charges on earth, coming before God. The 'Satan' figure is not in itself evil, but could refer to an Angel [a 'good' one, as I submit there are no 'sinful' Angels], or an Angel representative of a fellow worshipper on earth. The debates in Heaven between the Angels, the will of God as articulated there, is then reflected and carried out on earth – rather like how in Daniel 1–6 we have events on earth described in historical terms, and then we are given an insight into what's been going on in Heaven in Daniel 7–12. Yet the court / legal language continues throughout the book – e.g. Job is "perfect", i.e. legally blameless. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters. Job perhaps perceived this, even though the vision of the court of Heaven in chapters 1 and 2 was presumably unknown to him as he endured his sufferings; for in response to the friends' wrong judgment of him, he comments that "God covers the faces of the judges of the earth" (Job 9:24). The final summing up speeches from both God and Job simply emphasize the omnipotence of God; how ultimately *He* has been the adversary to Job, and there is no room in the cosmos of His creation for any other power, especially any of the various personal 'Satan' figures believed in by the worlds of both Canaan and Babylon. The heavenly court of "sons of God" is paralleled with all the stars in Job 38:7. Bear in mind that the stars were understood as pagan deities. The whole pagan understanding of the cosmos is being deconstructed. The stars are paralleled with the Angelic sons of God who are all totally under God's control; they are *His* Heavenly court.

The legal language of the book of Job has far reaching implications. We have noted the many connections between Job and the latter part of Isaiah, where again there is the impression of 'God in the dock', a cosmic trial of truth. The gods of the nations are invited to present their best cases, to demonstrate their reality against the claims of Yahweh, Israel's God, to be the only true God. In this trial, the suffering servant is the witness used by God. And this in turn is the basis for the same lawsuit motif in the Gospel of John, where the witness is the Lord Jesus as the suffering servant, and by extension all those in Him. Indeed there appear to be seven witnesses in John: John the Baptist (Jn. 1:7), Jesus Himself (Jn. 3:11), the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:39), God Himself (Jn. 5:32), the miracles (Jn. 5:36), the Old Testament (Jn. 5:39) and the crowd (Jn. 12:17). John presents the cross as the decisive verdict, linking back

to a similar verdict pronounced in Isaiah, which in turn has as its basis the final verdict of Yahweh in support of Job against the beliefs of the friends in the various 'Satan' gods of Canaan and Babylonia.

Job 1:13 It fell on a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house- Usually Job went and offered sin offerings for his children after these parties. But the disaster came exactly whilst they were partying. This would invite us to see this as judgment upon them, looking ahead to the judgment of the children ["sons"] of Israel.

Job 1:14 that there came a messenger to Job and said, The oxen were ploughing and the donkeys feeding beside them- A *malak* came with news of the calamities brought by the satan (Angel). It would be understandable if that *malak* should have been translated 'Angel' seeing there is so much other Angelic language in this area. See on Job 1:6,7. We see again a connection to the work of a Satan Angel.

Job 1:15 and the Sabeans attacked and took them away. Yes, they have killed the servants with the edge of the sword- The Sabeans are literally 'those of Sheba'. The same word is used by Job when he reflects upon the disaster at the hands of "the troops of Tema... the companies of Sheba" (see on Job 6:19). It seems therefore that there were people from Tema involved. And Eliphaz was from Teman (Job 2:11). Again we have a hint that these Sabeans and associated Temanites were somehow involved with the Temanite "friend" of Job, Eliphaz. The friends were in some form the Satan. In the restoration context, all the people of Sheba would repent and come to Zion (Is. 60:6 s.w.). The former enemies of God's people were to repent and join them.

And I alone have escaped to tell you- It has been suggested that the prologue to Job is in fact a literary device to place theological problems before us, e.g. of the relationship between service of God and receipt of blessing, and sin and suffering. But we must remember that later Scripture takes the experiences of Job as literal, and Job himself as a real historical person. However, it is not impossible that the account of the conversation between God and the satan was not a literal occurrence, but simply a way of setting up the problems which the historical narrative then addresses. It's worth meditating on this one. The three different messengers come and tell Job of the various disasters and conclude with the same rubric "and I alone have escaped to tell you". This is surely a theatrical presentation rather than a literal transcription of actual speech which historically occurred; my friend Steve Cook has suggested, quoting Jewish sources, that Job may well be the very earliest extant theatrical drama script of ancient literature. Job being drama would explain why the book is written as poetry. This approach also assists us in understanding how Job was told by a messenger that his sons had all died, and then at the end of the book he appears to be given his sons back again. If the messenger wasn't telling the truth, but was just part of the plot, the mechanism to present the theological problem, then this is understandable. The use of "the satan" would therefore not be referring to any cosmic being, but rather to a *role*. It has been observed: "In biblical sources the Hebrew term the *satan* describes an adversarial role. It is not the name of a particular character" (Elaine Pagels, *The Origin of Satan* (New York: Random House, 1996) p. 39). And again: "[*ha-satan*] is not the personal name Satan but a role specification meaning "the accuser / adversary

/ doubter”" (N.C. Habel, *The Book of Job* (London: S.C.M., 1985) p.89). The 'satan' or adversary was not therefore necessarily sinful: “As he first appears in the Hebrew Bible, Satan is not necessarily evil, much less opposed to God. On the contrary, he appears in the book of Numbers and in Job as one of God’s obedient servants" (Pagels, *op cit.* p. 39). He is “subject to God’s control and was used by God to accomplish his purposes... [there is] a pronounced emphasis on his subordination” to God (S.H.T. Page, “Satan: God’s Servant” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society;* Sept. 2007 Vol. 50 No. 3 p. 449).

The Sabeans of 1:15 were probably the descendants of Sheba, Abraham's grandson (Gen. 25:1-3). For his children to grow into a separate tribe, the events of Job must have happened some generations before the Law was given.

Job 1:16 While he was still speaking, there also came another and said, The fire of God has fallen from the sky- As noted on :13,19, this is the language of judgment. Job's children were indeed guilty of serious sin, and all Job's animal sacrifices couldn't save them from that judgment. At the end of the book, the friends are also liable to Divine judgment, but are saved not by sacrifice or ritual but by prayer. This all looks forward to the failure of Mosaic ritual to save; whereas a righteous mediator, the Lord Jesus, is the One who can save. See on :20.

And has burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them, and I alone have escaped to tell you- "The servants" is "shepherds" in LXX and GNB. Destruction of the sheep and shepherds is language elsewhere used about the suffering of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians. Job's sons were killed by wind and fire- both of which are associated with Angelic manifestation (:16,19). See on Job 1:6,7. It was the "servants" who were 'smitten with the edge of the sword' at the Babylon invasion (s.w. Jer. 21:7). Again we see how the book of Job discusses the very issues which were facing the exiles in Babylon as they reflected upon these same tragedies.

Job 1:17 While he was still speaking, there came also another and said, The Chaldeans made three bands, and swept down on the camels, and have taken them away, yes, and killed the servants with the edge of the sword; and I alone have escaped to tell you- "The Chaldeans" confirms that Job is being set up as representative of the exiles in Chaldea who had lost their families to the Babylonian / Chaldean invaders. See on :16; Job 19:9. The three bands clearly mirror the three waves of Babylonian attacks upon Judah. Often the book of Job will use Persian loan words, and it is clearly connected to the later prophecies of Isaiah about the exile. Hence the otherwise strange statement at the end, that God "turned the captivity" of Job. Job was in the land of Uz, clearly somewhere in Babylonia. He is set up as representative of the exiles.

Job 1:18 While he was still speaking, there came also another and said, Your sons and your daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother’s house- Again as noted on :13, the disaster came exactly whilst they were partying. This would invite us to see this as judgment upon them, looking ahead to the judgment of the children ["sons"] of Israel.

Job 1:19 and behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and struck the four corners of the house, and it fell on the young men, and they are dead. I alone

have escaped to tell you- Heb. "from the other side of the desert". This term would be appropriate to understanding Job as a parable of how disaster struck Judah from the other side of the desert, i.e. Babylonian. Hence the mention of a three banded attack from the "Chaldeans", an ethnic group hardly known in Job's time. But the poem uses that term to point up the fact that Job's "evil" is akin to that experienced by Judah. Hence likewise his restoration is spoken of as God 'turning the captivity of Job' (Job 42:10), language more appropriate to the exiles. "Struck" is the same word as "touch" in :11. This was the hand of God 'touching' Job as Satan had requested. A wind which struck four corners of a house at the same time was a whirlwind, associated with Divine judgment and theophany.

Job 1:20 Then Job arose, and tore his robe, and shaved his head, and fell down on the ground and worshiped- His robe, as the head of the family, was likely of religious significance; a kind of priestly robe. And he realizes now that all such ritual has failed to save- as noted on :16. The shaved Job again becomes a picture of the shaved Judah after the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 7:29 s.w.), and of the suffering servant who was "sheared", s.w. "shaved" (Is. 53:7). The response to this shaving was to "worship" and not charge God wrongly, a lesson not learnt by the exiles, who wrongly charged God over it all (as Ez. 18 makes clear).

Job 1:21 He said, Naked I came out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh- The 'taking away' is the term used of Judah's taking away into captivity (Jer. 20:5). God gave Judah a king in His anger, and took him away at the time of Zedekiah and the captivity (Hos. 13:11 s.w.). The raft of questions and mental struggles elicited by all this are those which the drama of Job will now discuss and debate. We note that Job immediately sees 'God in all this'. It wasn't that Yahweh gave, and Satan took away. God took away as well as gave. Without his family and wealth, Job feels naked- as if he is now ready to go into the grave. But it was with that now naked man that God would work, and He does likewise with men today.

Some have struggled over the idea of "return there", as if speaking about returning to the mother's womb. I suggest Ecc. 5:13-16 is perhaps a commentary upon Job, the rich man who lost his riches and also his children, and the idea of 'returning' is there clarified: "There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand. This also is a grievous evil: just as he came, so shall he go". Likewise 1 Tim. 6:7 appears to allude to Job 1:21 and likewise clarifies: "For we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world".

"Yahweh gave, and Yahweh has taken away. Blessed be the name of Yahweh" has a very poetic ring to it in the Hebrew, as if Job is quoting a well known saying. This is the only time in the book that Job uses the term "Yahweh", elsewhere he uses 'elohim'- and he speaks many times of "God" throughout his speeches. This leads us to wonder whether he was quoting a formulaic, conventional wisdom statement. His later words about God are not true and God rebukes him for this, as does Elihu, and he repents. His repentance is seen as speaking, finally, what is right about God. But at this point, he doesn't sin; at least, Job 2:10 says he didn't sin "with his lips", which could imply that his heart was wrong. But he said the right words at the time; but then in Job 3:1 he opens his mouth and curses, not blesses. He pretty much accepts all this,

when he finally admits that he had heard of God by the hearing of the ear, but only "now" does his eye "see" or perceive God. So for now, he says the right thing, quoting some well known maxim. Just as we can- but we have to be taught the personal truth of what we sing in hymns and the texts we cite from scripture. And that is really the story of Job.

The 'taker away' is clearly God, and not simply the satan. It was the fire "of God" that fell.

Job 1:22 In all this, Job did not sin- Job's reaction at this point was wonderful. He didn't sin in this respect; but he is later led to understand that he has indeed sinned and he accepts the call to repentance of Job 33:27. But the appeal for Job to repent and his final acceptance of it could also lead us to interpret this as meaning that Job did not consider he had sinned, when in fact he had. He would then become again representative of Judah; "Behold I will plead with you, because you say, I have not sinned" (Jer. 2:35).

Nor charge God with wrongdoing- This is legal language, as if Job did not put God in the dock and accuse Him wrongly. The idea of Israel as it were taking a court case against God recurs in the prophets. Job was their example and they largely failed to follow it. At the point of the trials, Job didn't charge God with "folly" (LXX). But Elihu and God convict Job of charging God with folly. This must, then, refer to how Job spoke during his speeches. In Job 10:1-3, and other places (e.g. Job 9:14-20), Job definitely does accuse God of wrongdoing, of unfairly hating him, and smiling upon the wicked. It was in these statements that he did charge God with folly / wrongdoing. But at the point of the trials, he didn't. And so it often is with us all. At the point of suffering, we take it well. It is as time goes by that we are tempted to respond badly.

JOB CHAPTER 2

Job 2:1 Again it happened on the day when the sons of God came to present themselves before Yahweh, that Satan came also among them to present himself before Yahweh- "Before Yahweh" doesn't at all have to mean this happened in Heaven itself. The phrase is used of how men come before Yahweh here on earth. Note how Job addresses the friends in Job 13:7 LXX "Do ye not speak before the Lord...". This is another hint that the friends were represented by the Satan figure of the prologue, who likewise appeared "before the Lord". Satan came amongst them, but influenced them to accept his viewpoint; or even spoke for them, until they became effectively the Satan. See on Job 13:21.

Job 2:2 Yahweh said to Satan, Where have you come from? Satan answered Yahweh and said, From going back and forth in the land, and from walking up and down in it- See the extensive discussion on Job 1:7.

Job 2:3 Yahweh said to Satan, Have you considered My servant Job?- We as the readers have the advantage of knowing that God had considered Job in great detail. But Job doesn't know nor feel that. Just as we may feel God doesn't pay attention to us, when in fact He is viewing us with microscopic analysis and interest. Or, as in Job's case, that He only looks closely at us in a critical way, with the intention to make us suffer because of what He sees in us. Later Job complains to God "what is man, that You magnify him? And that You ahould consider him?" (Job 7:17). Thus Job sees God- whom he probably conceived of as an Angel- as considering him,

whilst we are told earlier that satan / the adversary was told to do this. A human satan considering Job would not in itself have brought the trials, for no one human could have done all the things done to Job; and Job would not have complained so bitterly about a human being considering him.

For there is none like him in the land, a blameless and an upright man, one who fears God and turns away from evil- See on Job 1:8. The connection with Isaiah is to Is. 59:15 "Yes, truth is lacking; and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey". "He who departs from evil" is the term used about Job (s.w. Job 1:8; 2:3); and he too became a "prey" to evil. Job represents not only the exiles, but the righteous remnant amongst them who departed from evil but suffered all the same.

He still maintains his integrity- Job uses this word about himself in Job 27:6. On one hand we could argue that Job is unaware of God's high view of his integrity. Or we could argue the opposite; that this adds to the impression that he had been present at these discussions between the Satan and God; and the view of the Satan was in fact the view now of the friends, who effectively acted as the Satan figure who had influenced their thinking. His argument against the friends, that he did maintain his integrity still, was effectively arguing back against this position of the Satan. "Hold fast" or "maintain" is the appeal of the prophets to the exiles (s.w. Is. 27:5; 35:3; 56:4). But sadly there were none who really followed Job's example at that time. None maintained or took hold of Yahweh's righteousness (Is. 64:7 s.w.).

Although you incited Me against him, to ruin him- This is not really a rebuke; for the Satan is carefully portrayed as not actually sinning. Because God did in fact "ruin him". This 'inciting' of God reveals the sensitivity of God to human desires to understand and their wish that He would act. This is exactly what happens in our wrestlings in prayer with God. If God agrees, He "performs the counsel (advice) of His messenger" (Angels; Is. 44:26). That is in a restoration context- to encourage the early readership of Job to understand that God can be moved to respond. The Hebrew for "incite" means to prick or stimulate, s.w. "persuade"- God can be moved or provoked to action, He is sensitive to our struggles with 'the problem of evil' and His actions upon earth, just as much as human beings can provoke Him to anger.

Without cause- God acted without cause against Job, for no reason. Job will later rail against God because of this; Job repeats this in Job 9:17. There Job sees this as a reason to think God is unreasonable and uncaring. But the prologue gives us the inside information as to the background for that "without cause" suffering. It was part of God's incredibly high opinion of Job. Or we could argue that here we have the impression that he had been present at these discussions between the Satan and God; and the view of the Satan was in fact the view now of the friends, who effectively acted as the Satan figure who had influenced their thinking. And the point is established- that suffering can come on individuals "without cause". Yet the friends spend their speeches guessing at what the cause was in Job's case. In the restoration context, the suffering servant likewise suffered "without cause" (s.w. Is. 52:3,5). That figure was clearly based upon Job, and speaks of the righteous remnant at the restoration, and finally of the Lord Jesus who was their embodiment. Jeremiah laments that he too had suffered at that time "without cause" (Lam. 3:52 s.w.); failing to perceive the lessons of the book of Job, just as we can whenever we complain that we suffer "without cause". The reality of course was that the judgments upon Judah had not been "without cause" (Ez. 14:23 s.w.). And Job finally comes to realize that although he is right before God by grace, he too is a sinner and there was "cause" in his sufferings.

God's view that Job suffers "without cause" means that the friends are declared wrong ahead of time, when they give all their reasons for Job's sufferings. See on Job 1:6,9. He suffered for no reason, at least, no reason that makes any sense to man- nor even, according to this incredible statement, to God either. "Without cause / reason" is a hugely significant statement from God. It is the word used of how Saul sought to slay David "without a cause" (1 Sam. 19:5). We can also render it "without any achieved purpose". And yet in another sense, James 5:11 says that in Job, we see the "end" or 'achieved purpose' of God. Which in the end, was salvation. In another sense, Job's sufferings were not for any purpose... just as some trials and tribulations in our lives likewise appear devoid of purpose. Of course, not all suffering is in the same category. But we learn here that 'Suffering makes you a better man' is simply not always true. Yahweh is saying that *so far*, the satan has got it wrong. It was not true that Job only worshipped God because he was materially wealthy. He served God anyway. God doesn't as it were get people to serve Him by dangling carrots of material blessing in front of them. And yet the final restoration of Job does look like God operates some kind of reward and punishment system. Despite the book clearly teaching that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer (e.g. Job 12:6). This tension is intentional. Because we are being shown that all search for logical justice is futile when it comes to God's ways with man. The cosmos is not human centric, and we have no right to even enquire let alone complain. This is the point of the wisdom poem in Job 28- man cannot find it anywhere on earth, cannot somehow locate the answers he wants, despite sensing they are out there somewhere; and hence the conclusion: "To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding'" (Job 28:28). But in Job we see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and saves His people. There is, therefore, no explanation of suffering in the book; rather is man relocated within the vastness of the cosmos and of God's ways. Suffering remains in the foreground, but the horizon is vastly extended. In a sense, we live our lives within mystery; but that is why to believe means to trust. Those with weaker faith seem to be those who demand logical, accessible explanations- and so often get disappointed in God because of this. The book of Job shifts the question from "Why does suffering happen?" to "Who is God, and who am I, and how can man be just with God?". We can note that Paul argues in 2 Cor. 4:17,18 that the sufferings of this present time are unworthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; he doesn't [at that point] get into theodicy, giving reasons for the sufferings. He simply says, like the book of Job, that the perspective is so much gloriously greater.

Job 2:4 Satan answered Yahweh and said, Skin for skin- We could render this "skin after skin", as if the satan is inviting God to peel off the skin, the exterior, from Job- and see what he is really made of underneath. And what does the book of Job reveal? On the surface, Job does indeed curse God. But even beneath that, there is a hard core of faith / trust in God which is revealed at the end. He likewise is impatient and says that endurance is futile; but that was short term. The endurance of Job is praised in James 5:11. Whilst there was no wager between God and satan, Satan's suspicions appear to be true- but only on the short term, surface level. Job's blessing of Yahweh in Job 1:21 was good on the surface level. Peel away the skin and he curses God. Commentators generally don't want to face that, because they tend to focus on the opening and closing of the book, rather than do the hard work of engaging with the dialogues. The words of Job in them show no overall pattern of spiritual growth, suffering didn't make him a better person; admittedly there are some high points,

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him... I know that my redeemer lives", but they are quickly subsumed beneath his false accusations against God. But peel away another level, and Job's core faith and loyalty is revealed, despite speaking wrongly about God during the dialogues with the friends. And so, after repentance for that, the Divine blessings are poured out on Job even greater than they were at the start. Or the idea may be that Job was willing to accept the loss of the skin of his children, as it were in exchange for his own skin being saved. But 'Skin for skin' is a human expression- maybe based on trading one animal skin for another. It is appropriate to a human being on earth; and yet as explained on Job 1:6, the human Satan had a representative Angel in Heaven who also used this phrase in reporting the man's thinking before God. This reflects the degree to which God is aware of our language and perceptions.

Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life- This is the basis of the Lord's words "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul / life?" (Mt. 16:26), even if he possesses the whole world, as the mega wealthy Job appeared to. We note that He quotes the words of the Satan with approval; again confirming the impression that the 'Satan' figure is not essentially sinful. Just as the serpent in Eden was an animal making observations, however wrongly; and sin entered the world not by the serpent but through Adam (Rom. 5:12). The serpent was part of a "very good" creation and was a-moral.

Job 2:5 But put forth Your hand now- Satan asks God: "Put forth Your hand". The hand of God is an Angelic phrase. God agrees- "he is in your hand" (:6). Thus Satan's hand is God's hand, which in practice was articulated through an Angel. Job seems to emphasize the place of God's hand in bringing his trials- Job 2:5,6,10; 6:9; 10:7; 13:21; 19:21; 27:11 AVmg; 28:9. Job in Job 12:9 feels that in the same way as God's hand had created the natural creation- and the Angels did this- so that same Angelic hand was upon him for evil. "By His Spirit (God makes His Angels spirits) He garnished the Heavens; His hand formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. For no one human being could bring these sufferings upon Job. The human Satan, the fellow worshipper, was reflected in an Angel in the court of Heaven. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24 AV). This was exactly the brief given to satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- in the restoration context, the people and Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7).

And touch his bone and his flesh, and he will renounce You to Your face- In Job 2:4–6 we have the 'Satan' commenting that Job's flesh and skin need to be harmed; but in Job 19:26 we have Job stating his faith that even though *God* destroys his flesh and skin, yet God shall ultimately save him. See on Job 16:14. Adam's wife is called of his bones and flesh in Gen. 2:23, and one path of speculation would be that Job's wife is here referred to. Hence her absence at the end of the book.

Job 2:6 Yahweh said to Satan, Behold, he is in your hand. Only spare his life-

The satan's role, at least in Heaven, is best understood by the concept of "loyal opposition" in British and Commonwealth politics, whereby Members of Parliament or the opposition party can oppose something decided by the sitting cabinet, without being guilty of treason. They remain loyal to the monarch or constitution. This is why the opposition is technically called "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition". The opposition retains deference to the higher authority of the state and the larger framework within which democracy operates. This allows dissent without fear of being accused of treason. As Michael Ignatieff, a former leader of the loyal opposition in the House of Commons of Canada, said in a 2012 address at Stanford University: "The opposition performs an adversarial [we could say 'a satan-like'] function critical to democracy itself… Governments have no right to question the loyalty of those who oppose them. Adversaries remain citizens of the same state, common subjects of the same sovereign, servants of the same law". There is not a "King's party"; there is a ruling party and a loyal opposition- that is still loyal to the King. Thus in Canada and Australia, the phrase "His Majesty's Loyal Opposition" is also currently used. I suggest this is what was going on with the 'Satan' here. God allows opposition to Him, without accusing us of treason. For He is not the Allah of Islam, merely demanding 'submission' all the time. He is open to dialogue. And this enables the dynamic, two-way relationship that is possible between God and man. It givs real possibility to prayer, it reveals God as emotional and responsive to man's situations as well as his words.

LXX "I hand him to you". God is clearly, again, in control. This LXX reading is clearly alluded to in 1 Cor. 5:5 "you are to hand this man to Satan" and 1 Tim. 1:20 "Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed to Satan, in order that they might be instructed not to blaspheme". Again and again we see that any 'adversary' is under God's control and not radically free from Him. See on :5. In the restoration context, this was to be understood as the promise that no matter how God's people suffered, Israel would be preserved.

Job 2:7 So Satan went forth from the presence of Yahweh, and struck Job with painful sores from the sole of his foot to his head-

Satan now disappears from the book. A fair case can be made that his role is replaced by the friends- they were the "sons of God" who suspected he only believed because he was materially blessed. They will at length repeat the same conviction- that blessing has to be the reward for faith. Alternatively, we can understand that the 'satan' disappears because it is simply a device to make the point that Job suffers because of some issue in Heaven that we the readers are aware of [although Job isn't]- but we don't at all fully get what is going on there.

We have a fair amount of information about the symptoms of what Job was struck with, and it sounds like some form of black leprosy, elephantiosis. Job's disease has some similarities with what in Dt. 28:27 is called "the botch of Egypt". The symptoms mentioned in the book would match it: itchy ulcers (Job 2:8), body and face so disfigured that Job was not recognizable (Job 2:12), ulceration both internally and externally, making Job's breath smell and his whole body to stink (Job 19:17,20). This is why he sought refuge outside the town, on the ash heap which was the Old Testament equivalent of 'gehenna', a figure later to be used for condemnation. The sores bred worms (Job 7:5), appearing like clods of earth, opening and secreting, leaving the body swollen and emaciated (Job 16:8). Nightmares (Job 3:25; 7:4,14) and a sensation of choking (Job 7:15) stopped him sleeping, and his days were spent in exhaustion (Job 7:1-4). His bones were in agony, feeling as if they were on fire (Job

30:30) or as if they were being tortured in the stocks (Job 13:27), or being pulled off (Job 30:17). He was helpless, and the kids from poor families teased his futile attempts to stand up (Job 19:18). The disease was thought to be incurable, and so he longed for death (Job 3:20), actually coming to agree with his wife. Again, Job is cast as receiving Israel's curses for having broken the covenant, a leper doomed to death when he was innocent, in the spirit of the Lord Jesus. He is as Judah in exile. Leprosy was Divine curse, just as was fire and whirlwind in Job 1. He was being treated as a sinner.

Isaiah's description of Israel as "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness... but wounds, and bruises and putrifying sores" (Is. 1:6) is couched in this picture of Job. As if Job represents apostate Israel, although personally innocent; in the spirit of the Lord Jesus. These types of wounds made them ritually unclean. In Isaiah's first context, the suffering servant was King Hezekiah. Yet all Israel were to see themselves as 'in' him, as spiritual Israel are to see themselves as in Christ. "He was oppressed", as Israel at that time were being "oppressed" by Assyria. As they were covered in wounds and spiritual sickness (Is. 1:5,6), so the suffering servant bore their diseases and rose again in salvation victory. Significantly, Isaiah 40-53 speak of the one servant, whereas Isaiah 54-66 speak of the "servants" who fulfill in principle the work of the singular servant. The suffering servant, based upon Job, was a people embodied in the future Lord Jesus.

Job 2:8 He took for himself a potsherd to scrape himself with- The word for "potsherd", a piece of broken earthenware, is used repeatedly about Judah in exile (Is. 30:14; 45:9; Jer. 19:1; Lam. 4:2; Ez. 23:34). Job is presented as their representative.

And he sat among the ashes- Another similarity with Abraham, whose seed Job is presented as being (Gen. 18:27). The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (Job 2:8; 42:6). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (Job 40:4). Job intercedes for his children (Job 1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (Job 42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'Satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love.

Job 2:9 Then his wife said to him-

Job's wife was not slain. Although she tells him to "Curse God" just as the satan had pondered whether Job would "Curse God" if he lost everything (Job 1:11; 2:5). Just as Eve repeats the words of the serpent to Adam. Her suggestion that Job commit suicide is hard to make sense of. At best, it is betrayal of her husband in his hardest moment. She was the woman whom he testifies he loved and had never looked upon another woman; but she distances herself from him in his time of greatest need. She doesn't morally or spiritually stand with him and comfort him. She encourages blasphemy of God. We note that Job achieved his great standing before God with a wife who was clearly not a spiritual woman and even a blasphemer, and whose words betrayed him at his time of greatest need.

She has just lost her own ten children, and now she wants her husband to die too. She could be left an economic and social outcast. For women of those days, the purpose of marriage was stability and material provision. Hence the powerful and wealthy males were the most attractive. Now Job had lost everything, she found him

unattractive, and may well have wished his death so she could try to find another partner. This is why her advice that he curse God and commit suicide is harsher than even that of Eliphaz, who at least appeals for Job to repent: "Agree with God, and experience peace. This is how good things will come to you. Please receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart. If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up" (Job 22:21-23). But she remained with Job, and we are left to assume that it is she who is the later mother of Job's further ten children. Given everything went wrong for Job that could go wrong, we almost expect to read of her leaving him. But she doesn't. She has something a bit more to her than her betrayal and foolishness. She spent 180 months, 15 years, carrying Job's children, as well as presumably raising them. Job comments that during his affliction, his wife complained that his breath smelt (Job 19:17). The satan asked that God touch "all that [Job] has" (Job 1:11), but his wife was not slain; although we could argue that he lost relationship with her. But she is blessed with a further ten children at the end. Although Job divided the inheritance between his sons and his daughters (Job 42:15), which was unusual. No provision was made for his wife. And no comment is made about her restored fortunes. Job calls her "foolish" and God uses the same words about the friends in Job 42:8. Finally "all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before" rejoice with Job at his restoration in Job 42:11. But his wife isn't specifically mentioned. There's a lot to ponder here; but presumably we are to understand that she too is converted by Job, from blasphemy and folly [a "foolish woman"] to wisdom. And she was blessed; for having ten children and a large family was surely seen as Divine blessing.

Jewish thinking came to be influenced by Babylonian ideas of a dualistic cosmos, split between God and some 'Satan' figure. The book of Job is a corrective to this, in that it teaches that evil comes from God, and any Satan figure is under His total control. Yet a mere skim reading of the prologue to Job has led some to the very opposite conclusion. Significantly, the apostate Jewish writing *The Testament Of Job* completely twists the intent of the Biblical record, and adds into it the common misconceptions concerning Satan- e.g. it claims of Job's wife: "Satan followed her along the road, walking stealthily, and leading her astray... [Job warns her] 'Do you not see Satan standing behind you and unsettling your reasoning?'" (23:11; 26:6). These classical images of 'Satan' have to be *added in* to the Biblical record- because they are simply not there in the Biblical text. These ideas of women being easily influenced by a cosmic Satan figure are thereby deconstructed here; Job's wife is presented just as a real woman, making observations which many secular people would make.

Do you still maintain your integrity? Renounce God, and die- "Renounce" or "curse" is a word with two meanings; it can also be translated 'bless'. So she may also have been quipping that blessing God, as Job has done so far in the narrative, all the same leads to death. The Hebrew word translated in NEV "renounce" or AV "curse" is *barak*, the usual word for "bless". It is commonly used in the prologue (Job 1:5,10,11,21; 2:5,9). The ambiguity is intentional. This ambiguity feeds into the overall message- that man cannot in fact discern between Divine blessing and curse. The Lord's final answer is that we only see a fraction of His ways, we have no right to question let alone rail against His ways. If we trust Him, we shall be saved. But that means submitting our sense of right and wrong, fair endings, justice etc. beneath the reality of Him.

All the spiritual and philosophical questions notwithstanding, Job is to be recognized [at least at this point] for realizing that we serve God for nothing, because

we are His, and not in view of any personal reward- neither in this life nor beyond. Should we be condemned at judgment day, our attitude should be 'Thank You for the honour of having served You'. He will later say that even though God counts him as His enemy, even if God slays him, he will still trust Him (Job 13:15,24). This is trust, relationship, in the face of every reason to give it up; and in the face of a total lack of explanation from God as to *why*. In the face of every human cry of injustice, deprivation of legitimate rights etc. This is what James calls the patience / endurance of Job. Bearing in mind that at the end of the book, God still gives no reason *why*. There is some human suffering and experience which is not the chastening of a loving Heavenly Father, that is not the discipline that seems unpleasant at the time but later yields the fruit of righteousness. Job's sufferings were "without cause" (:3). And no cause is finally given.

Job does in fact do what she says- he does curse God, and he does seek to die (Job 3:20). Again we see that his initial strong response to the test was good, but he failed to retain it.

The LXX at this point adds a lot more detail, which is very much the language of Lamentations concerning the Jews after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem: "And when much time had passed, his wife said to him, How long wilt thou hold out, saying, Behold, I wait yet a little while, expecting the hope of my deliverance? for, behold, thy memorial is abolished from the earth, even thy sons and daughters, the pangs and pains of my womb which I bore in vain with sorrows; and thou thyself sittest down to spend the nights in the open air among the corruption of worms, and I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun, that I may rest from my labours and my pangs which now beset me: but say some word against the Lord, and die".

Job 2:10 But he said to her, You speak as one of the foolish women would speak- "The foolish" is the term used by the restoration prophets for the unfaithful in Israel; and her perspective is therefore set up as the wrong model which they were following (Jer. 17:11; Ez. 13:3).

What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job didn't sin with his lips- The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7). See on Job 1:6; 26:13; 30:21. The major theme of the book of Job is that *God* brought the problems into Job's life and that eventually they made him a more righteous person (Job 2:10; 16:11; 19:21; 23:16; 42:11). Notice that Job did not believe that only good things came from God; he nowhere complains about Satan bringing the problems. Job realized that his sufferings had made him come to know God in practice rather than just in theory - "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5). Seeing that problems make us more righteous people if we respond correctly to them (Heb. 12:5-11), why would a sinful, wicked being, who wants to turn us away from God, bring these things into our lives, when actually they only make us more righteous and closer to God?

I have pointed out that Job all through rejects the ideas promoted by the friends, the view of traditional wisdom (especially emphasized by Bildad, Job 8:8–10), that various supernatural 'Satan' monsters and figures were responsible for his experiences. Job began by saying that we receive both good and evil from God's hand (Job 2:10 cp. Is. 45:5–7). And he ends saying the same – that the Lord brought the trouble upon him (Job 42:11). He repeatedly sees God as the source of all his

affliction. Hence God can say that Job has spoken about Him that which is right (Job 42:8). But Job came to realize the massive practical extent of what he had previously known in theory, what he had “by the hearing of the ear”. Now his eye saw / perceived that truly no plan of God can be thwarted, by any of the various ‘Satan’ monsters imagined by men (Job 42:2). We too may say that we believe in the omnipotence of God; but such a belief requires us to throw out all beliefs in supernatural Satan figures. And that’s not a merely intellectual exercise; to see the tragedies and cruelties of our lives as being ultimately from God and under His control is something which shakes us to the core. See on Job 41:1.

I discuss on Job 1:21 whether the comment that Job didn't sin "with his lips" could imply he was responding in a standard, formulaic way, when his heart was not matching his spoken words. Possibly we are to infer that Job did curse God in his heart- exactly what he feared his children were doing.

We wonder whether Job is not starting to slip when instead of blessing Yahweh as he did previously, he instead argues that any blessing from God must also have evil along with it. God's blessings, however, are never articulated in that way. The promised blessings to Abraham and his seed hint at no accompanying evil. God's blessings have no curses added to them (Prov. 10:22 "The blessing of the Yahweh makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it"). The blessing of multiplied cattle had no curse of diseased cattle with it (Ps. 107:38). God reverses curses into blessings (1 Sam. 2:7,8), with no suggestion that those blessings still have some negatives attached to them.

Job 2:11 Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come on him, they each came from his own place- I have suggested earlier that the friends were influenced by the Satan figure and effectively became the Satan to Job. They "came" to him just as the evil "came" to him.

Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite- These people are traceable in the records of the patriarchs, again suggesting an early date for the historical Job. Eliphaz and Tema are associated with the Idumeans, the people of Esau (Gen. 36:4); Shuah was one of Abraham's children by Keturah. They were all three from various parts of Edom, areas elsewhere noted in the Bible for their pride and wisdom. They were all related to the Abraham family. They act true to type in their pride and appeal to their own wisdom.

And they made an appointment together- They were the "sons of God" who came together on set occasions "before Yahweh" (Job 1:6); so it seems that such meetings were not uncommon for them, and perhaps they came together as it were for an extraordinary meeting, or perhaps the dialogues presented occurred at their next regular meeting.

To come to sympathize with him and to comfort him- See on Job 19:12-14. In 2:11 the friends came "to mourn with him and to comfort him", although Job said he turned to them for comfort in vain (Job 16:2). The Hebrew here in 2:11 is identical to that in Ps. 69:20, describing Christ looking in vain for comforters. Job was the prototype of Isaiah's suffering servant and thereby a type of the Lord Jesus. "Comfort" is the word Job finally uses when he says he 'repents' (Job 42:6). Perhaps their aim from the start was to lead him to the repentance they wrongly imagined he must make for the sins which they mistakenly thought lay behind his sufferings. Judah in exile had none to truly bemoan them, just as Job didn't. The same word is used of this in Is. 51:19; Jer. 22:10.

Job 2:12 When they lifted up their eyes from a distance and didn't recognize him- The friends "knew him not" as the Jews also did not recognize the suffering servant because of the great physical torment (Is. 52:14; 53:3). Like those who crucified Christ "they sat down" watching him; "and sitting down they watched him there".

They raised their voices and wept; and they each tore his robe, and sprinkled dust on their heads toward the sky- The descriptions of the elders of Zion sitting on the ground in mourning for Jerusalem in Lam. 2:10 recalls the friends mourning for Job- thus associating both them and Job with a condemned Israel: "The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have thrown dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the young women of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground".

Job 2:13 So they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word to him, for they saw that his grief was very great- This great grief was intended to represent "the day of grief and of desperate sorrow" that was to come upon a condemned Judah (s.w. Is. 17:11; Jer. 15:18). This mourning connects with the mourning of Ezekiel over Judah: "I came to the exiles at Tel-abib, who were dwelling by the Chebar canal, and I sat where they were dwelling. And I sat there overwhelmed among them seven days" (Ez. 3:15). Job clearly is representative both of Judah, and, through his leprosy, with the suffering, saving servant of Is. 53. Just as the Lord is representative of His condemned people, He who knew no sin "made sin for us".

JOB CHAPTER 3

Job 3:1 After this Job opened his mouth, and cursed the day of his birth- Job although righteous was representative of a condemned Israel, whose "days" were likewise "cursed" (s.w. Is. 65:20). This is the essence of the representative nature of the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant who description took Job as its prototype. He was ultimately innocent and yet representative of a cursed people, and like Job, through His intercession for sinners He could bring salvation for them.

Job will later lament that he has suffered for "months", so there is a considerable time period referenced by "After this...". I discussed on Job 1:21 how Job begins by blessing God without sinning, and then in Job 2:10 we read that he did not "sin with his lips", implying he maybe did in his heart. Now, we have Job cursing. And his words will later be rebuked by God and Elihu, and he will deeply repent of them.

By so strongly seeking death (:21), Job is in fact going along with the bad advice of his wife in Job 2:9- to curse God and die, to commit suicide. He has cursed the day of his birth- and a curse, once uttered, was considered final and to have somehow achieved what it asked for. His cursing his birth day and night of conception, wishing them to no longer exist in the calendar, is effectively suicide. Likewise he will utter seven curses, four against the night and three against the day, with language continually allusive to the days of creation. In :4 he basically says "Let there be darkness", alluding to God's "Let there be light". Paul says that God "commanded the light to shine out of darkness" at creation; Job says "May light *not* shine..." (:4). There was darkness upon the face of the deep, and God changed that. But Job wants that darkness to return. He wishes to un-create what God has created. This surely is not far off cursing God. The five references to "light" in Gen. 1 are matched by Job's five

usages of the word "darkness". Job commands day and night to perish in :3 ["Let the day perish in which I was born, the night in which it was said, 'There is a boy conceived'"], whereas day and night were created in Gen. 1:3-5. God's creative "Let there be..." is matched by Job's "Let there perish / *not* be...".

Job curses his birthday. His children had been judged by God with fire from Heaven for cursing God on their birthdays. Seeing life is given by God, he is getting dangerously close to doing what they did. Job's children were slain by Divine judgment despite his intercession for them. This is another hint that Job was *counted* righteous by God- this is one of the hints that he was not in fact in reality as spotless as God saw him.

Job 3:2 Job responded- "Answered". We could read this as Job's answer to his suffering. But the 28 other occurrences of "answered / responded" in Job are always of a person answering what another has said. Who is in view here, seeing the friends haven't yet spoken, and apparently neither God nor satan have spoken to Job directly? The only candidate is Job's wife. She has told him to curse God and die. And his speech now pretty much wishes to do that, and he implies that he had indeed tried to commit suicide, but death eluded him. He curses his birth and his whole existence [which was given by God], and wishes to die. This is just what she told him to do- to curse and die. As noted earlier, he initially responds well to her. But over time, he gives in. We recall that when Elijah likewise wanted to die in 1 Kings 19:4 ["I have had enough, Yahweh; take my life"], God responded by ending his prophetic ministry. So although Job 3 is his response to his wife, it is also surely directed to God his creator, more than lamenting that God had given him life, and wishing God's creation to be reversed, the "Let there be light" to become "Let there be darkness".

Possibly the idea of 'response' is an indication that Job was present at the dialogue between God and the Satan.

Job 3:3 Let the day perish in which I was born, the night in which it was said, 'There is a boy conceived'- Heb. 'the night which said...'. He personifies darkness as a being, and sees himself as having been born out of that darkness. A great theme of the book of Job is that God brings light out of darkness, and is in control of the darkness; see on :4.

Job 3:4 Let that day be darkness. Don't let God from above seek for it, neither let the light shine on it- Job sees a chasmic difference between light and darkness; but the end of the book reveals the truth specifically taught to the exiles in Is. 45:5-7, that both light and darkness were from God. Job is seeking to undo creation, where God said "Let there be light" and created the first day. He is going wrong; this is beyond lament, this is wanting to undo God's creative work.

Job 3:5 Let darkness and the shadow of death claim it for their own. Let a cloud dwell on it. Let all that makes black the day terrify it- An allusion to the blackness caused by the desert sandstorms called "khamsin", which appeared to turn day into thick darkness. God noted that allusion, and appears at the end of the book in such a whirlwind, to reveal the light of His grace. The appearance of the "shadow of death" in the whirlwind shows that God is engaging with Job's words, but not answering. He shows that He in fact is in and through that "shadow of death". Job feels he is facing death, he wishes for the shadow of death to engulf him. But God's later comment is that "Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the gates of the

shadow of death?" (Job 38:17). He totally discounts Job's experience, as if to say 'No, in fact you saw nothing'. Not the sympathetic response man looks for at all. But that is the point of the book- that this God is far above us, and in His final end, God taken to the final term, is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Job 3:6 As for that night, let thick darkness seize on it. Let it not rejoice among the days of the year. Let it not counted in the number of the months- The "thick darkness" continues the allusion to the "khamsin" whirlwind sandstorm (see on :5), which brings a palpably "thick darkness". As discussed on :5, God will later respond to this desire for "thick darkness" by saying that the darkness is somehow the bound for the seas of chaos, a limit to what evil can do to man. God "wrapped it in thick darkness, marked out for it My bound, set bars and doors, and said, 'Here you may come, but no further'" (Job 38:9-11). The thick darkness which Job thinks is the final end for man, is in fact a limit which is under God's control and used to limit man's suffering.

Job 3:7 Behold, let that night be barren. Let no joyful voice come therein- More than wishing that his existence and birth would be somehow cancelled, the desire that his day of birth be "barren" would suggest "let no one be born in it". The restoration prophecies repeatedly use the word for "joyful voice" to speak of the joy which would again come from the restoration of Zion (Is. 61:7; 65:14; Jer. 31:7 and often). The blackness of despair which Job experienced was that of the exiles, and yet it could all be turned around, as happened for Job.

Job 3:8 Let them curse it who curse the day, who are ready to rouse up Leviathan-

These very words will be used by God in Job 41:1: "There is none fierce enough to arouse Leviathan". God mocks the idea that man can control Leviathan: "Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook?" (Job 41:1,2). The idea was that the mythical dragon, Leviathan, had the power to make some days of the year 'black days', and Job calls on magicians or anyone with powerful curses to get Leviathan on the job and blot out the night he was conceived and the day he was born. But God laughs at this, and says that not even the intensely angry Job was fierce enough to arouse Leviathan to do that job. In fact, God says that He plays with Leviathan as with a bird, and sets a banquet before him, just for fun (Job 40:29,30). Likewise Ps. 104:26 speaks of Leviathan as God's plaything: "this Leviathan You formed to play with". Job 40:19 LXX says the same of Leviathan: "This one is the beginning of the Lord's shaping, made to be played with by His Angels".

Job says that the friends who came to mourn with him were "ready to raise up Leviathan" – or, as it can also be translated with allusion to the friends, "to raise up their mourning" (see A.V.). They thought that Leviathan, the 'Satan' figure they believed was real, could be blamed. But Job continually sees God as the ultimate source of what had happened to him, and understood the whole matter in terms of 'how can a man be just with *God*' rather than 'how can a man get Satan off his back?'. A key passage is Job 9:24: "If it be not he, who then is it?" (R.V.); or as the G.N.B. puts it: "If God didn't do it, who did?". After all the theories of 'Who's responsible for all this evil in Job's life?', Job concludes that the source simply has to be God – and not anyone else. See on Job 1:1; 9:24.

Job 3:9 Let the stars of its twilight be dark. Let it look for light, but have none, neither let it see the eyelids of the morning- The stars of the morning rejoiced for joy at

Israel's creation (Job 38:7 s.w. :7). Job wishes this to all be somehow annulled. But God's joy in creating His people would be finally justified in His restoration of them, as happened with Job. Continually in Job 3, he asks for darkness to come upon him. Quite possibly God's response is in Job 38:2: "Who is this one darkening [My] plan with words without knowledge?". To just wish for death is a cop out. By doing so, Job was darkening God's plan. Job wishes that the night never sees the morning stars- that it continues for ever. God's response is that the morning stars sung for joy at creation (Job 38:7). His answers don't at all engage with Job's complaints nor questions, although His responses do allude to them- but in a way that ignores them. He is presenting Himself as so far above Job and his issues... and that is in fact His 'answer'; or shall we say, response.

Job 3:10 because it didn't shut up the doors of my mother's womb, nor did it hide trouble from my eyes- "Trouble" is the word used of Joseph's "trouble" (Gen. 41:51). Job was failing to see that his trouble had marvellously passed away and he was totally restored. God would save Israel from their "trouble" if they repented (Dt. 26:7 s.w.). "Trouble" is the word used in Is. 53:11 of the suffering servant's "travail of... soul". Again, Job was the prototype for the suffering servant.

Job 3:11 Why didn't I die from the womb? Why didn't I give up the spirit when my mother bore me?- Now begin the "why" questions... and this is exactly what God will refuse to answer, and even criticizes Job for. This whole depressive lament is more or less repeated by Jeremiah when in depression (Jer. 20:17,18). We can learn from that how we should turn to Biblical precedent and example even in the darkest times of depression. But further, we see how Job's experiences are again understood as the prototype for those of the righteous remnant at the time of Judah's sufferings at the hands of the Babylonians.

Job 3:12 Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breast, that I should nurse?- Job in the nadir of depression wishes that his mother had not placed him as her newborn child on her knees, nor offered her breast to him. Job here despises the nurture and nursing he was shown as an infant. God's response will be that He nurtures and nurses all manner of wild animals- baby lions, ravens and other birds, mountain goats... (Job 38:39,41; 39:4,30). And that is the wonder of His greatness. Again, as discussed on :9, this is not an answer to Job, but it is some kind of response and engagement. The simple point is that His horizon is so far wider than that of Job.

Job 3:13 For now should I have lain down and been quiet. I should have slept, then I would have been at rest- If Job had died as a newborn, he felt he would have "slept". He clearly understood death as unconsciousness, which shows that even in those early days, there was a clear understanding of death amongst the believers. For almost everyone else had ideas of an immortal soul consciously surviving death. But his whole argument is that death is unconsciousness.

Job 3:14 with kings and counsellors of the earth, who built up waste places for themselves- This is rather similar to the description of Babylon's king coming to the grave with "all the kings of the nations" in Isaiah 14. The depressed Jews in exile likewise saw their destiny beyond the grave as being identical with that of their Babylonian oppressors.

Job 3:15 or with princes who had gold, who filled their houses with silver- Their houses could refer to their burial tombs.

Job 3:16 or as a hidden untimely birth I had not been, as infants who never saw light- The description of Miriam in Num. 12:12 LXX is quoting from Job 3:16 LXX; as if both Job and Miriam represented apostate Israel.

Job 3:17 There the wicked cease from troubling. There the weary are at rest- Is. 57:20 identifies Job's troubled and 'not at rest' experience with that of the suffering, apostate Jews of the exile: "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt".

Job 3:18 There the prisoners are at ease together. They don't hear the voice of the taskmaster- To liken God to a hard taskmaster with a harsh voice... is surely not far off cursing God. Job in his depression feels as Israel suffering in Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 5:6,13), considering that death was the only way out of the misery of hearing the "voice of the taskmaster". But he fails to see that out of that misery they were redeemed and restored to their land. This is alluded to when attention is drawn to how God's creations "hear not the voice, the shouts and curses of the driver" (Job 39:7). God's people didn't have to "hear" the voice of the taskmaster; there was a way of redemption offered.

Job 3:19 The small and the great are there. The servant is free from his master- God has repeatedly spoken of "My servant Job". But Job wishes to be free of God his master- surely not far off from cursing God. Job considers God a hard taskmaster (:18), just as the condemned one talent man in the parable does. Job was a master, but he now felt as a servant who wished to be free. Whose servant was he? Surely God's. Job even yearned to be free of God, a feeling he later expresses. But he never attempts to cut the ties totally; for he knows that by the nature of things, he can't. And he is later to be taught that those ties that bind were nothing less than God's love and saving grace.

Job 3:20 Why is light given- Job recognizes that the light is a gift from God, and will be brought to realize throughout the book, and especially in the speeches of God and Elihu at the end, that the darkness likewise is a gift from Him. And this was the truth which the exiles had to learn (Is. 45:5-7 is addressed to them).

To him who is in misery, life to the bitter in soul- Hezekiah, a potential fulfilment of the suffering servant who was based upon Job, was likewise given life when he was "bitter in soul" (Is. 38:15,17).

Job 3:21 who long for death, but it doesn't come; and dig for it more than for hidden treasures- Job's desire for death was not fulfilled. And this stood for all time as a lesson of how the ties that bind in life, the sense of being hedged up and tied down in an unbearable position, are in fact the ties and cords of Divine love.

Job 3:22 who rejoice exceedingly, and are glad, when they can find the grave?- This was in Job's imagination. For nobody surely commits suicide with joy, and a final fear of death is part of the human condition.

Job 3:23 Why is light given- See on :20.

To a man whose way is hidden- see on Job 10:11,12; Is. 40:27. Job pretty much hates God because he cannot see his path forward. Simple trust in final salvation, having a Kingdom perspective, means we will not worry so much about our future in this brief life. "Hidden" is "obscured" / "darkened", "placed under a cloud". Finally the cloud of the whirlwind appears at the end of the book and Job finally realizes that out of that comes the light of God's glory.

Whom God has hedged in?- Job is feeling confined, imprisoned, blocked in. But this was what happened to Judah in their judgment (Hos. 2:6); Job although righteous was the representative of Judah. We know from the prologue that, as Satan observes, God had indeed fenced Job in. But for his good. But Job senses that fencing / hedging in- and sees it as God's unreasonable behaviour towards him. Just as the child sees 'hedging in' as parental heavyhandedness. We, along with Job, consider slaying all your kids with a Divine tornado... as not exactly hedging in. But finally, that was to be Job's path to eternity, hedged in by God.

Job 3:24 For my sighing comes before I eat. My groanings are poured out like water- But Job's "sighing" came to an end when he was restored. The same word is used of how the sighing of the captives in exile (Lam. 1:4,11,21,22) would likewise end when they were restored (Is. 35:10; 51:11).

Job 3:25 For the thing which I fear comes upon me, that of which I was afraid has happened to me- Job seems to be saying that the loss of blessing was what he had always secretly feared. This somewhat nuances his earlier statement that if we receive good from God we must also receive evil. The satan was again not far wrong. The material blessings did mean a lot to Job and he admits he feared losing them. It was not until he came to see their total irrelevance in the far bigger picture, that they were restored. For in the context of infinity, whether we are rich or poor in this life is of zero account.

Job's sufferings were a type of those of the Lord Jesus; and as for Job, so for the Lord, the sufferings of the cross were the thing which He had greatly feared all his life. Perhaps the thing which the Lord greatly feared, according to the Psalms, was feeling forsaken by God. And true enough to the Job type, this came upon Him.

Job 3:26 I was not at ease, neither was I quiet, neither had I rest; but trouble came- There are some very evident ways in which Job spiritually grew. Here he originally says that his life previous to his afflictions had not been a life of ease; but as a result of his suffering, he realized that actually it had been "at ease" (Job 16:12).

JOB CHAPTER 4

Job 4:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered-

We now have three cycles of dialogue between Job and his three friends. The book is structured around the number three. After the third cycle, there are three monologues; the poem to wisdom, Job's monologue, and Elihu's speeches. And finally there are three speeches by God, with Job's responses. These things are sandwiched by an epilogue and prologue.

Eliphaz appears to have been the eldest. The friends speak according to age, with Elihu as the youngest coming last. The idea was clearly that the longer you lived, the more wisdom you attained; but this is deconstructed throughout the book.

Job 4:2 If someone ventures to talk with you, will you be grieved? But who can withhold himself from speaking?- Both Job and the friends, including Elihu, so often argue that they cannot but speak. Eliphaz is here saying that whether or not Job agrees that Elihu can talk, he can't withhold himself from speaking; indeed, he argues that nobody could stop themselves from talking. And yet all are brought to silence by God's display of majesty and answers at the end. The drama sets us all up to quip 'If only you had all remained silent as you were at the beginning, when you all sat with Job in silence!'. We *can* control our tongue; but all concerned seemed to think that this was just impossible, and it was part of being human to talk when provoked. But self-control *is* possible.

Job 4:3 Behold, you have instructed many, you have strengthened the weak hands- Another telling point of contact with Isaiah is found here in 4:3-5. Job had "strengthened the weak hands... and... the feeble knees. But now it (the weakness and feeble knees) is come upon you, and you faint". This is picked up in Is. 35:3,4: "Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful (Heb. 'hasty'- both are relevant to Job) heart, Be strong... behold, your God will come". Thus Job is representative of the weak-hearted Jews in exile, and his final deliverance thus points forward to both their restoration and the final coming of the Lord to reestablish God's Kingdom on earth.

Job 4:4 Your words have supported him who was falling, you have strengthened the feeble knees- See on :4. The idea is that now Job himself had weak hands and feeble knees (:3,5), which needed strengthening. This makes him exactly correspond with the situation of the exiles in Is. 35:3,4; the good news of the gospel of restoration was to be experienced by him.

Job 4:5 But now it has come to you, and you faint. It touches you, and you are troubled- "Touch" is the word used by the satan in Job 1:11; 2:5, where satan argues that if Job is 'touched', he will renounce God. This is more evidence that the satan was the friends, on one level. When he fades from the narrative, the friends appear as it were in his place. It may be that Job's satan Angel was the Angel representing the three friends (satans) of Job. Because of His close identification with them, the satan Angel spoke their thoughts as if they were his own- compare Eliphaz's thoughts here with Satan's words of Job 1:9,10. For the connection between the satan and an Angel, see on Job 1:6.

Job 4:6 Isn't your piety your confidence?- The Hebrew can mean both "confidence" and "folly" (s.w. Ps. 85:8). The friends were convinced Job was a fake because he was suffering.

Isn't the integrity of your ways your hope?- Eliphaz seems to be restating Job's convictions, that his upright ways were what his "hope" was predicated upon. But Job through his sufferings comes to "hope" only for death (Job 6:8 s.w.), and feels he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). Bildad presses the same point as Eliphaz, suggesting that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had

"hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. He absorbed the false argument of the friends, that he had no hope; whilst at the same time protesting they were falsely accusing him. This is so psychologically credible. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there *is* hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 4:7 Remember now, whoever perished, being innocent? Or where were the upright cut off?- God's opinion of Job was that he was "upright" (Job 1:1 s.w.). But as the drama progresses, the friends argue that if Job were in fact "upright" then God would not be afflicting him (Job 4:7; 8:6 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "upright" and therefore cannot find God (Job 23:7,8 s.w.). He absorbs false guilt and becomes influenced by the guilt placed upon him by his religion and "friends" amongst the "sons of God". It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt. The language of Isaiah 53 seems to possibly allude here; the Lord was "cut off" and "perished", despite being the ultimately innocent man. This is the ultimate answer to Eliphaz's insistence that innocence and punishment cannot co-exist. And yet his argument is self-contradictory; he says that nobody perishes unless they are guilt; the innocent don't perish. But then, as discussed on :9, he admits that all men perish. All men are made of dust and "they perish forever" (:20).

Job 4:8 According to what I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble, reap the same- Although the friends are finally rebuked for not speaking rightly about God, Paul quotes these words in Gal. 6:8. This shows that the spirit in the New Testament can at times quote words which may be out of context, and reapply them in a new context. The accusation that Job was reaping the result of his sowing of sin was wrong; but the principle is quoted with approval, that those who sow to the flesh will reap judgment. Eliphaz overlooked the fact that the final reaping was at the last day, and not in this life. Job was driven towards understanding and faith in a "last day" judgment setting things right; for he knew that he was not reaping judgment for some specific sin. He had been righteous- and yet was not reaping the results of it. So he has to conclude that the time of reaping cannot be in this life. And he progressively longs for the coming of that day. Eliphaz may also have in view the fact that it was whilst Job was literally ploughing that the judgment came (Job 1:14). See on :9.

Job 4:9 By the breath of God they perish. By the blast of His anger are they consumed- An allusion to the wind or spirit / breath of God coming from the wilderness and destroying Job's children. See on :8. This is all the language of the destruction of Judah by her enemies (Is. 30:33). Indeed Job's children had sinned, as had the sons [s.w.] / children of Israel. But this didn't mean that Job had personally sinned in such a way as to elicit this judgment. Job is to be understood as representing

Judah in captivity. The fact their sons has been destroyed by the invaders was not in fact evidence that all of them had sinned. There was no guilt by association.

It seems Eliphaz is alluding to the creation of man, and arguing that in death, the creation process is reversed. There are many allusions to early Genesis in the book of Job; Job himself has made them in Job 3, where he wishes to be as it were de-created. Eliphaz here surely has in mind Gen. 2:7 where God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being". But now, as we could translate, "By the breath of God they disappear, by the wind of *His* nostrils they come to an end". But Eliphaz is applying the language of the common death of all men to those who are particular sinners. He fails to see that in fact all men are sinners and all must die as a result. Thus his theory is shown to be false- for his argument is that very big sinners get their lives ended and the spirit withdrawn from them. The fact is, this happens to all men. He fell for the [very human] tendency to differentiate between supposedly petty sins, and big ones. The account of Adam and Eve's sin is surely there to warn us against that. They 'only' ate a fruit... and so much judgment happened. Moses 'only' made an angry throw away comment... and he was barred from entry to the land. Ananias and Sapphira 'only' exaggerated their generosity... and were struck dead. And here is the intellectual, theological contradiction in Eliphaz's position. He argues on one hand that Job's suffering is because he has sinned. But on the other, that all men have sinned and must suffer because of it. See on Job 5:6. Likewise he argues here (Job 4:7-11) that God punishes sins like those he supposes Job has committed; but then he goes on to lament man's inability to get right with God (:17-21). And yet it is hard to deny that Job presents us with a man being materially blessed by God for his righteousness in his life- both before and after his trials. If Job's life shows that there is a relationship between deed and consequence, and his righteousness means blessing- then surely it is not in fact so unreasonable to assume that lack of blessing from God is related to sin and failure? And being struck with leprosy and fire from Heaven is clearly the language of Divine judgment. It is also hard to deny from Old Testament history that God does also punish major sins, and dramatically. We think of the flood, Babel etc. We can easily see the contradictions in Eliphaz's arguments, but those contradictions are in fact tensions which are very real. And God refuses to give answers to them in His final appearance. He makes no comment on the whole [to us] critical relationship between human behaviour and Divine response. He just says that the questions are inappropriate and beyond us. Likewise we note in Job 15:6 that the words of Eliphaz are strangely agreed with by Elihu and God in the end: "Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you". Just as the words and suspicions of the Satan are found to be partly true- in that Job does curse God.

Job 4:10 The roaring of the lion and the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lions, are broken- This and :11 pictures a family of lions perishing. Perhaps Job is the old lion, his wife the lioness, and the cubs are his sons.

Job 4:11 The old lion perishes for lack of prey. The cubs of the lioness are scattered abroad- See on :11. Ez. 19 likes Judah at the time of Babylon's invasion as being like a family of lions which died out. Again we see how the book of Job was reapplied to the situation with Judah at the time of their exile and restoration. Living broadly at the time of the patriarchs, the reference to the scattering of the wicked may also refer to what happened at Babel. This would have been a strong evidence, in their minds, that sin nets Divine punishment in this life.

Job 4:12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me; my ear received a whisper of it- This is typical of the sources of truth many turn to today. A person claims they had a secret revelation, unconfirmed by anyone else, unheard by anyone else, and incapable of any peer review. The contents of the claims are also unverifiable. But that is accepted as 'truth' by many. The book of Job concludes with God appealing to that which is before the eyes of every man- His power in creation, His way in history, the logical implications of the fact the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper, which lead to the conclusion that there must be a day of judgment to come, and that God must finally be revealed openly.

Job 4:13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on men- As noted on :12, Eliphaz claims nobody else heard this message, all other men were asleep, and he implies that he must be believed. Simply on the basis of his say so. And so many are eager to do that, rather than lift their own eyes and hearts to the skies and seek God for what and how He is and has revealed Himself.

Job 4:14 fear came on me, and trembling, which made all my bones shake- This language of fear and shaking bones is that used in Ps. 53:5 about the condemned; but Eliphaz presents this as reason to accept him as telling the truth!

Job 4:15 Then a spirit passed before my face. The hair of my flesh stood up- It's unclear whether Eliphaz is making this up (for how can a man living before mirrors were invented, in the darkness, knows what his hair looked like)- or whether it actually happened. But we will note on :18,21 that what he says is not completely true.

Job 4:16 It stood still, but I couldn't discern its appearance. A form was before my eyes. Silence; then I heard a voice saying- Or, a still voice, recalling the voice heard by Elijah. Eliphaz admits he couldn't discern the form and appearance of whatever revealed truth to him. Yahweh's form appeared to Moses (s.w. Num. 12:8) and indeed to all concerned in the book of Job, in His final theophany in the storm and whirlwind. That was to be the source of truth- and not the vaguely remembered, jumbled claims of a man like Eliphaz which couldn't be corroborated by his audience. The vision contrasts directly with Dt. 4:12, where Israel did *not* see any "form" but only heard a voice, the Divine word, which they were to respond to. But Eliphaz claims he saw the "form" right before his eyes. The form seemed to be more significant to him than the content, the voice of the words.

Job 4:17 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?- Job did justify himself more than God (Job 32:2) and this effectively was to be read as making himself *more* righteous than God. Here we have the essence of the problem in the book of Job- not suffering *per se*, but how can man be just or right with God. The answer is given at length in Rom. 1-8- by faith in God's imputation of righteousness to us, by grace. This is how man can be "pure" before God, by His forgiveness and imputation of righteousness (s.w. Ps. 51:2,7). This question as to how to be pure before God was that asked by David, after his sin for which there was no sacrifice. And the answer was the same- to confess sin, and throw ourselves upon the grace which brings imputed righteousness to us. Job was not perfect, as he himself comes to admit; and yet he was counted righteous by God, both at the start and the

end of the book. But any attempt to make ourselves righteous without this Divinely provided mechanism- is effectively to raise ourselves up above God. And that is the problem and failure of all works-based religions. The offer of being cleansed (s.w. "pure") by their maker was what the exiles were offered in the new covenant (s.w. Jer. 33:8; Ez. 36:25,33; 37:23; Mal. 3:3).

Job 4:18 Behold, He puts no trust in His servants. He charges His angels with folly- It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact all perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

Job 4:19 How much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth!- Eliphaz seems to be saying that there is no way that man can ever be right with God; because, as noted on :17, he was still ignorant of the wonderful truth of imputed righteousness and justification by grace through faith. He has a very low view of human nature. Although we are indeed dust and crushed by moths as our bodies decompose, all that we posit about human nature is true of the Lord Jesus- who fully shared our nature, and yet was holy and undefiled. The Bible in fact has a far higher view of the possibilities inherent within human nature than many do today, represented as they are by the false reasoning of Eliphaz.

Job 4:20 Between morning and evening they are destroyed. They perish forever without any regarding it- Again, Eliphaz is wrong to assume that all men "perish forever". Job correctly reasons himself towards a belief in the resurrection of the body at the last day (Job 19:25-27). And God does indeed "regard" the death of His precious ones (Ps. 116:15). It's because Eliphaz has no sense of a future judgment and reward that he assumes all Divine reward and judgment must be in this life- for he sees death as an eternal perishing, which God isn't much interested in. Quite possibly Job initially had the same belief. But he is led by the experience of suffering "without cause" in this life to grasp that there must surely be a resurrection, judgment and eternal reward at a future point (Job 19:25-27). Likewise he apparently believes in Yam and Tannin the sea monsters- who have no real existence. Job later pretty well repeats the reasoning of Eliphaz here, that man perishes forever: "You prevail forever against the hope of a mortal. He passes away; You change his face, and send him away. His children are honoured, and he does not know; they are humbled, and he does not perceive it" (Job 14:20,21). Job will respond angrily to Eliphaz, but he often pretty much says the same things.

Job 4:21 Isn't their tent cord plucked up within them? They die, and that without

wisdom'- LXX "For he blows upon them, and they are withered"- the language of Isaiah concerning the perishing of the glory of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. These words are true for the unbelievers, but are not universally true; indeed Peter appears to allude to this verse by saying that once his tent has been taken down, yet he still has the hope of eternal life at the resurrection of the body at the last day (2 Pet. 1:13,14).

JOB CHAPTER 5

Job 5:1 Call now; is there any who will answer you? To which of the holy ones will you appeal?-

"Answer" and "appeal" is legal language. Eliphaz rightly guesses that Job wants his day in court with God. Job says as much in Job 13:22: "Then make a plea and I will certainly be a respondent; or let me make a charge and You reply to me!". This 'having your day in court' is so important to people in our age. But we have no case at all, no matter how insistent we are that our version of justice is on our side, no matter how persuaded we are that we suffered wrongly and unjustly. We have no case and no valid complaint; man cannot legitimately put God in the dock. In the bigger picture of things.

Eliphaz appears to believe that there are Angels or holy ones around God, but Job cannot get sympathy from any of them. This indicates that the idea of a 'court of heaven', with Angels watching events upon earth, was appreciated by these people. See on Job 1:6.

At that moment, there was indeed nobody who would answer Job nor hear his appeal. Job's desire for these things, for real spiritual friendship and an advocate in Heaven, grew so intense that he comes to visualize an ideal friend, who would not only appreciate his every grief, but who would offer more than commiseration. He came to long for one who would reconcile him with the righteousness of God. Naturally, he would have had in mind Abraham's promised seed. His mind was therefore being prepared to desire the coming of Messiah; in prospect, he was developing a personal understanding and appreciation of the Lord Jesus. In all this, Job is our glorious example. There can be very few who have not experienced the terror of complete spiritual isolation, longing for understanding and true appreciation, but finding none within the ecclesia whom they can turn to. As we look back from our traumas to the glorious reality of Christ's existence, so Job looked forward to it.

Job 5:2 For resentment kills the foolish man, and jealousy kills the simple-

"Resentment" is AV "fury"; and the Hebrew translated "jealousy" is also translated "zeal". The idea could be that it is God's fury and jealousy which slays the fool, as happened in the judgment of Judah and her enemies (s.w. Is. 42:13; 59:17; Ez. 5:13; 16:38). Eliphaz sees the "fire of God" which struck Job's family as a sign that they were spiritually foolish. And he continues his allusions to Job's family in :3 and :4.

Eliphaz now assumes Job must be a 'simple fool' for not agreeing with him (also :3). He slips into *ad hominem* reasoning, going for the man not the ball. We notice that- and yet God's engagement with this is to make a massive *ad hominem* attack on Job, as discussed on Job 38:1. We as readers are led to dislike the friends' *ad hominem* attacks on Job. But then God does just that to Job. Again we see how God demonstrates that He is so far above all our reasoning and demands for what we

consider 'reasonable' engagement. And yet the end of the Lord in all this is that He is so pitiful and of such tender mercy (James 5:11).

Job 5:3 I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I cursed his habitation- "The foolish" refers obliquely to Job, spreading out as a tree in his prosperity, and then having his "habitation" cursed. It was God through the Satan figure who apparently cursed or judged Job's habitation; but here Eliphaz says that he personally had done so. This continues to strengthen the hints that the friends were connected with the Satan and their forces may have been those which attacked his family. GNB makes the connection clearer: "I called down a sudden curse on their homes".

Job 5:4 His children are far from safety. They are crushed in the gate. Neither is there any to deliver them- Job prayed God would forgive his children in case they sinned. The friends mocked this in Job 5:4; 8:4; 17:5 and 20:10, saying that the children of the foolish die for their *own* sins, whereas, by implication, Job had figured that *his* prayers and sacrifices could gain *them* forgiveness. Yet in the end, Yahweh stated that Job had understood Him and His principles right, whereas the friends hadn't. "Safety" is literally 'salvation', and Eliphaz taunts Job that those who truly seek God (:8) will indeed be saved (s.w. :11). There was none to "deliver" Job, so far as Eliphaz could see by his naked eye; but he was sure that such "deliverance" would be given to those who sought God (:19 s.w.). The exiles sought such 'salvation' or "deliverance" (s.w. Neh. 9:28), but there was "not any to deliver them" (Is. 42:22 s.w.). Job represents them; but as the story unfolds, we see that if they like Job were to resign their own righteousness, confess their sins and throw themselves upon God's grace- amazing restoration would come from the result of the "Chaldeans" who had devastated them as they had Job. The exiles too would be "delivered" (Jer. 20:13; Ez. 34:12 s.w.).

But with Rashi we can read the grammar here as jussive, a wishing of these things upon Job by Eliphaz: "May his sons distance themselves from salvation... And may they be crushed...". As if to say, 'This is the curse with which I cursed him'. This is all sounds like the death of Job's sons was as a result of a curse from Eliphaz. He, therefore, was the Satan of Job 1, or the Satan was the representative of the friends.

Job 5:5 whose harvest the hungry eats up, and take it even out of the thorns. They snare gapes for their substance- Here again Eliphaz wanders in his logic, assuming that Job's children had not shared their harvest with the hungry, nor allowed the poor to live by picking up stray grapes from their vineyards (as later required by the law of Moses). He assumes these sins must have happened, and likes to imagine that the invaders of Job's lands were disgruntled, hungry people. And many similar false suppositions are made by people today as they grapple with the problem of evil and personal suffering.

Job 5:6 For affliction doesn't come forth from the dust, neither does trouble spring out of the ground- The idea is that affliction doesn't come about as part of natural process, like plants spring out of the dust / ground. "Dust", humanity, isn't naturally born to the kind of affliction Job had experienced- according to Eliphaz. Whereas the Genesis record appears to teach the opposite; that we live in a fallen world where indeed affliction does arise as part of natural process. Eliphaz struggled to accept this, as many do today, assuming that all suffering must be the direct result of personal sin. That is simply not true to observable fact and basic human experience.

As discussed on Job 4:9, there is a clear contradiction in Eliphaz's argument. He argues here that Job's suffering is because he has sinned. But in the next verse (:7), that all men have sinned and must suffer because of it. The idea of "man is born to trouble" seems to be that man gives birth to trouble- trouble doesn't just spring up (:6), it is man's fault. Eliphaz alludes to the curse in Eden, but he fails to see the true implications of it.

Job 5:7 but man is born to trouble, as the arrows of the sons of Resheph fly upward- Significantly, it is the friends who make allusion to the 'Satan' figures and gods as if they are real, whereas Job in his responses always denies their reality and sees God as the direct source of His sufferings. Bildad speaks of how Job's troubles are to be associated with "the king of terrors" (Job 18:14); Eliphaz blames them upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he lament that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

Or we can read: "Man is born unto trouble, as the sons of the burning coal lift up to fly" (AVmg.). This would be using Angel-Cherubim language to say that it is inevitable that our Angels will bring trials into our lives.

Job 5:8 But as for me, I would seek God. I would commit my cause to God- Job did indeed seek God. But the friends assume that they can infer from the reality of Job's sufferings that therefore he didn't really seek God. This is to become a major theme in the book, so relevant to those Jews in exile who struggled with the problem of evil. Experience of suffering is not to say that therefore we have specifically personally sinned, and the sufferings of the suffering servant, who was Job and ultimately the Lord Jesus, are proof enough of that.

Job 5:9 who does great things that can't be fathomed, marvellous things without number- Job was one of the earliest books of the Bible, and these words are alluded to or even quoted with affirmation by other believers (Ps. 40:5; 72:18; 77:14; 136:4). There was some truth in the words of the friends, therefore, although the problem was that they mixed aspects of truth with much wrong interpretation. But the parts which are true are shown to be so by the way the book is used in later scripture.

Job 5:10 who gives rain on the earth, and sends waters on the fields- The way that God is essentially a giver, as witnessed throughout His creation, is a reason to turn to Him. That is a truth, but Eliphaz is wrong to reason that Job has not thus turned to God because Job is suffering. See on :9.

Job 5:11 so that He sets up on high those who are low; those who mourn are exalted

to safety- The idea of setting the low up on high is definitely applied to the exiles who would repent in Is. 57:15. Those who mourned for Zion would be delivered / 'saved'. All this came true in the experience of Job, and it could have done so for the exiles had they humbled themselves as Job did.

This is also quoted in Prov. 3:11, which is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Prov. 3:13-15 describes our Lord's successful finding of wisdom in the language of Job's unsuccessful search for it in Job 28:16-19, implying He found what Job and the friends did not (cp. Rom. 9:31,32). As explained on :9, the 'true' elements in the friends' speeches are confirmed as true by their usage in later scripture.

Job 5:12 He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands can't perform their enterprise- Eliphaz clearly understands Job as "the crafty", as stated explicitly in Job 15:5 (s.w.). As explained on :9, the true elements in the speeches of the friends are quoted in later scripture, although the friends misuse the 'truths' they held to condemn Job. This therefore is quoted with approval in 1 Cor. 1:19. Eliphaz is explaining why he thinks Job and his view of life have been brought to nothing, and Paul uses these words about the bringing down of legalism and the Judaists. Thus Paul read Job as representative of those who were influenced by the legalism of the Judaizers. Paul continues: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Job's constant desire to dispute with God and the friends, and the claims both he and they made to possessing wisdom, show Job was clearly in Paul's mind. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" he concludes, maybe thinking of the humbled Job and his friends.

Job 5:13 He takes the wise in their own craftiness; the counsel of the cunning is carried away headlong- This too is quoted in 1 Cor. 3:19; see on :12. We note that Paul here quotes the Hebrew text and not the LXX, even though most of his quotations from the Old Testament seem to prefer the LXX over the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. It wasn't that Paul personally picked and chose which version fitted his line of thought; he was a Divinely inspired writer, and God chose to interpret His word as He knew most appropriate.

Job 5:14 They meet with darkness in the day time, and grope at noonday as in the night- Eliphaz considers that Job was experiencing darkness at noon. And indeed he was. But in this Job looked ahead to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He like the Lord suffered as a sinner without having personally sinned. Job was representative of sinful Israel under judgment, for to "grope at noonday" was their punishment for breaking the covenant (s.w. Dt. 28:29).

Job 5:15 But He saves from the sword of their mouth, even the needy from the hand of the mighty- This again is directly relevant to the exiles in Babylon; if they accepted the new covenant and repented as Job did, they too would be saved "from the hand of the mighty" (s.w. Jer. 31:11).

Job 5:16 So the poor has hope, and injustice shuts her mouth- Again this was true for the exiles, "the poor", who had "the hope of Israel"- restoration and deliverance from those who had abused them as Job had been abused. Only then, in that final experience of deliverance at the restoration of the Kingdom, would injustice finally be answered. Everyone in the drama of Job, as in the world today, wanted an immediate

answer and resolution of injustice. But that was not to be; it was only in the final realization of the hope of Israel that injustice would be silenced.

Job 5:17 Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects! Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty- As noted on :9, the true parts of the friends' words are confirmed in later scripture. These ideas are alluded to in Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:5; James 1:12. But again, whilst the friends have some truth, they misuse it; for Eliphaz wrongly assumes that Job is despising God's hand, and ought to be "happy" if he were a true believer. But the nature of suffering is not like that, and the picture is not so simple. The 'happiness' of God's people is only at the end, in the Kingdom, when all things are resolved (s.w. Dt. 33:29; Dan. 12:12). Or in the restoration context, when Babylon fell and God's people were restored from exile (s.w. Ps. 137:8), after they had repented- for the positive effect of "chastening" is only experienced upon repentance (Job 36:10 s.w.). Judah in exile didn't repent, and so they were left with the problem of having been 'chastened' apparently in vain. The friends also fail to realize that "chastening" may not necessarily be for our own personal sins; the suffering servant was 'chastened' not for his own sins, but to achieve our peace with God (Is. 53:5 s.w.).

Job 5:18 For He wounds, and binds up. He injures, and His hands make whole- LXX "for he causes a man to be in pain, and restores him again: he smites, and his hands heal". This is relevant to the restoration of Judah which was possible at the restoration. Judah were like Job, covered in sores, but they refused to be 'bound up' by God (Is. 1:6 s.w.). At the restoration, through the promised suffering servant, this binding up was envisaged (Is. 61:1; Ez. 34:16 s.w.)- if they "returned to the Lord" (s.w. Hos. 6:1). This is why the book of Job is really a call to repentance, and his very name is a form of the Arabic word for 'repentance'. God's ability to "make whole" and heal therefore depended upon human acceptance of it. Judah's refusal to repent precluded all this. "Make whole" is the word for "physician", and Job came to realize that his friends, his fellow worshippers, were in fact physicians of no value who could not make him whole (s.w. Job 13:4). His disillusion with the members of his religion, his brethren, led him to seek the more earnestly to God as the only one whose hands could "make whole" (s.w. "physician").

Although elsewhere Eliphaz reveals his belief in cosmic, supernatural evil, he is driven here by his own logic to accept that the source of both injury and healing is God.

Job 5:19 He will deliver you in six troubles; yes, in seven no evil shall touch you- Eliphaz is again ignorant of the prologue. Job was touched even though he had not sinned. "Touch" is the word used by the satan in Job 1:11, again suggesting that Eliphaz and the friends were connected with the Satan, or were in fact the Satan. Ps. 91:10 seems to look back to this passage in Job 5:19: "There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling". Ps. 91 is Moses' encouragement to Joshua that the destroying Angel in the wilderness would not harm him, but he would be protected by the Angels who would "keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. 91:11). Thus Moses may have seen Job 5:19 to be talking about evil brought by Angels of evil (Ps. 78:49 shows his appreciation of these)- i.e. Job's satan Angel who brought the trials.

Job 5:20 In famine He will redeem you from death; in war, from the power of the sword- Job's calamities may well have driven him to literal famine or lack of food.

And again there appears to be an oblique reference back to the "war" upon Job's home encampment. Eliphaz therefore wrongly concludes that Job has not turned to God, or else he would be redeemed from the death that surrounded him. The phrase "redeem from death" is only used elsewhere in Hos. 13:14, where again we have the hope of redemption which was placed before a suffering Judah if they repented. Although Job had not personally sinned, he was representative of his suffering, sinful people. All his struggles with the injustice of it all were because he failed to realize that; and thus the representative nature of the work of the Lord Jesus is one of the major teachings of the book.

Job 5:21 You shall be hidden from the scourge of the tongue, neither shall you be afraid of destruction when it comes- As noted on :9, the true elements in the speeches of the friends are alluded to in later scripture, in this case in Ps. 31:20. But as with many today, the friends misused what truth they held in their mistreatment and judgmental attitude towards Job. We can observe that the calamities listed by Eliphaz in :21-23 include many of the judgments which the prophets threaten upon Judah, and which were fulfilled at the Babylonian invasion (famine, war, devastation, wild animals). Job is presented as Judah's representative, and his repentance and restoration could have been theirs.

Job 5:22 At destruction and famine you shall laugh, neither shall you be afraid of the animals of the earth- LXX "wild beasts", as in :23. These are symbols of the enemies of Judah who devoured her (Ez. 14:15). The repentant daughter of Zion could have laughed at them (Ps. 2); but she failed to follow Job's path.

Job 5:23 For you shall be allied with the stones of the field. The animals of the field shall be at peace with you- The reference may be to how invaders, the wild beasts, spoiled the land by dropping stones throughout it. The idea is of peace with the natural creation as well as the invaders. This was the ultimate prophetic picture for Judah in their restored kingdom- if they repented.

Job 5:24 You shall know that your tent is in peace. You shall visit your fold, and shall miss nothing- LXX "and the provision for thy tabernacle shall not fail", perhaps connecting with how there was no provision for the temple services until the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. In the immediate context, Eliphaz has in view how the tents of Job were afflicted and the animals of his fold were stolen.

Job 5:25 You shall know also that your seed shall be great, your offspring as the grass of the earth- The way Eliphaz speaks of how Job's seed or offspring could be many or "great… as the grass of the earth" suggests the people of Job's time were familiar with the promises made to Abraham, and the concept of their being applicable to them too. Eliphaz therefore suggests that Job is not in fact a true seed of Abraham because the promises were not having fulfilment in him; see on :26. But those promises have their ultimate fulfilment in the future Kingdom; whereas the friends, like many today, thought that the promised Divine blessings have to be fulfilled immediately, in this life. And if they aren't, then we must have sinned. But the promised blessings were all of grace, of faith and not works; and would be fulfilled in the future.

Job 5:26 You shall come to your grave in a full age, like a sheaf of grain comes in its

season- This and :25 did come ultimately true for Job, and Eliphaz lived to see it, and to realize he had been wrong in his judgment of Job. The allusion is clearly to Abraham, whose seed Job was (Gen. 15:15; 25:8). See on :25, where Eliphaz has implied Job is not the seed of Abraham.

Job 5:27 Look this, we have examined it, so it is. Hear it, and know it for your good- GNB "we have learned this by long study. It is true, so now accept it". LXX "but do thou reflect with thyself, if thou hast done anything wrong". The friends speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). But we learn by the end of the book that it is God's judgment in the court of heaven which is the only judgment worth paying attention to. This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures.

JOB CHAPTER 6

Job 6:1 Then Job answered- Every time we read or hear this in the drama, we almost wish him to remain silent as the Lord did at His trial. His final silence and laying his hand upon his mouth is what the drama wishes us for him to do the longer it goes on.

Job's response in chapters 6 and 7 are two acrostic poems, of 22/23 lines each. Clearly this is not strictly what he said, but the historical essence of it is being repeated in the drama (see on Job 1:1). His response to Eliphaz begins with a monologue, complaining about his situation, addressed to nobody (Job 6:2-13). He then addresses himself to the friends in Job 6:14-30. And then rants against God in Job 7.

Job 6:2 Oh that my anguish were weighed, and all my calamity laid in the balances!- LXX "Oh that one would indeed weigh the wrath that is upon me". This was the feeling of the exiles; that the wrath upon Israel, the "sand of the sea" (:3), was heavier than it ought to have been. And they like Job were brought to realize their sinfulness and the lightness of their judgment, having been punished, as Ezra reflected, in fact less than their iniquities deserved (Ezra 9:13). Job looked in vain for someone to understand and evaluate his sufferings. The friends had come to him to do this, but had failed. We too may tell our life story to another person for days or weeks- but

they will never quite understand. Job's disappointment with human relationships led him to throw himself finally upon God; for the only one to weigh accurately his calamity was of course God.

Job 6:3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the seas- Job feels that his suffering outweighs that of the whole world, or at least, of all Abraham's seed. This of course is a quite natural response- that nobody has been through what I have. But it is also a sign that we are undervaluing the suffering of others and are totally concerned with our own pain. God's answers to Job are effectively saying: 'You in fact are not at all the centre of the universe. You and your pain and your complaints are nothing in the bigger picture of things'. But God says it in such a way that the spiritual man is not offended, doesn't stomp off muttering about 'cold comfort', but actually 'gets it'. God brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26)- to make the point that man does not in fact hold the central place in the universe which he imagines he does. Job is restored when he prays for his friends / enemies (Job 42:10)- the proof that he had now moved out of his self centredness. See on Job 1:6.

I have noted several times Job's presentation as the seed of Abraham and allusions to the promises to Abraham. We have another one here. He considers that the promises of seed like the sand of the seas were somehow outweighed by his sufferings. He felt perhaps that he was not going to inherit the promises because of his sufferings; as if they were somehow indicative that he was not the seed of Abraham. This meant that he had yet to learn that the promises to Abraham, which were the basis of the new covenant offered to the exiles, were based upon grace; and they had their ultimate fulfilment in the restored Kingdom of God on earth and the blessing of having Yahweh as a personal God- and not in the blessings of secular life.

Therefore have my words been rash- Presumably Job refers to his words recorded in Job 2 and 3. But he uses a situational ethic here- as if rash language is excusable because of the weight of suffering. When he finally places his hand upon his mouth, Job realizes that such rationalization of poor language use was inappropriate.

Job 6:4 For the arrows of the Almighty are within me. My spirit drinks up their poison. The terrors of God set themselves in array against me-

LXX "For the arrows of the Lord are in my body, whose violence drinks up my blood: whenever I am going to speak, they pierce". This is pretty much cursing God, just as his wife urged him too and just as Satan predicted he would.

Eliphaz blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he laments that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph. The "terrors" he felt in nightmares (s.w. Job 7:14) were ultimately from God. These

"terrors" appear to be psychological trauma, parallel with his "spirit" being wounded by God's arrows (Job 13:21).

Job 6:5 Does the wild donkey bray when he has grass? Or does the ox low over his fodder?- Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for you say, My doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins. See on :11,26.

Job 6:6 Can that which has no flavour be eaten without salt? Or is there any taste in the white of an egg?- As noted on :5, Job seems to be saying that just as you can't expect a person to eat the white of an egg without salt, so his outbursts are justifiable. But of course one can eat eggs without salt. Job at this point comes over as a spoilt child refusing any food which isn't exactly to his taste. Finally he breaks down in self-realization and repentance, realizing his words have indeed been intemperate (see on Job 40:4; 42:6).

Job 6:7 My soul refuses to touch them. They are as loathsome food to me- As explained on :5,6, Job comes over as a spoilt child refusing any food which isn't exactly to his taste. He may be twisting the Divine command to only offer sacrifice, His "food" upon His table or altar, with salt. But Job is twisting scripture.

Job 6:8 Oh that I might have my request, that God would grant the thing that I long for- This desire for death, effectively suicidal, continues the pouting and egoistic attitude noted on :6,7. This is Job's response to Eliphaz's advice to repent and pray to God for restoration (Job 5:8 "I would seek God. I would commit my cause to God"). Job is sarcastically replying that his request to God is to die- and God isn't granting it.

Job 6:9 even that it would please God to crush me; that He would let loose His hand, and cut me off!- Job is careful not to speak of ending his own life, but he asks God to.

Job appears to allude to the dialogue between God and Satan in the prologue, for he references the source of his sufferings as God's hand. The LXX makes the allusion to the prologue (Job 2:6) even clearer: "Let the Lord begin and wound me, but let him not utterly destroy me". In this case, if only Job knew the conversation in Heaven, he would have known that his strongest desire [at the time] had in fact already been considered and agreed by God. This would then read as if Job doubted whether God would keep His side of the agreement made with the Satan- if indeed Job knew of the conversation. But it seems he was unaware. We know from the prologue Job will not be destroyed. But we know there has been discussion about him in the court of heaven, and he will not be destroyed. So much that we fear has already been discussed and vetoed by God in Heaven.

Job 6:10 Be it still my consolation, yes, let me exult throughout my unending pain, that I have not denied the words of the Holy One- The idea seems to be that Job longed for his death because he was comforted by the fact he had not hidden God's words; likewise he exalts in Job 27:11 (s.w.) that he has not hidden God's words. Job was a prophet and is quoted as one in James 5. He had perhaps heard God's words from a "holy one", an Angel, and had taught them to others. By implication, he assumed that after death he would receive some credit for his righteousness. He had moved on to this from a simple desire for death. But aware of his righteousness, he reasons towards a belief in some future point of reward, as this was clearly not happening in this life. This becomes developed into a belief in a day of judgment and the final manifestation of God. And this happens ahead of time, as it were, in Yahweh's final manifestation at the end of the book; but this lead Job to resign all his own righteousness. See on :13; Job 7:2.

Job 6:11 What is my strength, that I should wait further? What is my end, that I should be patient?- The LXX here is definitely alluded to in James 5:11 [the same word for "patient" is used], which speaks of the endurance / patience of Job in the end, despite his impatience in the short term; and "the end" of the Lord [cp. "What is my end?"]. Likewise James surely has in mind Job 7:16 LXX "For I will not live forever, that I should be patient [s.w.]; withdraw from me, for my life is empty". And his speeches are hardly patient: "I loathe my life; I will give free utterance to my complaint" (Job 10:1 LXX). But Job is definitely impatient and justified it as he justified his rash speaking (see on :5,12). And yet the patience of Job is quoted as proverbial (James 5:11). This may reflect how he was accounted righteous by God, and this final status was accepted by others. Or perhaps his patience refers to his endurance in faith, despite the fact that he was impatient during that endurance. He hardly comes over as patient in his speeches, but this was maybe seen as cosmetic failure compared to his final overall endurance in faith.

Job 6:12 Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass?- His argument is that he can't be perfectly patient because that would require superhuman strength. He blames the construction of his nature for his impatience (see on :11). And finally is led to repentance for this. It's rather like an alcoholic blaming his sin on his human nature.

Job 6:13 Isn't it that I have no help in me, that wisdom is driven quite from me?- LXX "Or have I not trusted in him? but help is far from me". If the LXX is correct then we see an extension of the argument developed on :10; he is confident that he has

trusted in God, and yet no "help" from Him is forthcoming; and so he is driven to belief in a future day of Divine help, at some point after his death. That point becomes more developed in Job's understanding, as the day when God's appointed mediator shall stand upon the earth- the return of the Lord Jesus.

Job 6:14 To him who is ready to faint, kindness should be shown from his friend; even to him who forsakes the fear of the Almighty- We can limit God's plans to save others in the ecclesia by our attitude to them- even if they become atheists we are not to withdraw human friendship from them. We can make others stumble from the path to His salvation. If a brother doesn't show pity to his fellow brother, this can make the afflicted brother "forsake the fear of the Almighty" (Job 6:14 RVmg.). Or we can read with GNB "In trouble like this I need loyal friends— whether I've forsaken God or not".

Job 6:15 My brothers have dealt deceitfully as a brook, as the channel of brooks that pass away-

At this point, only Eliphaz has spoken. But Job assumes the other two will reason as he has done. He assumes he knows their positions; and they likewise assume they know his position. And so the dialogues fade away, Bildad's final speech is very short and Zophar never gives his expected third speech. This is the problem with communication and dialogue- we enter it with the assumption we know it all, without truly open ears and minds to what the other may say.

Job is to be commended at this point for refusing to take false guilt; although at other times, he does take it. It is in fact far easier than we think to accept the false guilt that is placed upon us. One lesson of Job is the difference between true guilt, put on us by God for our actual sins- and the false guilt society and friends / "brothers" are so eager to place upon us. So often, 'blaming the victim' is used to focus attention away from the real issues. And that is what the friends are doing, by blaming Job as the victim. The bigger issue they were deflecting attention away from was the fact a) that they too were sinners and b) that God still remains the author of evil and suffering. Realities they didn't want to engage with. "Deceitfully" is the word used about the exiles in Babylon (Is. 48:8) and how they treated their God and His servant (cp. Job). Job is as the righteous remnant, and the friends, the other "sons of God", as the apostate Jews, who could be saved by the intercession of the righteous.

Job 6:16 which are black by reason of the ice, in which the snow hides itself- "Black" is 'turbid'. As in winter the rivers flowed freely, so the friends had promise of help, but when the heat came, they disappeared and were nowhere to be found (:17).

Job 6:17 In the dry season, they vanish. When it is hot, they are consumed out of their place- See on :16. In Job 24:19, Job later sees the melting of the snow waters as representing the destruction of the wicked; he comes towards the conclusions that his friends, his fellow "sons of God" of Job 1:6, were in fact sinners. Job, the righteous remnant amongst the captives, were to pray for and save the unspiritual majority; but they had to be convinced of how far astray their brethren really were.

Job 6:18 The caravans that travel beside them turn aside. They go up into the waste, and perish- "Caravans" and "paths" are the same word (:19). The idea is that these friends were like caravans of travellers diverting to follow tracks towards water sources but not finding the water, because they had dried up; and they perished. This

is how Job came to see the friends. The idea is that they were travellers who had lost their way in the desert and were about to perish. They were no better than Hagar, who was broadly contemporary with Job and his friends.

Job 6:19 The caravans of Tema looked. The companies of Sheba waited for them- The friends would have travelled to Job with caravans. He associates his deceitful brethren (:15) with the troops of Tema and the companies of Sheba which had fallen upon his cattle at Satan's behest (Job 1:15). Job knew that the friends had power over his persecutors (:24). They, Job said, had caused calamity to fall upon him, and thereby overwhelmed their one-time friend (:27 AV mg.). They thought, as Satan did, that Job's spirituality was only a sham (:28). For more evidence that the friends were the satan, see on Job 1:6. There is reason to think that Eliphaz, the leader of the friends, may have been the specific individual referred to as 'satan' in the prologue. God singles him out for especial condemnation at the end (Job 42:7). After one of Eliphaz's speeches, Job responds with what appears to be a comment upon him, rather than God: "He has made me weary: you have made desolate all my company. And you have filled me with wrinkles... he tears me in his wrath, who hates me (surely Job speaks here about Eliphaz, not God): he gnashes upon me... my enemy (satan) sharpens his eyes upon me. They (the astonished friends?) have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me... they have gathered themselves together (as the friends did to Job) against me" (Job 16:9-11). Eliphaz was a Temanite, from where Job's afflicters came. See on :22.

Job 6:20 They were distressed because they were confident. They came there, and were confounded- LXX "They too that trust in cities and riches shall come to shame". But see on :18.

Job 6:21 For now you are nothing. You see a terror, and are afraid- LXX "But ye also have come to me without pity; so that beholding my wound ye are afraid"; GNB "You are like those streams to me, you see my fate and draw back in fear".

Job 6:22 Did I say, 'Give to me?' or, 'Offer a present for me from your substance?'- Perhaps there was the idea that Job had obtained his wealth from the friends and they were justified in seeking to take it back; see on :19.

Job 6:23 or, 'Deliver me from the adversary's hand?' or, 'Redeem me from the hand of the oppressors?'- I suggested on :19 that the friends themselves were involved in the work of the hand of the satan / adversary. But Job never asked them to 'stop'.

Job 6:24 Teach me, and I will hold my peace. Cause me to understand wherein I have erred- Job's sacrifice of a truly broken spirit was worth more than thousands of apposite words. Job had dimly imagined that this would be so: "Teach me, and I will hold my tongue; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred" (6:24). When Elihu *did* teach him and show him that he was erring by *nature* rather than specific sin, Job truly held his tongue: "I will lay mine hand upon my mouth... I will not answer... I will proceed no further" (Job 40:4,5; notice the threefold repetition). This is one of several examples of Job knowing the truth in abstract theory, but not appreciating it until the mixture of reflection on his trials and Elihu / Jesus, brought it home.

Job 6:25 How forcible are words of uprightness! But your reproof, what does it reprove?- This experience led Job to long for "words of uprightness", and thereby he came to be ready for the final revelation of God's words at the end of the book. Likewise our disillusion with human words and relationships leads us to be the more eager and ready for God's revelation. The very phrase "words of uprightness" are only found when Elihu appears and claims to speak "words of uprightness" (Job 33:3). And the words of uprightness were to absolutely condemn Job, although not as the friends did.

Job 6:26 Do you intend to reprove words, since the speeches of one who is desperate are as wind?- Job seems to here place himself beyond reproof; as if he considers his desperation to mean that therefore whatever he says can't be reproved, because the weight of his sufferings meant that he was justified in saying anything. This is discussed and exemplified more on :5, and it is this continual self-justification which has to be humbled in God's final appearance at the end of the book.

Job 6:27 Yes, you would even cast lots for the fatherless, and make merchandise of your friend- See on :19. Job had worked his way up in the world (perhaps from being an orphan, "fatherless", parallel with "your friend") without consciously seeking prosperity (Job 1:10 AVmg.; Job 8:7; 31:25), and had shared his blessings with others; he realized at least in theory the weakness of his nature; and yet when he examined himself, he really didn't think he was too monstrous a sinner. The Lord Jesus likewise, the ultimate "suffering servant", was humanly fatherless.

Eliphaz has uttered one speech; the other friends haven't yet spoken. Eliphaz was coming out with the standard line that 'Your suffering is because you've sinned, so, you need to repent'. But Job makes a clearly *ad hominem* attack without engaging what he has said: "You would even roll dice for orphan slaves and make yourselves rich off your closest friends!" (GNB). And they end up doing the same to Job. Job feels he has been falsely accused of being a sinner- and so he falsely accuses Eliphaz of being a gambler and swindler. So easily, the victim of false accusation can end up falsely accusing others. This is all a pattern of how communication fails.

Job 6:28 Now therefore be pleased to look at me, for surely I shall not lie to your face- GNB "Look me in the face. I won't lie". As discussed on :27, Job is turning this into a very personal fight- when the disagreement at best was about theology. It seems the friends could not look Job in the face. That may not just have been because of the awful nature of his disease, but because of a bad conscience, seeing perhaps they were behind the things which came upon Job; see on :19. This is the very picture of the suffering servant in Is. 52:14, upon whose faces men could not look.

Job 6:29 Please rethink. Let there be no injustice. Yes, think again. My cause is righteous- This again is legal language, Job wanting his day in court. He will indeed get it, at the end- and be condemned. Job implies they were being unjust. The issue of who was "just" or not is a major theme in Job (continued in :30). In this lies the significance of the Lord's final appearance, to convict all of their sin, and teach that only His justification of men is worth anything. All self-justification is meaningless at best, and effectively putting man above God.

Job 6:30 Is there injustice on my tongue?- See on :29. Job does later repent of his

words and place his hand upon his mouth. But these words on another level make him a type of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "suffering servant", who could ask "Which of you convinces me of sin?", whose words were perfect.

Can't my taste discern mischievous things?- This could be implying that his sufferings had not robbed him of his ability to sense right and wrong. If indeed the friends were connected with the Satan figure, and were responsible for the sufferings which came upon Job (see on :19), then he may be implying that despite his illness, he is quite aware of what is going on.

JOB CHAPTER 7

Job 7:1 Isn't a man forced to labour on earth? Aren't his days like the days of a hired hand?- LXX "Is not the life of man upon earth a state of trial?"; GNB "Human life is like forced army service, like a life of hard manual labor".

Isaiah's prophecies of the restoration and the Kingdom are shot full of allusions back to Job. The cry that Zion's warfare or "appointed time" is now ended (Is. 40:2) is taken straight out of Job 7:1; indeed, Job 7:3-7 describes Job's haggard life in the same terms as Israel in dispersion are described in Isaiah 40. The point being, that Job's eventual re-conversion and salvation is a pattern for that of all God's people. Job came to recognize that every moment he existed was a trial to him, sent by his satan-Angel. Thus he complained "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?" (7:1). The Hebrew for "appointed time" is exactly the same as for "host" as in hosts of Angels. This neatly connects the idea that the exact duration of his life was controlled by God's Angel-host, as was every trial which he experienced. This would be the work of the "wonderful numberer" Angel of Dan. 8:13 who controls all time periods. Job 14:13,14 says the same: "O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave... if a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come". "What is man that Thou dost magnify him? and that Thou shouldest set Thy heart upon him? (lit. 'consider him')" (7:17). Thus Job sees God- whom he probably conceived of as an Angel- as considering him, whilst we are told earlier that satan was told to do this. A human satan considering Job would not in itself have brought the trials, and Job would not have complained so bitterly about a human being considering him. An Angelic satan setting his heart upon Job would account for this 'considering' alone leading to the trials. If it is argued that it is a human satan who set his heart on Job here in Job 7, then the context is hard, though not impossible, to square: "Thou dost magnify man... Thou preserver of men" (v. 20,21). There is some hint of physical movement by 'God' which would seem applicable to the Angel too: "Thou shouldest visit him... depart from me... let me alone" (v. 18,19).

Job 7:2 As a servant who earnestly desires the shadow, as a hireling who looks for his wages-

We have the advantage of having read the prologue. Yahweh is very proud of His servant Job. But Job doesn't know that, and presents himself as an abused, unpaid servant who just wants to end the misery of his servanthood by suicide. His payment was months of misery, sleepless nights and agony (:3). Just as Joseph put on a hard face to the brothers, but behind that had a heart that wept and broke in love for them- so it can be between God and man. Job was indeed Yahweh's servant, but His beloved

and favourite one. But He acted in a way that left Job thinking he was the most abused of all Yahweh's servants. But the end of the Lord... is that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy to Job (James 5:11). The rejected servant in the Lord's parable considered Him a "hard man". He is anything but a hard taskmaster. It is those who refuse to see behind the veil, who create their own narratives about God which are so wrong, those who see life only on the surface level... who end up not knowing God and rejecting themselves from His purpose with them. Those who cannot move beyond the fact God slew their 10 beloved kids with a tornado...

I noted on Job 6:10 that Job felt that he was owed wages for his good works and teaching of God's word before his calamities began. He moves on from just wanting death to concluding that righteousness must have a reward; and if not in this life, then it must come at some point after life ends. This becomes developed into a belief in a day of judgment and the final manifestation of God. And this happens ahead of time, as it were, in Yahweh's final manifestation at the end of the book; but this lead Job to resign all his own righteousness.

Job 7:3 so am I made to possess months of misery, wearisome nights are appointed to me- It is unlikely that Job's period of affliction lasted more than a year or so, and yet this is the part of his life and spiritual growth that is presented to us in such detail. At times Job thinks that he is likely to die that night; here he seems to imagine death coming after "months" of such nights. This is a realistic psychological picture of a suffering man. And it is likewise psychologically credible that the suffering person in one sense feels that time is dragging, and yet in Job 9:25,26 he feels that his time on this earth is racing by: "My days are swifter than a runner; they flee away; they see no good. They go by like skiffs of reed, like an eagle swooping on the prey". The same contradictory feelings are seen in how on one hand he believes in a resurrection from the dead, but at other times he has no hope for any life after death. In Job 21:7-9 he feels that the wicked are blessed; in Job 27:13-17 he is sure that the wicked must some day be punished. But it was out of this dialectic that he came to truth.

Job 7:4 When I lie down, I say, 'When shall I arise, and the night be gone?' I toss and turn until the dawning of the day- LXX "Whenever I lie down, I say, When will it be day? and whenever I rise up, again I say when will it be evening? and I am full of pains from evening to morning". This is clearly the spirit of Dt. 28:67 "In the morning you will say, I wish it were evening! and at evening you will say, I wish it were morning! for the fear of your heart which you shall fear and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see". Job is clearly representative of Israel in their suffering.

Job 7:5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust. My skin closes up, and breaks out afresh- The crusts forming over the sores appeared as "clods of dust", driving Job to appreciate his humanity as mere dust and ashes. The disease sounds like leprosy or elephantiasis, and connects him with the suffering Judah of Is. 1:6. Worms are typically associated with the decaying of a dead body, so it was as if Job experienced a living death.

Job 7:6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope- Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and

on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there *is* hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 7:7 Oh remember that my life is a breath. My eye shall no more see good- It's unclear whether this is addressed to the friends or to God, although I suggest on :8 that it is primarily God whom he has in view. Whatever, he is asking for pity to be shown to him because he has no "good" in front of him and his life is so short. See on Job 8:2.

Heb. "my eye will not return after death" (Rashi). This is one of many times that Job is clear that he doesn't believe in an afterlife. This is why he and the friends were so concerned about suffering and blessing in this life, because they had no belief in anything further. But Job is forced by his circumstances to conclude that there must in fact be a future day of judgment and justice, involving God somehow coming to earth as judge; and although Job felt at the point of death, he therefore assumed there had to be a resurrection of the body (Job 19:25-27). But even that faith expressed in Job 19 was flakey, for after stating that he also says the opposite. We note that despite what we would consider his major doctrinal deficit, God has expressed in Job 1,2 how He was still thrilled with how he was faithful to Him within the frames of his current understanding.

Job 7:8 The eye of him who sees me shall see me no more. Your eyes shall be on me, but I shall not be- Again it is hard to know whether Job addresses God, "Him who sees me", or the friends, "your eyes...". He goes on to address God in :12. He thinks that because his own eye shall no longer see (:7), therefore their eyes would not see him. Job often refers to God's eyes, perhaps a reference to the Angels, who I suggested were representing the satan figure (the friends?) in the court of heaven; see on Job. 1:6. But he was to be taught that God doesn't see as man sees; our vision is not His. And his assumption that God will not see him again after death... is going to turn into a strong conviction that at some point after death, he will see God (Job 19:25-27).

Job 7:9 As the cloud is consumed and vanishes away, so he who goes down to Sheol shall come up no more- That was how he felt, although already he has hinted that there must be a day of future reward after his death; and this becomes developed into a belief in a day of judgment and the final manifestation of God (Job 19:25-27). And a man who oscillated so much in his faith and verbal behaviour is seen by James 5:11 as an example of patient endurance... not being derailed, ultimately, by his failures.

Job 7:10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more- That is true, in that there is no disembodied existence after death, and the dead don't return to haunt where they had once lived. This belief in the mortality of man was in sharp distinction to the beliefs of the primitive people amongst whom Job lived, and such understanding of death as unconsciousness and inactivity has always been characteristic of God's true people.

Job 7:11 Therefore I will not keep silent. I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will

complain in the bitterness of my soul- Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins. See on :20.

Job 7:12 Am I a sea, or a sea monster, that You put a guard over me?-

God will later engage with this when He talks of Leviathan the sea monster and Behemoth the beast. Clearly God sees Job as like them- thick skinned and stupid, made as His plaything, teased by His Angels. If anything, God is saying 'Yes Job, that's who you are'. And all within us as humans cries out against this. But as ever, the end of the Lord is that He was very pitiful and of tender, saving mercy to Job (James 5:11). For now, Job is asking: 'Am I Yam or Tannin?', the monsters hunted and slain by Baal. God's answer is also that no, I am not going to slay you and triumph over you. I am here to save you. But yes you are like the sea monster, that stupid and dumb, who faces a surging flood of Jordan head on and opens his mouth thinking he can swallow it all up. God will reply that He does indeed put a guard over "the sea", Yam, the sea god. And it is a band of "thick darkness", which Job complained had come upon him from God (Job 38:8-11). The "guard" or band was in fact for his salvation; the word is used in Neh. 4:9 for a "guard of protection". Job complains that he is under constant surveillance; but we know from the prologue what he doesn't. That surveillance was from a God who loved him and had a hugely positive view of him. Even though He slew his ten kids with a tornado... Job argues that he can understand God keeping a close check on Yam and Tannin, the sea monsters. But he is just a mere man- for we must read :17 in this context: "What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your mind on him". Why would God so bother with him... And that is the point of God's response, in likening Job to Leviathan and "the sea". Job is even more important to God than they are. These monsters didn't exist- but, as with the issue of demons, God reasons along as if they do. The point being, that He is way above them and is all powerful. And all loving. Sure, there is no restoration of justice, justice being done and being seen to be done

etc. He gives no justification for His ways. For He is not a man that this should be appropriately demanded of Him.

There are several allusions in Job to Babylonian legends concerning Marduk – indicating that the book must have been re-written in Babylon with allusion to these legends. Thus the *Enuma Elish* 4.139,140 speaks of how Marduk limited the waters of Tiamat, and set up a bar and watchmen so that the waters wouldn't go further than he permitted. But this very language is applied to God in Job 7:12 and Job 38:8–11. One of the purposes of Job was to urge Judah that Yahweh was greater than Marduk, He and not Marduk was to be Israel's God.

Job 7:13 When I say, 'My bed shall comfort me. My couch shall ease my complaint'- Sleep was no way of temporary relief. If indeed he had elephantiasis as suggested on :5, then this sleeplessness and psychological disturbance was associated with that disease.

Job 7:14 then You scare me with dreams, and terrify me through visions- "Scare" is the word elsewhere translated 'dismay', and is used of how the exiles were urged not to be dismayed but to believe that God would indeed bring them from exile to restoration in His restored Kingdom (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27). Job begins by being dismayed / scared (Job 7:14), but develops to not be dismayed (Job 31:34 s.w.), following the example of the Lord's battle horse (Job 39:22).

Job 7:15 so that my soul chooses strangling, death rather than to see my bones- Clearly Job was suicidal although he later keeps himself in check, and instead pesters God to take his life. The agony in Job's bones looked forward to the experience of the Lord on the cross, where He saw His bones sticking out as He looked down upon them (Ps. 22:17). But Job is now blaming God for his suicidal thoughts; his claim is that God has 'scared' him (:14), and now he wants to die when he looks at his body. And the desire to end mortal life leads on to a desire not to have eternal life ["I don't want to live forever", :16].

Job 7:16 I loathe my life- This is the same word as "cast away". The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast him away. Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26).

I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath- Continually, Job sees God and not any cosmic, evil 'Satan' figure as responsible for his sufferings. His momentary desire not to live forever suggests he knew that eternal life was on offer, but like the exiles, the weight of his sufferings caused him to lose interest in that hope. However we can understand him as meaning that he didn't want to live forever in this life, as he was.

Israel in Egypt told Moses to leave them alone to serve Pharaoh; the Psalms marvel, therefore, at God's grace in still bringing them out of Egypt. And likewise Job, the man who didn't want to live for ever, will live for ever. God doesn't pay ultimate attention to every word... and neither should we. LXX "I shall not live for ever, that I should patiently endure: depart from me, for my life is vain". As discussed on Job 6:11, this is alluded to in James 5:11 where we are told that Job was in fact

'patient' [s.w.]. Job did not see the point of patient endurance because he didn't believe he would live for ever. But James 5 says that he did patiently endure. God sees our endurance over the long term, overlooking the times we did not endure in the short term.

Job 7:17 What is man, that You should magnify him-

Ps. 8:4,5 clearly alludes to these words, but concludes that despite man being so small, he is to be "crowned with glory and honour"- and this elicits praise of Him. Whereas Job is saying that because man is so small, why will God not just leave him alone and let him die. Clearly Ps. 8 is a correction of Job here: "What is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You care for him? For You have made him a little lower than the Angels, and crowned him with glory and honour. You make him ruler over the works of Your hands... Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!". As noted on Job 6:1, the precise words of Job 7:17-19 didn't fall from Job's mouth. They are placed in his mouth by an inspired author, quite possibly writing during the exile, well after Psalm 8 was written and had become well known. He may be making the point: 'Job would've been better to have the view of the psalmist in Psalm 8. Instead he has quite the opposite, and wrong, view'. We can see man's smallness positively- as a sign of God's amazing grace (Ps. 8); or, as Job wrongly did, a sign of His disinterest in man and how He treats men as if they are slaves to be used and abused at will. Truly, we make of God, and of life, what we will.

Job was aware of the promises to Abraham, and he uses the same word used of how the name of Abraham and his seed would be magnified (Gen. 12:2; 19:19). But in his depression and suffering, he didn't want this, just as the exiles didn't. They too had to be reminded that God would magnify Himself through them (s.w. Ez. 38:23; Joel 2:21; Mal. 1:5) just as He finally did through Job.

That You should set Your mind on him- "Hast thou considered (lit. 'set your heart upon') My servant Job..?" (Job 2:3 AV) God asked satan initially. Later Job complains to God "what is man, that You should magnify him? that You should set Your mind on him? (lit. 'consider him')". Thus Job sees God- whom he probably conceived of as an Angel- as considering him, whilst we are told earlier that satan / the adversary was told to do this. The human satan considering Job would not in itself have brought the trials, the Angel representative of the Satan did; Job would not have complained so bitterly to God about a human being 'considering' him. See on Job 1:6.

These words are quoted and reinterpreted by David in Psalm 8. Instead of remaining awed by man's smallness, David sees the huge potential that there is in being man- to be lord of all creation. Just as he had been exalted through his faith that he could conquer Goliath, so could all men be, if they are men as God intended. And as Paul shows, this has already been exemplified in the glorification of the Lord Jesus. We are not therefore to wallow in the smallness of humanity but to glory in our potential. We who are "babies and sucklings", so weak and vulnerable, gurgling and muttering incoherently, can utter perfect praise; and be lords of heavens, sea and earth. The Son of Man has shown us the path to that glory, having been one of us, of our nature. That fact shows us what it is and what it can be to be human, and for all time shows the potential within man. This is the answer to the question "What is man?". This is not so much a lament of man's smallness, weakness and vulnerability, although on one level it is that; rather is it a rhetorical question, the answer showing us what great potential there is for man who believes as David did. Likewise "What [or 'who'] is... the Son of Man...?" is answered in the achievement and person of the

Lord Jesus. "What is the Son of Man?" leads to the answer: "The son of God". David's question is in fact a reply to Job's depressed statements about man in Job 7:16,17: "I loathe my life. I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath. What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your mind on him". David is showing that man is so much more than Job's view here, in depression, that man is nothing and better off dead than alive.

Job 7:18 that You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment?- God is involved "*every* moment" in the life of His people; Job, presented as the suffering exiles, came to realize this (Is. 27:3 cp. Job 7:18 s.w.).God watered His vineyard "every moment" (Is. 27:3 s.w.). The testing "every moment" was the struggle of the exiles, resolved in the promise of Is. 54:7 "For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you". But even in this small moment, He was watering them and caring for them.

The Hebrew for "visit" is literally 'to take special note of', hence GNB "inspect". We know from the prologue what Job doesn't know. That indeed God has taken special note of him, in a positive sense. But he complains that all men receive the same treatment, and this 'inspection' results in God mercilessly afflicting men. Again we see how there is a massive silver lining to what Job thinks is happening.

Job 7:19 How long will You not look away from me, nor leave me alone until I swallow down my spittle?- Again Job connects the eyes of God with his sufferings, asking God to look away from him, to thereby end the sufferings. And the eyes of God were His Angels, representing the Satan in the court of heaven (Job 1:6).

Job 7:20 If I have sinned, what do I do to You, You watcher of men?- GNB "Are you harmed by my sin, you jailer?". This isn't far from cursing God as his wife advised and as satan predicted he would. We know from the prologue that God watched Job so carefully and positively. But Job sees those eyes as the eyes of a cruel jailer. Job is full of self justification, as noted on :11. He now argues that the vastness of God means that He shouldn't be so sensitive to human sin. We marvel at God's total justification of Job, His imputation of righteousness, when He later states that Job had spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7,8; although that statement may simply refer to Job's repentance). "You watcher of men" is yet another reference to God's angel-eyes ever watching and noting sin; see on :19. But the idea is equally as AV "preserver" or 'keeper'. He didn't want that preserving or watching in his depression, as the exiles didn't; but the promise of the prophets was that God was indeed watching / preserving, in order to restore them- just as He did with Job (s.w. Is. 42:6; 49:8; Jer. 31:6).

Why have You set me as an archer's target for You, so that I am a burden to myself?- Eliphaz blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he lament that God is an archer using him as his target for

practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

LXX "Why hast thou made me as thine accuser, and why am I a burden to thee?". We know from the prologue that the opposite is true. God loved him, and Job was not the Satan / accuser. So often, what Job feels, says and concludes is contrary to what we know from the prologue. Just as so much of how we feel about life, in our low moments, is quite opposite to how things are in the ultimate reality of God's heavenly judgment.

Job 7:21 Why do You not pardon my disobedience, and take away my iniquity?-

Job has picked up false guilt from Eliphaz. He initially denied he had sinned. Now he assumes that he must have sinned. So he asks God to forgive him. He began to feel before God how Eliphaz wrongly thought of him. We know from the prologue that God considered that Job hadn't sinned. We too can so easily take on false guilt and live unaware of how God counts us as righteous by grace. And there is such a thing as a man admitting he has done things he was accused of, when in fact he was innocent. Not as part of a 'deal', but because he genuinely is overcome by false guilt that has been laid upon him. This is now being increasingly recognized within the judicial system. Job's response is so psychologically credible. On one hand, he responds strongly against the friends' claim he is suffering because he has sinned. He insists this isn't the case. He is innocent. He shouts "Rubbish!" at them. But in the next breath, he is coming before God and telling Him that he is indeed a terrible sinner. When we know from the prologue that that wasn't what God thought of him. We see it in life, all the time. And probably in ourselves at some points in our lives. The New Testament teaching of justification by faith through grace ought to save us from this. And the Holy Spirit convicts us of our actual sins, and that alone is the conviction we must respond to.

Job argues as if God can just do this anyway; but he fails to appreciate the role of repentance. And this is a major theme of the book, and a meaning of the very name "Job".

For now shall I lie down in the dust. You will seek me diligently, but I shall not be- Job expected his death to come at any moment (AV "Thou shalt seek me in the morning"). He felt that death would mean that no matter how hard God searched, He would not find Job. But Job was to be taught that God is the God of resurrection and final judgment, and therefore death is no escape from Him.

JOB CHAPTER 8

Job 8:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered- Bildad largely repeats the arguments of Eliphaz, although more crudely, and with more appeal to the weight of past wisdom (:8-10).

Job 8:2 How long will you speak these things? Shall the words of your mouth be a mighty wind?- This may be commentary upon Job's complaint that his life is but a breath which will soon pass (Job 7:7). The idea may be that indeed Job will soon die and will not be speaking these things for much longer; although Job considered himself just a temporary breath, his words were a mighty breath / wind because they

were so serious in their accusations against God. And we learn from this that despite the frailty of the human condition, this doesn't justify wrong speaking.

Job 8:3 Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert righteousness?- The drama is set in patriarchal times, and so the allusion would be to the belief of Abraham that God as judge shall do right (Gen. 18:25), and Job was wrong to imply otherwise. Job was implying otherwise, and so we conclude that God's later statement that Job had spoken right about Him (Job 42:7,8) must simply refer to Job's repentance.

We see here the problem of using the "it logically follows" argument, rather than humbly accepting things as they are. Job has protested his innocence and insists he is suffering for no good reason. Bildad assumes all suffering is due to sin. Therefore, if God gives suffering when someone hasn't sinned, He would therefore be unjust. And so he accuses Job of having called God unjust and of having perverted the course of justice in the court of Heaven. We know from the prologue that Job has suffered "without cause"; and therefore indeed He will *appear* unjust. And we shall finally see that God makes men suffer, even slaying all their children, absolutely "without cause", but absolutely with justice and integrity. Just as His command to exterminate the entire population of Canaan and His destruction of people at the flood was all perfectly just, right and true. The over entitled and over privileged will stamp their baby feet about this. But relationship with God is clearly only for the humble. The Lord taught likewise that suffering isn't always because of personal sin. The man born blind was not blind because of his son nor that of his parents. The Siloam tower fell upon some men and killed them not because it was a judgment for some specific sin (Lk. 13:4).

Job 8:4 If your children have sinned against him, He has delivered them into the hand of their disobedience- LXX "Sent them away to the place of their disobedience". This clearly has relevance to the exiles of Judah being sent off to Babylon, whose idols they had worshipped. Clearly Job's children had indeed sinned and been judged appropriately, and Job is here accused of wrongly justifying them- although so far, he has complained only of the injustice of his own judgments. We can perhaps see Job as a representative of the faithful minority amongst the exiles, and his children as the Jews who had sinned. Ezekiel had told the Jews in exile that even Job could not mediate for them to get forgiveness for them. Bildad may be mocking the way that Job's sacrifices for his children hadn't in fact brought about their deliverance from the judgment for their disobedience.

Job 8:5 If you want to seek God diligently, make your supplication to the Almighty-

The stress may be on "you", the contrast is with "your children" (:4). Bildad is implying Job's children were struck because they were sinners who would not repent. Whereas Job has been struck in the hope he would repent; and so Bildad urges him to speedily do so. That is his sense in :6, that if Job becomes pure through repentance, then God will as it were awake for him. We know from the prologue that God has not at all turned off from Job, He is watching very closely. And Job has no sin to repent of.

He may be picking up on Job's sarcastic comment that if he died, then God would seek him and not find him (Job 7:21). Instead of thinking like that, Job should have been seeking God- not trying to get to a position where God could not seek him. GNB "But turn now and plead with Almighty God". Bildad, as noted on :1, is just repeating the words of Eliphaz (Job 5:8). Job had turned to God when afflicted, but the friends

ignored that. They liked to imagine that was just mere words; for, they apparently reasoned, if someone seeks God and has repented, then God is going to solve their material problems. This is exactly the mistaken view of many within the Pentecostal movement today.

Job 8:6 If you were pure and upright, surely now He would awaken for you, and make the habitation of your righteousness prosperous- The words of the friends suggest that their view was in fact that of the satan in the prologue. Satan obviously quibbled with God's pronunciation of Job as perfect and upright (Job 1:8). And Bildad likewise seems to allude to this when he comments concerning Job's downfall: "If thou wert pure and upright; surely now he would awake for thee" (8:6 AV). For more connections between the friends and the satan, see on Job 1:6.

God's opinion of Job was that he was "upright" (Job 1:1 s.w.). But as the drama progresses, the friends argue that if Job were in fact "upright" then God would not be afflicting him (Job 4:7; 8:6 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "upright" and therefore cannot find God (Job 23:7,8 s.w.). He absorbs false guilt and becomes influenced by the guilt placed upon him by his religion and "friends" amongst the "sons of God". See on :20.

LXX "And will restore to thee the habitation of righteousness". Indeed Job was restored. Likewise :7 LXX "Though then thy beginning should be small, yet thy end should be unspeakably great".

Job 8:7 Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase-

The beginning Bildad had in mind is Job's pathetic present state. Repentance of sin would give Job a wonderful "latter end". This is the phrase used of how just such a transformation occurred for Job (Job 42:7 "God blessed the latter end of Job"). But the repentance was not for any previous sins, but for the sins of following Bildad's false claims about God.

Job's "latter end" did increase (s.w. Job 42:12) and Bildad lived to see it, and thereby realized how wrong his judgment had been. Bildad's words may be a recognition of how Job arose to wealth from small beginnings, implying that his "latter end" would only really increase if he were repentant and Godly (:5,6). The fact Job's latter end did increase was therefore evidence that God accepted him as Godly. The same word is used of the "latter end" of Israel, which will likewise be "increased" and blessed; and could have been so for the exiles had they followed the path of Job (Is. 41:22; 46:10; Jer. 29:11; 31:17).

Job 8:8 Please inquire of past generations. Find out about the learning of their fathers-

The research [AV "search"] commended was to be not of Scripture, but of the views of men. This refusal to think outside tramlines is typical of religious people and denominations. The writers and thinkers of previous generations must never be disagreed with.

Bildad stresses the power of traditional understanding (:8-10), and one of the themes of the book is the utter failure of traditional understandings of the time compared to the ultimate reality of God and His hand in human life. Perhaps he has in view the patriarchs, beginning from Abraham. But his fathers were idolaters, and Bildad is missing the point- that the Divine truths revealed to individuals are freestanding and independent of how long they lived or to whom they have listened.

Job 8:9 For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days on earth are a shadow- The final appeal of God demonstrates that any man can at this point know and perceive His Truth, and man is not 'without knowledge' because he is out of step with ancient gurus, or ignorant of them. Perhaps Bildad may have in view the way that lifespans were far longer in the past, and therefore he considered the patriarchs wiser. But so many people live the same year every year, and the number of years lived isn't related to their wisdom.

Job 8:10 Shall they not teach you, tell you, and utter words out of their heart?- This challenge to go and ask the old men of :8,9 may therefore be a reference to old sages who were alive at Job's time; for if the reference is to the patriarchs, then they were dead and could not have spoken to Job.

Job 8:11 Can the papyrus grow up without mire? Can the rushes grow without water?-

The idea in :11,12 is that if water is removed from the papyrus plant, it immediately wilts and dies. Now suffering has come to Job, he has immediately stumbled. This is exactly the same reasoning as the Satan, again encouraging us to see the friends as effectively the satan.

Bildad's idea is that Job's prosperity was like a quick growing papyrus which would soon wither (:12) because it had not enough water or mud. Bildad's reasoning is wrong, but clearly the Lord quarried His parable of the sower from parts of these ideas (see on :16 also). For He speaks of the man who has no "depth of earth" as the one who responds eagerly to the word sown, but falls away "when affliction of persecution arises for the word's sake" because he has 'no root in himself' (Mk. 4:5,17). Bildad was therefore not simply saying that Job's persecution was because he had sinned; but rather he implies that Job had lost his faith after the persecution arose, because he had no real root in faith. In this Bildad was also wrong, for Job continually seeks to God in his tribulations. Behemoth was quite at home in the "mire "(s.w. Job 40:21); and the connection is in order to demonstrate that even the "mire" was created by God and just as He saved Jeremiah out of the mire of the dungeon, so He could save Job and the exiles. And the only other usage of the word is in the description of the healing of the "miry places" (Ez. 47:11) if the exiles were responsive to the prophetic call to restore the temple and city made in Ez. 40-48. But like Behemoth, whom God will paint as Job, so Job ought to be quite at home with how his situation was. Although what he suffered would have caused any man PTSD for life and can hardly be met by the passing comment "Just take it easy, son".

Job 8:12 While it is yet in its greenness, not cut down- "Not cut down" suggests that Job had withered even before he was "cut down", just like the papyrus which is without mud and water to sustain it (:11). The word for "cut down" is used of the cutting down of Judah (Ez. 17:4,22); Job is clearly the suffering servant who represents God's suffering people.

It withers before any other reed- "Withers" is literally 'dried up'. The theme of 'drying up' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or

dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 8:13 So are the paths of all who forget God. The hope of the godless man shall perish-

Job has often lamented that his hope has perished, and Bildad says that this is evidence that he is "godless" or a hypocrite. And yet the theology of the friends is that we have "hope" only in this life; the "hope" is of God giving you a materially blessed life now.

Given all Job's references to God, it is patently wrong to assume he was "Godless" and had 'forgotten God'; we are hereby warned as to the dangers of assuming someone is not 'of God' because of the path of logic which our theological positions have led us down. And yet there is still some truth in what Bildad says; those who "forget God" will indeed perish, and the phrase is used about Israel in Dt. 32:18; Ps. 106:21. Job was experiencing the sufferings of those who "forget God" even though he himself had most clearly not done so. In this we see the nature of representational suffering and intercession, which came true in its ultimate term in the Lord Jesus, the "suffering servant" based upon Job.

Job 8:14 whose confidence shall break apart, whose trust is in a spider's web- LXX "For his house shall be without inhabitants, and his tent shall prove a spider's web"- a reference to the collapse of the tent / house of Job's sons, killing them all.

Job 8:15 He shall lean on his house, but it shall not stand. He shall cling to it, but it shall not endure- To 'lean upon' is to trust; Job was accused of leaning upon his own large "house", his family and literal home, which had now been taken away from him. That may have been partly true; but now he 'leaned' upon God alone. And the same was intended to be true of the exiles, who had 'leaned' upon human strength, Egypt especially (Is. 30:12; 31:1 s.w.), desperately clinging on to it; but when that was removed, they were to 'lean upon' God alone (Is. 50:10 s.w.). Again, Job is Judah.

Job 8:16 He is green before the sun. His shoots go forth over his garden- The picture is of a plant which initially grows quickly and prolifically, but is planted upon rocks (:17) and the sun will soon smite it. Again, as noted on :11, the Lord constructed His parable of the sower from this. The seed sown on stony ground was the man who responds enthusiastically initially, but then fades away once persecution arises (Mk.

4:5,16,17). This was a picture of what happened to Israel; and Job was their representative, even though in the end, he was the good ground and did not faint under persecution.

Job 8:17 His roots are wrapped around the rock pile. He sees the place of stones- Roots upon stones rather than earth continues the connection with the parable of the sower; see on :16.

Job 8:18 If he is destroyed from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, 'I have not seen you'- Judah in exile felt 'destroyed from their place', but the lesson of the dialogues in Job is that the friends were seeing things as they were at the moment, and failing to understand that God had a longer term program of restoration. Job would be the pattern for the exiles to follow- and they would return to their "place".

Job 8:19 Behold, this is the joy of his way: out of the earth, others shall spring- The idea of others springing up in the place of the withered papyrus, also by the waterside, is to be found in the prophecies of the exiles' restoration (s.w. Is. 44:4; 42:9; 43:19 etc.). Bildad was wrong to think that the cut down Job could never spring up again; he would, just as the exiles likewise could have sprung up to new life in the restored kingdom. The reasoning of the friends was that of the faithless Jews in exile.

Job 8:20 Behold, God will not cast away a blameless man-

Bildad assumes God has "cast away" Job. And Job absorbs this false guilt, for he will later say that God has cast him away (Job 10:3, AV "despise"). Job 36:5 uses the word to say that God doesn't cast anyone away, because He is so mighty. Likewise Lev. 26:43 promises that even in their exile for despising / casting away God, He will not cast them away (s.w.). God doesn't treat man as man treats God.

Job appears to argue with this in his reply, insisting that he is not "blameless" or (AV) "perfect" (Job 9:20,21). He realizes through this false statement of Bildad's that in fact God cannot require utter perfection in order to save a man; and at the same time, He clearly blesses the sinful and brings calamity to the righteous. The conclusion therefore is that there is no direct connection between sin and present suffering; and the salvation of the righteous, none of who are "perfect", is by grace. And the narrative of the book of Job takes us beyond even that, suggesting that being blameless or perfect is only by God imputing that status to believers. For God's opinion of Job was that he *was* "blameless" (Job 1:1). But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt. See on :6.

Neither will He uphold the evildoers- Heb. 'hold the hand of evil-doers'. And yet this was exactly what God did to sinful Judah in captivity (Is. 41:13; 42:6). That was all by grace, and grace is something which Bildad knew nothing of.

Job 8:21 He will still fill your mouth with laughter, your lips with shouting- The

language of the restored exiles having their mouths filled with laughter and singing when Yahweh brought again Zion- not because they were technically righteous, as Bildad reasoned, but by His grace. Bildad's words are far too simplistic; a man who has suddenly lost all his children from a Divine tornado will have PTSD issues for the rest of his life, and will hardly spend the rest of his life in laughter and joy. We immediately feel this as we read these words. But in fact they came true for Job, or at least, we are invited to see things that way. Which means that Divine restoration is psychological and emotional, and not just a material restoration of prosperity.

Job 8:22 Those who hate you shall be clothed with shame. The tent of the wicked shall be no more- This was what ought to have happened to the friends, at the end. But it didn't, again by grace, because God accepted Job's intercession for them.

JOB CHAPTER 9

Job 9:1 Then Job answered- The interpretation of this chapter depends upon discerning connections with the previous speech of Bildad.

Job 9:2 Truly I know that it is so, but how can man be just with God?-

Job 9:2-24 is a poem of 23 lines each beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Clearly this is poetry rather than the words that came out of Job's mouth; see on Job 1:1.

We naturally enquire what Job is agreeing with when he says "I know that it is so". In :10 he will quote verbatim Eliphaz's words of Job 5:9. From his arguments now, it seems Job is responding to Bildad's question, "Will God pervert right?". To which Job replies: 'Of course— but how shall man ever be right with a God who behaves as He does, how can I get God to see all the righteousness I have done?'. We know from the prologue that God was intensely aware of Job's righteousness. Job doesn't know that, and assumes God is treating him as if he is not right with Him, because God's hand on Job is wrongly seen by Job as condemnation for sin. He would then be concluding that God is impossible to please. Job has in fact totally absorbed the reasoning of the friends, much as he claims it is rubbish. He assumes he is not right with God, when in fact he was. And this is something we can wrongly feel for much of our lives. The glorious truth is that through being in Christ, we are right with God! He is not in fact continually disappointed in us. Job is not right to assume that God is condemning him and seeking an argument with him (Job 10:2). This is a transforming truth. Job's loss of his family, and the inexplicable nature of his sufferings, distracted him from this wonderful truth; as it so often does for us. God's ways are high above ours; we may think we have the right theology about Him, but we all misunderstand Him in that we fail to see ourselves as He does. We see ourselves through the lens of our failures and inherent weaknesses, and we reflect onto ourselves how others see us. Because we struggle to forgive and find it so hard to see others positively... we assume God looks at us the same way. Because we spare just a few passing thoughts for God in the course of the day... we think God treats us the same. No. He is on fire for us, 24/7. You don't give your son to die for a man you don't much think nor care about. The gift of the Spirit enables us to see what unredeemed man cannot see- something of the extent of God's love for us: "... strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, to the end that you... might be able to comprehend with all

the saints what is the width and length and depth and height, and to truly know and understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge" (Eph. 3:16-19). No smart philosopher, powerful business man or physically stunning man or woman can ever get this. This ability to perceive something of God's huge love for me, His positivity about little me, is the greatest and most transforming gift. The book of Job brings it out so clearly- we see in the prologue how God views Job. And then we see him in the mire of depression, not knowing the prologue, unable to see himself as God sees him, and reflecting back onto God how he sees himself, and how the friends see him. How true were Simon and Garfunkel in their song about the otherwise mundane, council estate girl Mrs. Robinson: "Mrs Robinson, Jesus loves you more than you will know".

Indeed it seems to me that much of Paul's reasoning in Romans about righteousness and justification is alluding to the book of Job, even if there are few direct quotes. Indeed these are wonderful, deep things out of darkness. It is why I beg men and women to be baptized into Christ, to be counted right before God, so they can live in all joy and peace through believing these things. Tragically, like so many, Job will go off at a tangent in :3, assuming God is implacable, is against him, and needs bringing into court to be judged for His behaviour.

Or perhaps what Job is agreeing with are the statements immediately preceding this, that God will not cast away the blameless [AV "perfect"] and will judge sinners (Job 8:19-21). But Job has been driven further in his thinking- as an imperfect but relatively righteous man who is suffering the apparent judgment of God. And so he asks the question which is at the root of the book: "How can man be just with God?". Paul spends Romans 1-8 discussing this question, because it is at the heart of the Christian Gospel (see on :10). His answer is that which Job finally reasons himself towards, and which is finally revealed at the end by God's answers: by God's grace, through faith in imputed righteousness.

Job 9:3 If He wishes to contend with him, he can't answer Him one time in a thousand-

This is legal language. But the Hebrew is ambiguous as to whether it is God wanting to contend with man with 1000 questions, or Job wanting to contend with God. LXX assumes the latter. Job wants a court case with God, wants God in the dock, but he is frustrated that God will not respond. Depending on translation, Job may even be saying that God "cannot answer" man, and so He refuses to attend court, and the chapter goes on to show how God is so powerful and thus can get away with not answering. Job here and later will thus accuse God of abuse of power on a cosmic level. No wonder Job is condemned for blasphemy. He does indeed curse God as his wife told him to, and as the satan predicted he would.

Or we can read that Job complains that God is contending with him, picking a legal case against him (Job 9:3; 10:2). But it is in fact Job who contends with God and is condemned for it (Job 33:13; 40:2). What we think God is doing to us, we are in fact doing to God.

The idea of God in legal contention is quite a theme of the restoration prophets. And the story of Job was, I have suggested, rewritten (under inspiration) for the exiles. God had contended with Judah and found them guilty (Is. 3:13; Jer. 2:9), but He would not contend for ever (Is. 57:16). All contention or answer back against Him, counter accusing Him, placing God in the dock, was clearly wrong and useless (Is. 45:9). Instead He by grace would contend legally against the abusers of His people (Is. 49:25; 51:22; Jer. 50:34), so that the suffering servant would be justified / counted righteous by God, so that all legal contention against him was powerless (Is. 50:8).

But this contention by God against Israel's enemies depended upon their repentance (Mic. 7:9). All this was finally seen in Job's experience; he was set up as a pattern for the exiles to follow, although ultimately they didn't follow it to the end.

LXX "God would not hearken to him, so that he should answer to one of his charges of a thousand". Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Job 9:4 God who is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who has hardened himself against Him, and prospered?- As explained on :3, all attempts to put God in the dock by refusing to repent, or by simply accusing Him of injustice against sinners, were therefore inappropriate and pointless. Job is effectively denying Bildad's implication that Job had "hardened himself" against God. The same word is used of Pharaoh hardening himself against Yahweh (Ex. 7:3). It was Israel who hardened themselves against God (Dt. 10:16), leading to their exile (2 Chron. 36:13; Neh. 9:29; Jer. 19:15). Job was accused of having done this and was apparently treated as if he had done so; again in the spirit of the Lord Jesus, being treated as a sinner, experiencing the judgment for sin, when personally innocent.

Job 9:5 He removes the mountains, and they don't know it, when He overturns them in His anger- Job claims that God gets angry for no reason with mountains who "don't know it", who have no idea or ability to understand what's happening, overturning them by volcanoes just for the sake of it. And likewise He treats Job. God's final reply doesn't much disagree with this view. "Mountains" plural can be read as an intensive plural; the one great mountain which was to be removed into exile was as it were mount Zion; and it was the house of Judah which was to be overturned- but until "He come whose right it is" (Ez. 23:25-27). The friends only dealt with present realities before their eyes, as did the exiles- they failed to see the longer term perspective. What was removed and overturned could be returned and revived. That was the Divine plan. See on :6.

Job 9:6 He shakes the earth out of its place. Its pillars tremble- Language used of the shaking of the earth and heavens of Israel and Judah at the hands of their invaders. See on :5. The idea of "place" occurs often in Job. The sinner is removed from his place, death removes man from his place. There was a strong perception that the

physical earth, along with society, had a structure. Everything and every man had his "place". But Job notices that God has a way of upsetting the order which He created, moving men, rocks and mountains out of their established place. And in a random way. Job sees God turning creation into chaos, just as the Genesis record described Him turning chaos into order, through His creative words. God's final response is going to speak much about His creation, but He will give no comment on His way of apparently de-creating men and the world into chaos. The truth is that be that as it may, His saving love, His love shown in His eternal salvation of man, is the constant that shines through it all. We in the new creation still experience the sense of chaos insofar as we are not completely out of this present system. But the same guiding, constant light shines through. For in Job we see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (James 5:11).

We note that elsewhere in scripture, earthquakes, mountains being cast into the sea etc. do not harm or faze the faithful (Ps. 18:8; 46:3,4; 75:4; 97:4; 114:5-7). Quite possibly we are meant to deduce that Job's fear of these things suggests a lack of faith at this point. He doesn't have the peace predicted of the believer. The dimming of sun and stars (:7) is likewise the language of Divine judgment, and Job is clearly scared by it. His theology is limited to the understanding that serving God leads to blessing in this life. He has little conception of a future day of reward and judgment. He isn't holding on to faith in God's purpose to save him despite passing through all that in the turning upside down of his life. Job in this sense represents the exiles in Babylon. The language of earthquake, mountains moving, sun and stars darkening... is all used of the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the Mount Zion temple and the deportations of Jews into exile. Through all that, the faithful were intended to perceive God's love and final purpose to save His people. Like Job, they failed in that; but they were to follow his pattern of repentance and final blessing.

Job 9:7 He commands the sun, and it doesn't rise, and seals up the stars- Language used in the apocalyptic message of darkness and destruction of the kingdom of Judah (e.g. Is. 13:10). The simple point is that all that was done by the hand of God and His word of prophetic command, and not because of supernatural forces of radical evil in the cosmos.

Possibly Job is sarcastically alluding to creation, where God commanded "Let there be light", and created the sun and the stars. Now, Job is saying God has a way of just annulling His creation- which is what he feels God has done to him, creating and blessing him, and then turning him upside down in random anger.

Job speaks of God's destructive, judgmental power against the mountains (9:6), earth, pillars (9:7) sun, stars (9:8), heavens (9:9) and the constellations. He sees God revealed as violent in the natural world, and He sees this violent God as violating him. In Job 38,39 God will speak of the same categories in the same order- to demonstrate His greatness, His total control, and He cites all this as evidence that Job is wrong. In the end, at "the end of the Lord" (James 5:11), God is love and salvation, not condemnation, and His control of all natural processes reveals that.

Job 9:8 He alone stretches out the heavens, and treads on the back of Yam- God is therefore seen as far greater than the legendary sea monster Yam; see on :24. "He *alone*" has power; He doesn't share power with any cosmic 'Satan' being, all is under His control.

Job 9:9 He makes the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, and the rooms of the south- The

surrounding culture believed (as many do today) that the stars influence life upon earth; Job emphasizes that God is the creator of the stars, and the present tense "makes" suggests that Job even perceived that the stars were not fixed but are part on an ongoing creation- something modern cosmology has finally come to realize. "The bear", Heb. 'the fool', alludes to the myth that there had been a rebellion against God in Heaven, and 'the bear' had been chained up in the sky for all to see. Job is deconstructing these myths; quite simply, God had "made" these constellations and placed them as they are by His sovereign power. The Hebrew *keseel*, "Orion" is indeed always translated 'fool' in its other 70 occurrences in the Bible. The idea is that the rebellious foolish bear has been strung up in the sky by God for all to see. The context is as discussed on :3, Job's accusation that God abuses and treats as a fool any who disagree with Him. The friends may have the same idea in view when they say that He charges His Angels with folly.

Job 9:10 He does great things past finding out; yes, marvellous things without number-

Job here quotes verbatim Eliphaz's statement in Job 5:9, where Eliphaz there argues that all God does has meaning and is for good; and therefore Job's sufferings are intentioned by Him as judgment. But Job quotes this fact that God does "great things" in the context of his argument that God misuses His power to do great things without any meaning (see on :3).

Job is moving closer to the great truths which God Himself will make explicit at His appearance at the end of the book. The friends assumed that meaning could easily be attached to event by "the wise"; whereas Job is driven to conclude by his sufferings that God's ways are "past finding out", and yet all of His ways are wonderful. I suggested on :2 that Paul's arguments in Romans 1-8 about 'how a man can be just with God' are consciously based upon the book of Job. In Romans 9-11 he cites Israel as the parade example of what he has been saying in chapters 1-8. And so it is appropriate that he concludes that section by quoting these words of Job: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past tracing out!" (Rom. 11:33). The "marvellous things" which Job sensed were somehow going on are verbalized and made explicit in Romans- they are the things of God's saving grace.

Job 9:11 Behold, He goes by me, and I don't see Him. He passes on also, but I don't perceive Him- This is not so much a glum lament as an extension of the argument of :10; God is doing wonderful things, things connected with His grace, which are beyond human comprehension. And Job cites his own lack of perception as proof enough of that.

And yet from the context discussed in :3, it seems that :12-24 is Job's description of God's huge power in order to back up His conclusion- that God as it were throws His power about, in order to crush and paralyze those He chooses to. Without any moral restraint and paying no attention to human suffering and experience in this life.

Job 9:12 Behold, He snatches away-

The idea is that God 'carries off' as a hunting animal carries off its' prey. His idea is that God uses His great, irresistible power in an irresponsible way. He cannot be hindered, and His power is such that [according to Job] He refuses to be questioned nor to give any legal account of what He is doing. This is the kind of crude atheistic

blasphemy that believers just turn their eyes and ears away from when they hear it. And yet here it is coming out of Job's mouth; and he is the hero of the story. Specifically this is perhaps a reference to the snatching away of Job's cattle. He doggedly insists that all his sufferings were from God.

Who can hinder Him?- The dramatic story of Job thrice uses the same phrase as in Is. 43:13, concluding that "who can hinder...?" God's way (Job 9:12; 11:10; 23:13). The exiles were to understand that no human opposition or discouragement can turn back or hinder God's purpose to save His people, even if they are as Job in suffering. His saving and restorative purpose will not be hindered, if we wish to identify with it.

Who will ask Him, 'What are you doing?'- It is for God to ask this of sinful man (s.w. Gen. 3:13; 4:10); but not for man to demand this of God. It is for man to ask himself "What have I done?", and repent (s.w. Jer. 8:6). And yet it could be argued that Job does indeed ask this of God, and has to lay his hand upon his mouth at the end. In the restoration context, Israel as the clay were not to ask the Divine potter "What are You doing?" (s.w. Is. 45:9). To do so would be to strive with our maker.

Job 9:13 God will not withdraw His anger. The cohorts of Rahab stoop under Him- "Rahab" is a symbol of both Egypt and Babylon. GNB "God's anger is constant. He crushed his enemies who helped Rahab, the sea monster, oppose him". This language is clearly alluding to the helpers of Tiamat in the Babylonian myth; see on :24. Job's argument is that even the sea monster has to submit and collapse, God is so powerful. God lashes out in a random way, and abuses His power. So Job feels. We note that Job clearly believed in sea monsters. His theology was wrong, but he still hugely pleased God despite that.

Job 9:14 How much less shall I answer Him, and choose my words to argue with Him?- Job argues that God is sovereign in Heaven, with no evil rival (contrary to the view of the friends, and of many today). Therefore, who is a single man like Job to argue back with God? He would love his day in court with God, but he knows that however well he argues his case, God is so powerful that He will do what He wants anyway and so the whole legal case he fantasizes about would be a waste of time. Again, Job is accusing God of an abuse of power. God's response will be to talk even more of His vast power, picking up many of the aspects of creation which Job here touches on. And He leaves it at that. That is His response.

Job 9:15 Though I were righteous, yet I wouldn't answer Him. I would make supplication to my judge-

Job feels overpowered by the irresistible and awful might of his opponent. His righteousness means nothing [athough we know from the prologue how much it meant to God his judge!]. He felt just one little guy in a legal case against the big business corporation. LXX "For though I be righteous, he will not hearken to me: I will intreat his judgment"; GNB "Though I am innocent, all I can do is beg for mercy from God my judge". The ambiguity of the original is perhaps intentional; for Job teeters between accepting his sinfulness, and yet claiming he is without sin. See on :35 for another example.

Job 9:16 If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I wouldn't believe that He listened to my voice-

The legal language continues. Job says that even if he had managed to call God to account in court, and God had responded- he says that God wouldn't listen to him, and

nobody could make God engage with him. He will repeat this desire to get God in court in Job 23:3-9: "Would that I knew where to find Him that I might come to his tribunal. I would lay my case before Him, would fill my mouth with [legal] arguments. I want to know what words He would answer me. I want to consider what He would say to me... and I could carry my case through successfully". If only he had known the prologue, and known how constantly high was God's impression of him and His feelings towards him!

Here is spiritual depression in its classic form. The cup is always seen as half empty rather than half full. Even answered prayer is seen as irrelevant and no proof that the God who appears so distant has in fact responded to little me. The weight of suffering and the sense that we are suffering at God's hand "without cause" (:17), with no discernible meaning attached to event, outweighs all the evidence of His intense love and interest in us.

Job 9:17 For He bruises me with a storm, and multiplies my wounds without cause-

We know from the prologue that indeed Job's wounds are "without cause". But he draws a terribly wrong conclusion about God from that. We can translate "He would bruise me...". Even if, as described in :14-16, he managed to get God in court- God would just lash out at him again. What follows now in :17-21 is not so much a description of Job's present suffering, but rather his imagination of what God would do to him even if he ever did manage to get God into court to answer for His behaviour.

"Bruises" is the same word translated "bruise" in Gen. 3:15, thus implying that he is receiving the result of the covenant in Eden for no reason. Therefore he is finally led to acceptance of his sinfulness. The Lord Jesus must have been sorely tempted to adopt the same false reasoning of His great antitype, but He surely had learnt the lesson that Job like Himself was suffering as representative of God's people and not as a consequence of personal sin. The references earlier in Job 9 to God spreading out the Heavens and creating the stars show Job's mind at this time was set early in Genesis (:8-10). See on Job 10:9; 13:20-22. This is yet another lesson which comes out of Job- we are suffering the results of living in a fallen creation. The only ultimate answer to that is through the work of the seed of the woman, the Lord Jesus, and the resolution is not going to come completely in this life.

God had accused the Satan figure of wanting to have Job suffer "without cause" (Job 2:3 s.w.). And here Job repeats this. The Lord Jesus likewise suffered "without cause" (Ps. 69:4; 109:3 s.w.). Israel did suffer for a "cause" or reason- they had indeed sinned (s.w. Ez. 6:10; 14:23). Job as their representative, like the Lord Jesus, suffered those same judgments but *without* a cause.

Job 9:18 He will not allow me to catch my breath, but fills me with bitterness-

"Catch" is the usual word for "return"; the complaint is that God doesn't allow Job to die, to return his breath or spirit to Him in death. The suggestion is that because God has total control over the moment of human death, there is absolutely no point in arguing back with Him. On this reading, he argues that God is a sadist because He won't let Job die. But as God didn't listen to Israel's words to Moses, wanting to remain in Egypt, so He doesn't do what Job asks- because He has a far more glorious "latter end" for him. It's no bad thing to list all the prayers of ours that were never answered.

Or we could read this as perhaps Job's response to Eliphaz's claim that God both wounds (:17) and heals (Job 5:18). Job's comment is that God wounds without cause-

and keeps on doing so, not healing, not even a chance to catch his breath. Again, he presents God as a sadist, mercilessly chasing a panting man. He is cursing God.

Job 9:19 If it is a matter of strength, behold, He is mighty! If of justice, 'Who', says He, 'will summon me?'- Job has been fantasizing about calling God to judgment. But he realizes that God would just flatly refuse. He is above the legal process of man, and Job is angry about this. Finally of course God will appear, and summon Job to judgment and condemn him.

No human strength or argument about justice is relevant; God cannot be summoned to court by man and placed in the dock. Therefore, one can only accept His ways and trust that He is ultimately right. That isn't what Job explicitly says nor wishes to recognize at this point, but his sufferings and reflections upon them lead him to be just moments away from this conclusion. And when God expresses this more specifically at the end of the book, He is only verbalizing what Job has already come to tacitly realize. And for us too, God's revelation in His word often simply confirms the understandings He has led us to through our sufferings in life.

Job 9:20 Though I am righteous, my own mouth shall condemn me. Though I am blameless, it shall prove me perverse-

The Hebrew is difficult. We could read: "If I justify myself, my own mouth shall condemn me; if I say I am perfect, it shall prove me perverse". But God considered him "perfect", despite those imperfections. Job didn't get to read the prologue that we readers have read. He failed to know how high was God's opinion of him; just as we can labour under false guilt, and consider that because man no longer loves us, then neither does God.

The implication might be that Job considers that God will make him say the words confessing guilt, even though he feels none.

This can as well be rendered as AV "Though I be blameless", i.e. 'even if I were blameless', and likewise in :21. The ambiguity of the original is perhaps intentional; for Job teeters between accepting his sinfulness, and yet claiming he is without sin. See on :11,15 for other examples. God's opinion of Job was that he was "blameless" (Job 1:1). But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt.

Those who are sure they won't be condemned, taking the emblems with self-assurance, come together unto condemnation. Job knew this when he said that if he justifies himself, he will be condemned out of his own mouth (Job 9:20- he understood the idea of self-condemnation and judgment now). Isaiah also foresaw this, when he besought men (in the present tense): "Enter *into the rock*, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty", and then goes on to say that in the day of God's final judgment, "[the rejected] shall go *into* the holes of *the rock...* for *fear of the Lord and for the glory of His majesty* when he ariseth to

shake terribly the earth" (Is. 2:10,11,19-21). We must find a true, self-condemning humility now, unless it will be forced upon us at the judgment.

Job 9:21 I am blameless. I don't respect myself- LXX "For even if I have sinned, I know it not in my soul" may be alluded to by Paul in 1 Cor. 4:4. Even if we have a good conscience, it is not our conscience which will stand and judge us at the last day. It is before God's word that we stand or fall. Or perhaps along with GNB we can read this as simply the nadir of spiritual depression: "I am innocent, but I no longer care. I am sick of living. Nothing matters; innocent or guilty, God will destroy us".

Here and by implication in other places, Job effectively says that there is no point in serving God or striving for obedience to God. This is what the priests of Israel later said after the restoration, to whom this book was partly addressed in its later rewriting: "It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?" (Mal. 3:14). Elihu claimed that Job "has said, It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself in God" (Job 34:9)- i.e. keep the commands of God, seeing that the Hebrew for "delight" often occurs in the context of obedience to the word. The Malachi passage is more specifically alluding to Job 21:7,15: "What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?". These are the words of Job, complaining about the prosperity of the wicked who had such an attitude, and the carefree happiness of their lives: "Their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ" (Job 21:11,12). It is in this that the Malachi context is so significant, for Mal. 3:15 continues: "We (the Israelites) call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up" . This was also Job's view. Notice that Job is probably implying that his prosperous three friends were among the wicked whom he is describing, thus associating them with the corrupt Jewish priesthood.

I despise my life- The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast Him away. Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26). Again and again, we who have read the prologue know that Job thinks God thinks about him in a negative way, when this was not at all the case. His great sin, for which he must repent, was in not seeing God for who He was, and not wanting to still see that God did love him.

Job 9:22 It is all the same. Therefore I say that He destroys the blameless and the wicked- Here we have another example of Job's disbelief in any future judgment. And yet these dialogues are an example of what happens when theology fails. Their theology was that obedience to God brings blessing, and disobedience results in curse. But that theology had failed. Job is driven to the understanding that there must surely be a future day of judgment, which meant resurrection, which meant God somehow revealed on earth at some latter day, when justice would finally be done. Likewise, he is increasingly driven to the reflection that life for all men, the good and the bad, is very brief- and for good and bad alike, ends in death: "together in the dust [all men] lie, and the worm will cover them" (Job 21:26). This clearly alludes to the curse upon man in Eden. All have sinned, and whether some sin more than others they all alike come to dust. Job suffered "without cause" and I don't discern any spiritual growth in him within the dialogues; but it would be true to say that his theology developed. And we are possibly intended to discern that.

This and :21 are in response to the statement in Job 8:20 "Behold, God will not cast away a blameless man". Job appears to argue with this in his reply, insisting that he is not "blameless" or (AV) "perfect" (Job 9:20,21). He realizes through this false statement of Bildad's that in fact God cannot require utter perfection in order to save a man; and at the same time, He clearly blesses the sinful and brings calamity to the righteous. The conclusion therefore is that there is no direct connection between sin and present suffering; and the salvation of the righteous, none of whom are "perfect", is by grace. And the narrative of the book of Job takes us beyond even that, suggesting that being blameless or perfect is only by God imputing that status to believers. For God's opinion of Job was that he *was* "blameless" (Job 1:1). But as the drama progresses, Bildad argues that if Job were in fact "blameless" then God would not cast him away (Job 8:20 s.w.). Job absorbs this reasoning, and confesses that he is not "blameless" (Job 9:20,21 s.w.), and yet he is driven to the conclusion that the "blameless" and sinner are "destroyed together" by God (Job 9:22 s.w.). It's quite possible that in depression and periods of suffering, we can come to have a lower view of ourselves than that which God has of us; just as at other times we can have a higher view of ourselves spiritually than we ought to. There is true guilt, the guilt which we should take, and false guilt. And Job seems to have picked up the false guilt thrown upon him by Bildad. We too need to learn this difference between false and true guilt. See on Job 8:6.

Job 9:23 If the scourge kills suddenly, He will mock at the trial of the innocent-

The scourge had indeed killed suddenly for Job and his family, and Job considers that God laughed or mocked at it. And he claims God would mock any trial, any court proceeding, even though Job is innocent. This is all blasphemous and God and Elihu will sharply reprove him later.

What began as what I called "the nadir of spiritual depression" in :21 now moves beyond that to outright false accusation towards God. For He does not mock at the "sudden" suffering of His people, such as Job experienced in the sudden loss of all he had. We marvel the more at God's final statement that Job had spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7,8). That Divine comment may indeed simply be upon Job's statement of repentance. But all the same, we would expect God to clarify that was what He intended, and to offer some note that Job has indeed falsely accused Him. But God doesn't. He doesn't need to. He has completely justified Job by faith, clothing him with imputed righteousness. And His demonstration of His ways has in any case made the required point, and Job recognized that.

Job 9:24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges-

Job claims that God wants the wicked to prosper, and just as He Himself is [according to Job] totally lacking in integrity and has ignored the legal system, so, Job says, He has blinded the eyes of human judges.

Or we could argue that again Job is driven towards an understanding that God will finally bring about a day of justice when He gives the earth into the hands of the righteous. He realizes that all creation is to some extent in his situation- groaning for the manifestation of the sons of God, as Paul puts it.

If it be not He, then who is it?- I noted on Job 1:1; 3:8 that a major theme in the book of Job is the deconstruction of the 'satan' myth. A key passage is Job 9:24: "If it be not he, who then is it?" (R.V.); or as the G.N.B. puts it: "If God didn't do it, who did?". After all the theories of 'Who's responsible for all this evil in Job's life?', Job

concludes that the source simply has to be God – and not anyone else. If He truly is all powerful, then who else could ultimately be responsible? Job states that "the cohorts of Rahab [a Canaanite 'Satan' figure] shall stoop under [God]" (Job 9:13), clearly alluding to the helpers of Tiamat in the Babylonian myth. "God *alone* stretches out the heavens, and treads on the back of Yam" – the sea, or sea–monster (Job 9:8). See on Job 10:8.

Job 9:25 Now my days are swifter than a runner. They flee away, they see no good- Seeing no good was the punishment upon God's exiled people because of their sins (s.w. Jer. 17:6; 29:32). Again we see Job suffering the judgment of sinners when he himself had not sinned. This was exactly what happened to the Lord on the cross.

Job 9:26 they have passed away as the swift ships, as the eagle that swoops on the prey- Heb. "ships of reed", alluding to the swift skiffs on the river Nile. Perceiving how quickly life has sped by is typical of the thoughts of dying men. I argued on Job 1:1 that Job was indeed a historical person, and the language he uses in his depression and illness is poetically formulated, but all the same has absolute verisimilitude to the thoughts and feelings of an actual person in his situation.

Job 9:27 If I say, 'I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad face, and cheer up'- As noted on :26, these thoughts are exactly true to life of a real historical person. He realizes that putting on a brave face and forgetting his sufferings for a moment- is just not going to work. He still suffers from a nagging sense of being wrong before God (:28), and it is this which is preparing the way for his final repentance at the end of the book.

Job 9:28 I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know that You will not hold me innocent- Job works himself up deeper and deeper into a position that is opposite to what is in fact God's position on him. Just as so many can do today. LXX "I quake in all my limbs". That quaking was apparently in prospect of the future judgment which he feared, although at other times Job longs for that judgment day to come. This again as noted on :26 is absolutely psychologically credible. Job may be using the term translated "innocent" in the sense of 'acquitted' as it is in Job 10:14. He fears God will not forgive him at the final judgment; and this is all part of the build up towards the final bursting of the tension at the end of the book, when God appears, condemns Job and then justifies and restores him. And all Job's fears are proven ultimately unnecessary- but only because of God's grace.

Job 9:29 I shall be condemned. Why then do I labour in vain?- Job sees no point in the court case with God he dreams of, because he feels God will condemn him whatever. We of course know from the prologue that God had a very high opinion of him. He is so not getting God's view of him...

Job asks a total of 122 questions throughout his speeches. God responds by asking him 61 questions, exactly half the number Job asks Him. The correspondence is perhaps God giving a nod to the fact He knows Job has asked the 122 questions. He doesn't specifically answer any of them.

Job's reliance on works to bring justification with God is clearly seen here, as if to say 'If I've been condemned, all these good works I've done are vain- they won't give me the salvation I thought'. This again is part of the build up towards the final declaration of salvation by grace which we find in God's final revelation at the end.

Job 9:30 If I wash myself with snow, and cleanse my hands with lye- This was apparently the attitude of the exiles. The question "How can a man be just with God?" is the same question as 'How can a man ever be clean before a perfect God?', and is repeated in this form in Job 15:15; 25:5. They had considered themselves cleansed whiter than snow because of their obedience to some parts of the Mosaic law (Lam. 4:7), but failed to accept that such cleansing to be whiter than snow is only possible by doing what David did, and casting ourselves upon God's grace outside of justification by works (Ps. 51:7). Job was to learn this lesson at the end. It was this offer which was made to Job just as it was to Judah under judgment (Is. 1:18).

Job 9:31 yet You will plunge me in the ditch. My own clothes shall abhor me- This again is Job allowing his depression to lead him to unreasonable statements about God, and not speaking right about Him. The fact we are sinners doesn't mean that God makes us dirty; we make our own clothes dirty. The word translated "ditch" is usually used in Job about the grave or "pit" (Job 17:14; 33:18,22,24,28,30); so the idea may be that all the same, for all his efforts to be righteous and cleanse his own sin, God will plunge Job into the grave at the end.

Job 9:32 For He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him, that we should come together in judgment- Job in his own righteousness and amateur attempts to fix up his own sins was unable to come "together" or "at one" with God in judgment. Job is driven to realize his need for outside help (:33), but by the nature of his situation that help needed to be somehow also "a man" who still could approach to God as his advocate. He was driven to his need for the Lord Jesus, who is presented as the ultimate answer to this need- a man of human nature, but sinless Son of God.

Job says that he can't get God to come to judgment. But God will bring him to judgment!

Job 9:33 There is no umpire between us, that might lay his hand on us both- The word for "umpire" suggests 'one who is right', a reasoner, an advocate, one who pleads (s.w. Job 16:21), a reprover (Job 40:2 s.w.). Job's request is not simply for a mediator; he would have used a different word if so. He seems to want to put God in the dock, but knows this is not appropriate; he wants someone else to do this who can legitimately do it. And he is rebuked for this in Job 40:2.

But to lay the hand means to impose his power and authority on both parties, and do justice between the two. Job wants someone more powerful than God. This isn't necessarily a prophecy of Jesus nor a desire for a mediator- it is a desire for someone more powerful that God. Yet there is nobody like that. And yet in another sense, Job is at least being driven to seek a mediator. But God will appear in person at the end of the book, directly to Job, without any mediator.

Job 9:34 Let Him take his rod away from me- "Take His rod away" is the very same phrase used in Gen. 49:10, promising that the sceptre (s.w. "rod") would *not* be taken away (s.w.) from Judah. Judah would always have God's rod or sceptre with them; David likewise takes comfort from the fact that God's "rod and staff" remained with him and were not taken away from him (Ps. 23:4 s.w.). We see here God's grace in not in fact answering every prayer of a depressed or misunderstanding believer; we can likely look back in our own lives and see examples of this. The exiles experienced God's "rod" (s.w. Lam. 3:1), and only those who passed beneath it could enter the

restored Kingdom (s.w. Ez. 20:37). The desire to not experience the rod was therefore precluding a necessary step towards entrance into the Kingdom.

Let His terror not make me afraid- Job repeats this fear in Job 13:21, and Elihu alludes to it when he uses the same phrase in assuring Job that *his* terror will not make Job afraid (Job 33:7). The terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). That terror should "persuade men" to accept grace, Paul argues. To have that terror unexperienced by men would mean they had no persuasion toward grace. Job is saying that God is intentionally terrifying him by throwing His power around. He is accusing God of bullying and abuse of power...

Job 9:35 then I would speak, and not fear Him; but I am not in such a position within myself- LXX "So shall I not be afraid, but I will speak: for I am not thus conscious of guilt". The ambiguity of the original is perhaps intentional; for Job teeters between accepting his sinfulness, and yet claiming he is without sin. See on :15 for another example.

JOB CHAPTER 10

Job 10:1 My soul is weary of my life. I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul- Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

Job 10:2 I will tell God, 'Do not condemn me. Show me why You contend with me- Job reasons like this because he feels that his sufferings mean that he is guilty. Again, he has picked up the reasoning of the friends and accepted the false guilt they put on him. As discussed on Job 9:2, God is not at all mad with Job. He has a very high

opinion of him; just as He does of us, in Christ. If only Job knew and trusted that, he would not have gone off down the rabbit hole of assuming that suffering [even loss of all your children] means that God is contending and condemning us. The truth is that we are just before God... and that wonderful truth makes all struggle with present sufferings irrelevant and inappropriate. It is seen as somewhat commendable to talk of how we 'struggle with God'. The final condemnation of Job for his words show that in fact this is not a cool thing to do. It is deeply inappropriate and is a form of cursing God. Who are we as men to do anything than focus upon God's grace and accept literally all else, even the loss of all your kids, is utterly irrelevant to the wider horizon of God and His saving grace.

On one hand, Job thinks God's condemnation of him in unreasonable because he hasn't sinned. Hence "Far be it from me to say that you are right; until I die I will not put away my integrity from me. I hold fast my righteousness, and will not let it go; my heart does not reproach me for any of my days" (Job 27:5,6). And in Job 31 he calls down a curse upon himself if in fact he has sinned. But elsewhere he does confess he is a sinner (Job 7:20,21; 10:14; 13:26). Especially does this somewhat contradict Job's earlier statements in Job 9 that he is indeed a sinner and therefore fears condemnation. He knows, therefore, why he is worthy of condemnation; but his underlying sense that he is in fact innocent keeps coming out. And this is something we probably can identify with; it is one thing to admit that "I am a sinner", or "We are all sinners"; but quite another to accept the consequences and meaning of that, when compared to society we may appear very righteous.

Job 10:3 Is it good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?-

Here we have Job at his worst, accusing God of despising him and favouring the wicked, and getting a kick out of making good men suffer. This surely was one of the sayings he had to repent of at the end. As discussed on Job 1:22, Job initially did not charge God with wrongdoing. But he does do so here and e.g. in Job 9:14-20.

Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26). The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast him away.

Here again we see that Job's depression leads him to charge God foolishly. He clearly does not smile on wicked counsel, nor does He despise people. We marvel the more at God's final statement that Job had spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7,8). That Divine comment may indeed simply be upon Job's statement of repentance. But all the same, we would expect God to clarify that was what He intended, and to offer some note that Job has indeed falsely accused Him. But God doesn't. He doesn't need to. He has completely justified Job by faith, clothing him with imputed righteousness. And His demonstration of His ways has in any case made the required point, and Job recognized that.

Job 10:4 Do You have eyes of flesh? Or do You see as man sees?- As explained on :5,6, these desires Job had were in a sense legitimate; and they set him up to yearn for a person exactly like the Lord Jesus. The exiles' demand that God be like this was partly answered in the vision of the cherubim, which were covered with a body or

"flesh" full of "eyes" (Ez. 10:12). This was to teach that God was in fact legitimately aware of the human perspective of His people in exile.

Job 10:5 Are Your days as the days of mortals, or Your years as man's years- LXX "Or is thy life human?". It was to be, in the person of His Son. See on :6. Job's argument is that life is brief and we only have this life, so, why is God making his brief life such a misery. This implies Job thought he only has this life, with no sense of eternal life.

Job 10:6 that You inquire after my iniquity, and search after my sin?- The Lord Jesus can execute judgment upon human sin exactly because He is and was "Son of man" (Jn. 5:27); He is the answer to Job's complaint in :5 LXX "Is thy life human?". Job's questions and struggles set him up to need and appreciate the Lord Jesus, although Job died without having seen Him, although probably believing in His future appearance.

Job 10:7 Although You know that I am not wicked, there is no one who can deliver out of Your hand- This appears to contradict Job's apparent awareness of sin in Job 9. He later confesses his sin; but here he seems to expect God to accept his own view of himself. He was effectively casting God in his own human image and likeness rather than the other way around. Or we could consider the possibility that Job is trying to force a difference between his being a sinner, but not being "wicked", i.e. 'extremely sinful' by the norms of society. This false difference is tackled by Paul in Rom. 1-8 and Job at the end repents, realizing that no such gradation of sin is ultimately acceptable.

Job 10:8 Your hands have framed me and fashioned me altogether, yet You swallow me up- He reasons that he is the clay in the hand of a potter who just created him in order to smash him (:9). GNB "Your hands formed and shaped me, and now those same hands destroy me". This was indeed what happened at the destruction of Judah by God through Babylon; see on Jer. 18:8-10. It was unreasonable of both Job and the exiles to consider that because they were God's created people, therefore they were somehow immune from judgment. Job believed that it was *God* who was seeking to swallow him up in death (Job 10:8 Heb.) – surely alluding to how Mot, the god of death, was thought to have jaws encompassing the earth and swallowing up people at their death into the underworld. But Job rejected that myth – he saw God as the swallower, and death as a return to the dust, albeit in hope of bodily resurrection at the last day (Job 19:25–27). See on Job 26:6.

LXX "Thy hands have formed me and made me; afterwards thou didst change thy mind, and smite me". This is not far off cursing God, just as his wife advised and as satan said he would.

Job 10:9 Remember, I beg You, that You have fashioned me as clay. Will You bring me into dust again?- The idea is that Job has no hope beyond this life and so he thinks God is really unreasonable in not giving him a good life now, seeing he has been so obedient. He fails to factor in that he is under the curse of Eden, to return to dust. As noted on :8, it was unreasonable of both Job and the exiles to consider that because they were God's created people, therefore they were somehow immune from judgment. A connection is made between Job and Adam here. This is Gen. 3:19- the curse upon sinful Adam that he would return to the dust. Job seems to be admitting

that he is like Adam in that it appeared God was going to end his life as a result of his sin- return him to the dust. But he reasons that this is unfair, seeing he has not sinned (Job 10:7,14,15). Thus he oscillates between saying he has sinned and is like Adam, and then claiming that although he is being treated like Adam this is unfair. See on Job 9:17; 13:20-22.

Job 10:10 Haven't You poured me out like milk, and curdled me like cheese?- The original is obscure. Hence GNB: "You gave my father strength to beget me; you made me grow in my mother's womb". Again, as noted on :8,9, Job appears to consider that his being human, having been created by God, means that it is unreasonable of God to find fault with him. This again is leading us up to the final revelation of God, where all such justifications of sin and minimalizing of Divine judgment are taken away.

Job 10:11 You have clothed me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews- "Knit me together" is the same word as "hedge" when satan complains that God has made a hedge about Job (Job 1:10). Job sees this hedging in as limitation; but we know from the prologue what he doesn't, that it is actually the sign of God's care for Job and His pleasure in him. Job does not appear to be aware of the conversation between the satan and the Lord. Job is therefore saying that actually the only hedge or fence he has is his own physical body. In Job 3:23 and Job 19:8 this hedging seems to be interpreted as a feeling of spiritual restriction- as if like Paul, Job yearned to be released from this body of sin and corruption to "the glorious (spiritual) liberty of the sons of God". Job seems to be saying 'You say I'm hedged about with blessings. But now the only hedge I've got is this sick body. The only help you give me now is to give me my spirit to keep me alive, only so you can torment me more'. Understandable, if faulty, reasoning in Job's situation.

Job 10:12 You have granted me life and grace. Your visitation has preserved my spirit- This is the kind of oscillation of feeling which is characteristic of depression. One moment Job sees God as unreasonable, the next, he appreciates the gift of life which he has been saying he doesn't want; and appreciates grace, and that it is God's special and conscious "visitation" which keeps him alive every moment. Divine "visitation" is an idea used for judgment (Jer. 11:23; 23:12; 46:21 etc.). If Job understood it that way, he is coming to see the paradox later made explicit at the end of the book- that the wrath of God is the love of God, His judgment is in fact the preservation of life for those who respond to it; it is in fact His grace. And *chesed* is the word that features in the description of the promises to Abraham as "mercy and truth" (Gen. 24:14,27 etc.).

But seeing Job kept asking for God to end his life, it seems Job is being sarcastic by saying that God has given him the "grace" of a life and preservation of that life- when it isn't what Job wanted. The idea in :12,13 is that Job acknowledges that God had blessed him, but sees this as nuanced because the God who knew the future had also planned all the grief He was to bring upon Job. He had (:13) a kind of hidden agenda to hurt Job, even whilst earlier giving him blessings.

Job 10:13 Yet You hid these things in Your heart. I know that this is with You- LXX "Having these things in thyself, I know that thou canst do all things; for nothing is impossible with thee". Job at the end was to repeat these words in Job 42:2, but really understanding and meaning them as a result of his sufferings.

Job 10:14 If I sin, then You mark me. You will not acquit me from my iniquity- Job feels here like Cain (Gen. 4:15; see on Job 11:15), marked for his sin and unable to just die as he perhaps initially wanted. Still Job is far from the total confession of sin and repentance which he finally comes to; he accepts he is a sinner, but seem to always qualify it, putting it under some question, and accuses God of unjustly punishing him for sin. But the Hebrew translated "mark" is the common word for 'keeping', e.g. "the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). Perhaps Job is lamenting that God still keeps him alive and doesn't let him die.

Job 10:15 If I am wicked, woe to me. If I am righteous, I still shall not lift up my head, being filled with disgrace, and conscious of my affliction- Perhaps Job has in mind the two possible outcomes of his final judgment; the "woe" of condemnation if indeed he is finally judged wicked, and yet the "disgrace" he would still feel if declared righteous. We see here how he has no clear faith in salvation at this point, and dislikes the way future salvation has to come through accepting "disgrace". The final revelation of God at the end elicits both his disgrace, and also his final acceptance that God has counted him as righteous. "Righteous" is the word for "just", used in the common question and theme of the book: "How can a man be just with God?" (Job 4:17; 9:2). What Job had to recognize was that righteousness was a gift from God by grace, and by attempting to establish his own righteousness according to his works, he was effectively condemning God (s.w. Job 40:8). We can also reason that Job's confusion is because even if he is personally righteous, he still will feel the "disgrace" or shame of condemnation- the very term used of the "disgrace" of Israel in their condemnation and rejection (Jer. 13:26; Hos. 4:7 etc.). And again we see the representative nature of Job as the suffering servant. He was righteous, but bore the shame / disgrace of Judah's condemnation. This confused and depressed him, but the Lord learnt from this; feeling our condemnation on account of His total identity with us, and yet being personally righteous.

Job 10:16 If my head is held high, You hunt me like a lion. Again You show Yourself wonderful to me- As noted on :15, Job struggles with what seem contradictory movements of God toward him. On one hand, he is hunted as prey being chased by a lion; but then this same God, manifest through the lion, shows tender grace to him. And again, this is how things were to be with the representative suffering servant. It was God's people who were hunted by God, acting like a lion manifest in Babylon / Assyria. And yet that same God was "wonderful to me" personally, for Job was a righteous man. It was only when he was called upon to pray for his friends and to save them that he appreciated this; and thereby became established as a wonderful prototype of the Lord Jesus.

The complaint that 'you love me one minute, hate and abuse me the next' is typical of complaints against those who abuse their power over someone. And Job is saying this to God. Or we can read with GNB "to hurt me you even work miracles".

Job 10:17 You renew Your witnesses against me, and increase Your indignation on me. Changes and warfare are within me- This continues the theme of :16, that one moment God shows Himself "wonderful to me", and the next, He has Job in the dock calling all manner of witnesses against him, and reading out the judgment of His "indignation". And this "change" or tension, this struggle or "warfare", was "within me", deeply absorbed into Job's struggling soul. The Lord Jesus generally appeared to

have none of this, until the final struggling appeal "My God, why have You forsaken me?", 'Me, the righteous one' (Mt. 27:46). That struggle is shown resolved in Job.

Job 10:18 'Why, then, have You brought me forth out of the womb? I wish I had given up the spirit, and no eye had seen me- This despising of his own life was because (as explained on :15-18), Job had yet to appreciate that his sufferings were not just for himself; they were because he was representative of others, and his prayer for the friends would be for their salvation. This is Paul's message in 2 Cor. 1- that suffering is in order for us to help others, and to mediate to them the grace God gives us in our sufferings. But without that sharing further, suffering is perceived by the sufferer as solely personal. And they therefore wish to die, because suffering for our own sake seems pointless. And so the simplistic explanation of the book of Job to the effect that 'through suffering Job became a better man' is missing the point, and is a one cent answer to million dollar questions.

Job 10:19 I should have been as though I had not been. I should have been carried from the womb to the grave- Job doesn't wait to hear the answer to his question to God of :18- *Why...?* had he been born. The answer to that was that he was to become a representative sufferer who would be prepared for a point where he could pray for his friends and save them. Without this aspect of evangelism, of pastoral effect upon others, then all human experience and suffering, even life itself, is ultimately meaningless.

Job 10:20 Aren't my days few? Cease then. Leave me alone, that I may find a little comfort- Job didn't want comfort, he wanted God to leave him alone; and this was just how the exiles felt, in effect. Hence the message of the restoration prophets was that God's people were to be comforted (Is. 40:1 etc.). By grace, God didn't answer Job's request, and pushed forward His saving plan with him, as He sought to do with the exiles. These words were later on the lips of David (Ps. 39:10-13), perhaps at the time of his illness after his sin with Bathsheba. But that period was the one when he wrote the Psalms which are most clearly prophetic of the feelings of the Lord Jesus upon the cross. And Job was being led toward the spirit of Christ.

Job 10:21 before I go where I shall not return from, to the land of darkness and of the shadow of death- At this point Job has apparently no faith in a resurrection. But already he has reasoned that the suffering of the righteous means that there must be a day of future judgment, involving personal resurrection. And by Job 19:25-27 he is clear about this. His faith, like ours, went up and down in the short term, but progressing towards the final acceptance of Divine salvation, grace and restoration at the end.

Job 10:22 the land dark as midnight, of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as midnight'- The friends have argued that life is governed by strict principle, whereby God brings suffering upon sinners and rewards the righteous. But Job feels that there is no order in life, all is so random. The lack of "order" and darkness suggests a return to the situation as described before the creation of Genesis 1. Job is failing to perceive that his 'decreation' or 'uncreation', like the destruction of Judah's kingdom and temple, was all a necessary prelude to the new creation promised in the restoration prophecies. And it was the essence of that which Job experienced in his own restoration. And this is why Job 12:22 is such a significant

breakthrough in Job's thinking, when he starts to accept that "He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death".

JOB CHAPTER 11

Job 11:1 Then Zophar the Naamathite responded- He comes over as angry and arrogant, as if he really hates Job. He doesn't specifically answer Job's arguments nor even cite them very much. I noted on Job 1:6 that Job's "friends" appear to become associated with the actual actions of the "Satan", and Zophar's anger with Job would confirm that conclusion.

Job 11:2 Shouldn't the multitude of words be answered? Should a man full of talk be justified?- The idea may be that Job was wrong to justify his much talking by saying that it was inevitable because of the greatness of his suffering; see on Job 10:1. Job was not to assume that his wild talking was simply not culpable, just because he was suffering and depressed. And again, there is some abiding truth in that. And God finally demonstrates that Job is "justified" by grace, and not by his words. But again, we see all of them feeling that they *must* speak. There are too many words in Job... "A man full of talk" is literally 'a man of lips'. Perhaps the contrast is with the words of the wise which came from their hearts and whose theology condemned Job: "Shall they not teach you, tell you, and utter words out of their heart?" (Job 8:10). In response to this complaint that Job was talking too much, he responds by launching off into his longest speech, of 75 verses (chapters 12-14). Job clearly felt his much speaking was totally justified.

Zophar like all the friends, like Job and like Elihu, expresses a compulsion that he just has to speak. When it would have been far more helpful if he had not done so. This recalls the experience we surely have all had- when someone says, or we say, "OK fine, but let me just say one thing... I'd just like to say... I feel I must just make the point that...". And it is the words said with those preludes that are often the most damaging, inflammatory and unhelpful.

Job's speeches don't really engage much with what the friends say. The dialogues are in fact a lesson in how relationships break down- the points made [and not all that the friends say is wrong] are not responded to, not engaged with, and the other party goes off on other issues.

Job 11:3 Should your boastings make men hold their peace? When you mock, shall no man make you ashamed?- LXX "Be not a speaker of many words", alluded to by James when he urges is not to be "many teachers" (James 3:1). See on Job 10:1. The friends mix elements of truth (as noted on :2) with unreasonable exaggeration of Job's weaknesses and positions. He has not so far come over as 'mocking', but that was how Job was perceived by the friends; just as our holding of alternative positions can be wrongly read as 'boasting' and 'mocking'.

Job 11:4 For you say, 'My doctrine is pure. I am clean in Your eyes'-

Perhaps, "I was clean"- and despite that, Job suffered. We know from the prologue that Job was clean in God's eyes. Zophar denies this, and Job is sucked in to that false guilt.

As noted on :1, Zophar attacks Job according to Zophar's own perceptions of him, the image of "Job" he had developed in his mind, rather than reality. As noted on :1, unlike Eliphaz he doesn't actually engage with what Job says. And he is typical of many who engage in supposed 'dialogue' today. Job has only said that even if he were to cleanse himself (implying he felt unclean), then God would not accept him (Job 9:30). The friends begin with the suspicion that Job is being judged for sin; and so their wrong theological position [that sin brings immediate Divine judgment and loss of previous blessing] leads them to interpersonal problems, and an overall negative view of their brother Job, seeking to perceive fault in everything he said or had ever done. They are a classic case of confirmation bias in relationships, developing a narrative about a person that has no basis in reality.

Job 11:5 But oh that God would speak, and open His lips against you-

This alludes to Job's request for a court case against God. Zophar wishes that this could happen and that God would indeed pronounce against Job. He is ignorant of the fact that in the court of heaven scene which opens the book, God has spoken for and not against Job.

In the end, all the participants in the dialogue get what they ask for- God's open revelation. But it was not what any of them expected. And the opening of God's lips was against the friends, and not against Job.

Job 11:6 that He would show you the secrets of wisdom! For true wisdom has two sides- This was finally true for them all. Both Job and the friends say many true things, but they fail to see there was 'another side' to those truths; just as so many do today.

Know therefore that God exacts of you less than your iniquity deserves- Connecting with how Ezra confesses that the exiles and all Judah had been punished less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). Zophar likely implies that Job's huge sins (reflected in his massive judgments) really deserved death, and the fact Job was still alive meant that he was being punished less than deserved. And so it was with Judah. God had not destroyed them as a people, He had not taken their collective life; and this meant that they were being punished less than their sins deserved. And yet they, like Job, considered they were being punished and judged disproportionately. The resolution of that was in accepting their sins and the justice and grace of God's judgment of them, as Job finally did at the end.

Zophar is the most aggressive and caustic of the friends. Just a few verses into his first speech, he tells Job that he ought to have been punished far more than he had been. Job had been afflicted to the maximum extent- and Zophar says this was God being generous to Job, exacting less than Job's sin deserved. We wonder how ever he could have said that to the suffering Job sitting before him. Zophar considered that Job had committed such a huge sin- by simply insisting that the traditional view was wrong. This is so psychologically credible; people who are tolerant and permissive can become terribly aggressive when their entrenched belief system is disagreed with. Zophar concludes by saying that Job's best hope is to die (:20). And yet this man was Job's "friend". We see again how different theological views, not agreeing with someone, leads to them tearing up relationships and transforming so quickly from friend to aggressive enemy.

Job 11:7 Can you fathom the mystery of God?- This again is true so far as it stands, but Zophar uses this truth wrongly. He implies that any attempt to understand God's

ways was therefore wrong; and yet he dogmatically proceeds with his own attempts to fathom the mystery of God. Paul has this verse in mind in Rom. 11:33, where he declares that the "mystery of God" (Rom. 11:25) is in His saving grace which cannot be fathomed by us. And that was the declaration of the "mystery of God" which is finally made at the end of the book of Job.

Or can you probe the limits of the Almighty?- Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found out' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9).

Job 11:8 They are high as heaven. What can you do? They are deeper than Sheol. What can you know?- As discussed on :7, it is indeed true that we cannot "know" God by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. And that lesson abides. And yet on the other hand, 'knowing' God in the Hebraic sense of 'having a relationship with' is absolutely possible, and is what God seeks with men. However it is possible that Zophar uses the idea of 'heaven and *sheol*' as it is used in the only other two Biblical occurrences of the phrase (Ps. 139:8; Am. 9:2)- where it means that one cannot escape God by going above heaven or deeper than *sheol*. Jonah, representative of the exiles, tried to do this and failed.

Job 11:9 Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea- God's ways are further or longer than the *eretz*, a word often used specifically of the land promised to Abraham. There is the hint here that the final wisdom of God was connected with a plan of global salvation, and was not limited to any single territory. This had special relevance to the captives in Babylon and Assyria, some of them now outside the *eretz*; and it also speaks to their tendency towards racial elitism, as if Israel were the only people God was willing to have relationship with. The prophets therefore speak of the restored people of God as being multiethnic, and His kingdom as universal and not any longer only based in the *eretz* of Israel.

Job 11:10 If He passes by, or confines- "Confines" is the word used of the shutting up or confining of the exiles in captivity (Jer. 13:19; Lam. 2:7; Am. 6:8).

Or convenes a court, then who can oppose Him?- This again has abiding truth- because we cannot simply get out of our relationship with God by as it were not turning up in court.

The dramatic story of Job thrice uses the same phrase as in Is. 43:13, concluding that "who can hinder...?" God's way (Job 9:12; 11:10; 23:13). The exiles were to understand that no human opposition or discouragement can turn back or hinder God's purpose to save His people, even if they are as Job in suffering. His saving and restorative purpose will not be hindered, if we wish to identify with it.

There may be reference here to the court of Heaven which God had convened to consider Job's case. And that cannot be resisted. But both Job and the friends are ignorant of how in that court, God had argued passionately for Job and not against him. Time and again, we find all of them out of sync with what God really thought, and assuming His positions are the very opposite of what they actually are.

Job 11:11 For He knows false men. He sees iniquity also, even though He doesn't

consider it- AV "will He not then consider it?", as if God is aware of all sin, and will "consider" it in judgment. Zophar and the friends seem to think that this judgment is going on in Job's life, whereas Job is correctly driven to understand that judgment must be yet future.

Job 11:12 An empty-headed man becomes wise when a man is born as a wild donkey's colt- The idea seems to be that a stubborn and untamed man like Job, similar to a wild donkey's colt, can still become wise- if he repents (:13). Zophar is misreading Job, but he is correct to understand the true wisdom as being in repentance. Job's vain search for wisdom in Job 28 finally comes to an end when he repents and thereby 'finds' God. Even wrong argumentation and false accusation can be used by God to bring us closer to His truth, through the process of our working it through and rejecting it.

Or translating slightly differently, this could be one of the sayings of the 'wise' elders whom Zophar took so much notice of: "But an empty man will become wise when a wild ass colt is born a man"- in other words, an empty man will never become wise.

Job 11:13 If you set your heart aright, stretch out your hands toward Him- As noted on :4, Zophar's wrong theology [his assumption that Job must have sinned to be suffering as he now was] led him to judge the state of Job's heart, as being not "set aright". And it is exactly this wrongful judgment of human hearts which arises from an insistence in believing that we can attach meaning to event in the lives of others; and this is effectively to play God.

Job 11:14 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away. Don't let unrighteousness dwell in your tents- Clearly an oblique reference to the family "tents" of Job having been smitten because of the unrighteousness there. Job's children were indeed sinners, it would appear. For they were struck down by "the fire of God". But Zophar is reasoning that one man, Job, can be responsible for the sins of his family. But God works with individuals, and all Job's regular sacrifices for the sins of his children were revealed as irrelevant. For God deals with individuals.

Job 11:15 Surely then you shall lift up your face without spot; yes, you shall be steadfast, and shall not fear-

There is surely allusion to the leprosy that disfigured Job's face. This is a push back on Job's comment in the previous chapter that God is so mean, that even if he were righteous, he couldn't lift up his face before God (Job 10:15).

Zophar possibly recognized that Job was like Cain in that his countenance had fallen and he was so angry, although also fearful of God (Gen. 4:5); Job has already seen himself as Cain (Job 10:14). See on Job 13:27; 16:17,18; 31:39. Job has argued that even if he were righteous, still he could not lift up his face without spot and without fear. Zophar fails to realize that it was quite possible for Job to be personally righteous, and yet to experience all the sufferings and feelings of the sinful, condemned people of God. The idea of being "without spot" before God is picked up in the New Testament. We can be like this (Eph. 5:27; 2 Pet. 3:14) but only "in His sight", because the righteousness of His spotless Son has been imputed to us by grace through faith (Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19).

Job 11:16 for you shall forget your misery. You shall remember it as waters that are

passed away- Having lost all his 10 children to a Divine tornado, it is insensitive to suggest that Job could just forget all this and then live a great life. Zophar here sees wealth and health as the ultimate offer which God makes to man, rather like prosperity theology and Pentecostalism today. What did Job want? To be right with God, to have relationship with Him, to understand. He puts it clearly in Job 14:15 in his fantasy of how he wished things could be: "You would call, and I would answer You. You would have a desire to the work of Your hands". And that is what the Gospel offers.

The exiles likewise could be restored so that their sufferings were seen as the waters of Noah which had passed away (Is. 54:9), and would forget the days of their misery. "Misery" is the word translated "travail" regarding the sufferings of the suffering servant (Is. 53:11). That figure is undoubtedly based upon Job as prototype.

Job 11:17 Life shall be clearer than the noonday. Though there is darkness, it shall be as the morning- Again, there is some level of truth in all this. This is what repentance could lead to. And the language is exactly that of the joyful dawn which could have come for the exiles, brought forth out of the darkness of captivity in Babylon. Job experienced this in his restoration, but the exiles failed to follow his path.

Job 11:18 You shall be secure, because there is hope. Yes, you shall search, and shall take your rest in safety- Again, the language of the restoration prophets concerning the lying down of the returned exiles in safety with none making them afraid (Is. 14:30; Hos. 2:18).

Job 11:19 Also you shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid- Exactly the language of how Judah could be restored, if they repented and accepted the new covenant (Ez. 34:14,15; Jer. 33:12).

Yes, many shall court your favour- LXX "and many shall charge, and make supplication to thee", the language of later Isaiah of how the tables would turn and the Gentiles would make supplication to the restored exiles.

Job 11:20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail- Perhaps Job's health issues included failing eyesight. For here when Zophar speaks of the fate of the wicked, he has Job in view. The very language of the curses to come upon Israel for breaking covenant (Lev. 26:16), experienced by them at the Babylonian invasion (Lam. 2:11; 4:17). The suffering servant experienced this (Ps. 69:3 s.w.) as did Job, sharing in the judgment of the condemned although not personally sinning.

They shall have no way to flee- The judgment upon Judah (s.w. Jer. 25:35; Am. 2:14).

Their hope shall be the giving up of the spirit- Zophar is saying that Job's best possible hope was death. A very hard thing to say to your suffering "friend". See on :6. This was what Job so hoped for, and Zophar has Job in view all through his description of the death of the wicked. As demonstrated earlier in this verse, the condemnation of the wicked did indeed happen to God's people, and Job experienced it, whilst being personally innocent. This is the exact situation with the Lord Jesus. He who will dispense condemnation does in fact know what condemnation feels like, because He so identified with condemned humanity.

JOB CHAPTER 12

Job 12:1 Then Job answered- Job now seems angry in this speech, descending at times to sarcasm.

Job 12:2 No doubt, but you are the people, and wisdom shall die with you- Job is responding to the friends' insistence that Job stood condemned according to the wisdom of those who had gone before. Job is saying that he doesn't accept that, and that rather the friends are projecting their ideas onto the previous 'wise men', creating those men after their own likeness and mental image. In fact, Job is saying, the friends consider that they themselves are the source of all wisdom, they see themselves as the unequalled pinnacle of wisdom, so great that when they die, so will their wisdom. In other words, their wisdom was just they themselves.

Job 12:3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you. Yes, who doesn't know such things as these?- Job refused to take false guilt and to be pushed down by men. Our opinion is *a priori* as valid as that of any other believer, no matter how they seek to shore it up by allusion to other sages.

Job 12:4 I am like one who is a joke to his neighbour, because I called on God, and He answered. The just, the blameless man is a joke- The restoration prophet Jeremiah quoted this about himself (Jer. 20:7; Lam. 3:14 s.w.), as representative of Judah in captivity, who were mocked [s.w. 'joked at') daily (Jer. 48:27 s.w.) by their neighbours, the Babylonians and the peoples of their confederacy.

Perhaps we have sarcasm here. Job is saying that he, the righteous man, called on God- and God answered with all the suffering. As his wife may have said [depending on translation], "Bless God and [you] die". And so he says that he, and his religion, are made a joke to people. This isn't far from cursing God as his wife advised and as satan predicted he would.

Job 12:5 In the thought of him who is at ease there is contempt for misfortune. It is ready for them whose foot slips- Suffering is intended to produce empathy with others; as 2 Cor. 1 makes clear, this is a large reason for our experience of suffering. Job is realizing this; that there can be no empathy with the suffering from those who haven't suffered. And thus he was being led towards realizing that his sufferings were not just for himself, but were to be used to comfort others. And those "others" were the friends, whom he was to save by his forgiveness and prayers for them. LXX "For it had been ordained that he should fall under others at the appointed time, and that his houses should be spoiled by transgressors"- connecting with the destruction of the great houses of Jerusalem by the Babylonians (Jer. 52:13).

Job 12:6 The tents of robbers prosper. Those who provoke God are secure, who carry their God in their hands- Job makes several references to the arguments of the satan in his replies to the friends; as if they were in fact the satan, and as if he knew perfectly well what they had said to Yahweh. Thus he tells the friends that those who provoke God are secure, whereas the satan had suggested that Job would provoke God to His face if his security was taken away. Job says that such people who provoke God have all things given into their hand by Yahweh; and it is hard not to see in this a reference to the satan, into whose hand Job had been delivered. It was as if Job was saying to them: 'You are the ones who have provoked God, you are the ones into

whose hand God has delivered me; so actually you are the wicked, not me'. For more connections between the friends and the satan, see on Job 1:6.

Job 12:7 But ask the animals now, and they shall teach you; the birds of the sky, and they shall tell you- At the end of the book, we are told that it is God who not only created Behemoth, but can effortlessly control him in accord with His purpose. That's the comfort of the message. Indeed the descriptions of the natural world which lead up to the Leviathan / Behemoth passages are there to underline this point; and it's interesting that those passages zoom in upon the cruelties and even brutalities within nature. Yet these are all of God's ultimate design and creation, and under His providential control. Job had earlier perceived this; for he responds to the friends' allusions to an evil 'Satan' figure as the source of his suffering by observing: "Ask the animals... The birds of the air... [they show that] the hand of the Lord [and not any supernatural 'Satan'] has done this" (Job 12:7–9). Job himself turned to the natural creation for lessons, and so God's final appeal to that same creation was only really leading him further from where he had already arrived.

Job 12:8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach you. The fish of the sea shall declare to you- "Declare" is literally 'to number'. Job's idea was that one had only to look at the natural creation, and they would 'number up' the extent of God's activity. But later Job has to be taught that man cannot number up these things (s.w. Job 38:37; 39:2). They could not be numbered by man, but only by God. This is the same word used in the restoration prophecy of Jer. 38:22: "As the host of the sky cannot be *numbered*, nor the sand of the sea measured", so God's grace would be poured out in restoring His people. Job was being taught the same lesson. He finally believed it, but the exiles generally didn't, and so their restoration didn't happen after the pattern of Job's. Job is set up not so much as representative of the exiles, but of the righteous remnant and their intended repentance and restoration.

Job 12:9 Who doesn't know that in all these, the hand of Yahweh has done this- Satan asks God: "Put forth Your hand". The hand of God is an Angelic phrase. God agrees- "he is in your hand" (:6). Thus Satan's hand is God's hand, which in practice was articulated through an Angel. Job seems to emphasize the place of God's hand in bringing his trials- Job 2:5,6,10; 6:9; 10:7; 13:21; 19:21; 27:11 AVmg; 28:9. Job in Job 12:9 feels that in the same way as God's hand had created the natural creation- and the Angels did this- so that same Angelic hand was upon him for evil. "By His Spirit (God makes His Angels spirits) He has garnished the Heavens; His hand has formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. For no one human being could bring these sufferings upon Job. The human Satan, the fellow worshipper, was reflected in an Angel in the court of Heaven. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24 AV). This was exactly the brief given to satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- in the restoration context, the people and Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7).

Job says that the hand of God has touched and destroyed him. So I would take his words here as bitter sarcasm. He says that all creation will testify to the fact God is destructive. Nature is cruel. His skepticism about God in nature is engaged with by God at the end, although [as ever], not specifically answered. Likewise his statement in :12 that "with the aged is wisdom" is sarcastic, because he often disagrees with the friends' claim that the aged men have wisdom. And so again, his subsequent comment that "With God is wisdom and might. He has counsel and understanding" is followed by his accusation that "breaks down, and it can't be built again. He imprisons a man, and there can be no release" (:13,14). He sees God's 'wisdom' in a very sceptical way. He may even be quoting a wisdom hymn, but sarcastically.

Job 12:10 in whose hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind?- As noted on :9, this alludes to God's command to the Satan: "He [Job] is in your hand". But Job insists that he is in *God's* hand. He is labouring this point (:9), because he is perhaps answering the implication of the friends that he has sinned and is therefore in the hands of some cosmic evil being, out of God's control.

Job 12:11 Doesn't the ear try words, even as the palate tastes its food?- The idea is that truth should not just be accepted because the source is an old or reputedly wise man (:12). For even their wisdom is nothing compared with God's (:13). Job is looking for truth to come from direct revelation from God rather than through the wisdom of men. And that desire appears frustrated by God's apparent silence. But all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book.

Job 12:12 With aged men is wisdom, in length of days understanding- See on :11. Job may be being sarcastic here, and perhaps we could put a question mark at the end of this sentence. For to predicate wisdom upon years lived becomes laughable compared, therefore, to the wisdom of the God who is from everlasting (:13). Therefore Job is looking for truth to come from direct revelation from God rather than through the wisdom of men. And that desire appears frustrated by God's apparent silence. But all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book.

Job 12:13 With God is wisdom and might. He has counsel and understanding- Possibly this is Job's comment on the idea that wisdom is with the elders (:12); he would be saying that they are claimed to be wise, but wisdom is with God. But I have suggested on :9 that Job is here being sarcastic about God, saying that His wisdom and understanding involve being cruel in the natural world and destroying things there without cause.

See on :11,12. Job has complained about God's apparent silence and failure to speak or dialogue with him throughout all the suffering. But Job doesn't doubt that God does have "counsel and understanding". Again, all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book. Job can be read as implying that he doesn't have "counsel and understanding", but God does. This again makes his representative of Israel under judgment, who were left "without counsel and understanding" (s.w. Dt. 32:28).

Job 12:14 Behold, He breaks down, and it can't be built again. He imprisons a man, and there can be no release- Here Job starts to go wrong. Because he feels that at this

moment, he has no hope of restoration- therefore he assumes that this is how God is. But this was how the depressed exiles felt. The restoration prophecies speak of release from the prison of captivity, and the broken down Zion being "built again" (Jer. 24:6; 31:4). The fact Job was 'released' and restored, despite his momentary lack of faith that this were possible, was intended as a pattern for the exiles.

Verses 14 and 15 are Job's comment on the 'dark' side of creation; God destroys His own creation, aimlessly, just as He does to Job, and as He makes whole nations wander aimlessly by removing their leaders (:23-25).

Job 12:15 Behold, He withholds the waters, and they dry up. Again, He sends them out, and they overturn the earth- The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 12:16 With Him is strength and wisdom. The deceived and the deceiver are His- Job is poetry, and poetry works by using familiar words and images in new ways. Hence myths can be alluded to and used, but in order to present them in a different context and to achieve more powerfully a conclusion rather than just baldly stating it; i.e. that Yahweh is all powerful and that there are actually no abiding realities behind the myths. Thus poetry is an appropriate medium through which to articulate this message. “The deceived and the deceiver are His” is poetry which even comes through somewhat in translation (Job 12:16). The expectation is that the deceiver is Satan, and God is with or sympathetic to the deceived. But no. Such dualistic expectations are set up, but crushed at the end of the strophe: both deceived and deceiver are God’s. For there is no dualistic cosmos out there. Indeed, "the deceiver" may refer to some superhuman tempter, similar to how many today understand 'Satan'. And Job is saying that God is far more powerful than any such being. Or we can note that the words for "deceived" and "deceiver" are usually used about sin and those leading into sin. Despite all that, God is still there, and His people "are His"; the words are used about spiritually "wandering" Judah in their captivity (Ez. 34:6), who were still "His" in that He would never ultimately reject His people.

Job 12:17 He leads counsellors away stripped. He makes judges fools- This was to be seen in the leading away of the leaders of Judah "stripped" in exile, despite their apparent wisdom. Again Job is being driven to the view that God alone has wisdom, as the judges and counsellors represented by the friends simply have no wisdom. As noted on :11-13, all this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book.

*Job 12:18 He loosens the bond of kings. He binds their waist with a belt- L*XX "He seats kings upon thrones, and girds their loins with a girdle", exactly the language used of Cyrus. Being a leader was a gift from God which He could give and take at will, according to the wisdom of His own plans, which as yet Job could not perceive, but which was to be revealed at the end of the book.

Job 12:19 He leads priests away stripped, and overthrows the mighty- LXX "He sends away priests into captivity". So relevant to the leading into captivity of the priests such as Ezekiel. Job appears to have been a priest for his family, and his overthrow was therefore representative of Judah's; and his path to restoration was to be theirs, if they perceived it. He could not of himself save anyone, only show an example to be followed; as stated explicitly to the exiles in Ez. 14:14,20. And this is true of us all.

Job 12:20 He removes the speech of those who are trusted, and takes away the understanding of the elders- The "trusted" and "elders" are oblique references to the friends. All human wisdom is removed compared to God's wisdom. But that wisdom is only finally revealed at the end of the book. The lesson of Job is to wait patiently for that, suffering when we cannot assign meaning to event for the moment, in the knowledge that finally there is a Divine wisdom at work through it all.

Job 12:21 He pours contempt on princes, and loosens the belt of the strong- Job is starting to perceive that God's style is to radically invert everything. The high are brought low, the humble exalted. This explained why Job had been brought down, and led Job towards an expectation that he the humbled, the weak, would be restored. This theme of radical inversion, the first being last and the last first, is found throughout the restoration prophets, especially Isaiah. The humbled exiles were to see in their humiliation a situation pregnant with hope for restoration.

Job 12:22 He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death- Earlier, Job has longed to go to the darkness of death never to return (Job 10:21), where "the land [is] dark as midnight, of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as midnight'" (Job 10:22). The lack of "order" and darkness suggests a return to the situation as described before the creation of Genesis 1. Job is failing to perceive that his 'decreation' or 'uncreation', like the destruction of Judah's kingdom and temple, was all a necessary prelude to the new creation promised in the restoration prophecies. And it was the essence of that which Job experienced in his own restoration. And this is why Job 12:22 is such a significant breakthrough in Job's thinking, when he starts to accept that "He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings out to light the shadow of death".

This bringing things to light from darkness is associated with God raising and destroying nations (:23). There is a clear connection with Dan. 2:22 "He reveals deep

and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness and the light dwells with Him". Again we discern relevance to the faithful exiles, like Job suffering from the 'satan', albeit Divinely controlled, having lost all things, and struggling with the whole thing. The engagements of Job with the issue lead him to the conclusion that out of this darkness, Yahweh will bring light, in the very end. And this was what Daniel, one of the faithful exiles, was also led to realize.

Job 12:23 He increases the nations, and He destroys them. He enlarges the nations, and He leads them captive- As noted on :21, Job was beginning to perceive that all goes in cycles of exaltation and humiliation, but he is to finally learn that for God's people, that humiliation is required for them to be exalted and restored as God intends. We too are to humble ourselves under His hand, that we may be exalted in due time. Perhaps Peter had his eye on Job's restoration as he wrote that (1 Pet. 5:6). These things are clearly relevant to the captives who were in Babylon, at the hands of an 'enlarged' Babylon which would also be 'destroyed' in due time.

Job 12:24 He takes away understanding from the chiefs of the people of the earth, and causes them to wander in a wilderness where there is no way- This is quoted in Ps. 107:40 as a summary of the history of Israel, but the Psalm goes on to say that "the poor" of Israel would be "set on high from affliction" (Ps. 107:41). Again Job's experiences were understood by the Psalmist as typical of all Israel.

Job 12:25 They grope in the dark without light. He makes them stagger like a drunken man- Yet this was in fact the experience of Job himself (see on Job 5:14). Job was experiencing darkness at noon. But in this Job looked ahead to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He like the Lord suffered as a sinner without having personally sinned. Job was representative of sinful Israel under judgment, for to "grope at noonday" was their punishment for breaking the covenant (s.w. Dt. 28:29).

JOB CHAPTER 13

Job 13:1 Behold, my eye has seen all this. My ear has heard and understood it- This may be in direct reference to what Job has just said in Job 12, he is saying that he has worked these things out by his own reflections, and this has led him to an understanding which is no less valid than that of the friends. Job would later confess that he has indeed heard of God by the hearing of the ear; but only at the end did he join the dots, to the point where he could say that "now *my eye* sees You" (Job 42:5).

Job 13:2 What you know, I know also. I am not inferior to you- The way Job reasons suggests he had the same theology as the friends- that sin leads to punishment in this life, and obedience leads to blessing. And here he says as much. As noted on :1, Job is not saying that his knowledge or understanding is identical to that of the friends, but rather that his path to knowledge is no less valid than theirs. "Inferior" is better 'to fall down'. Job may mean that he is not falling down before them, but before God. For he uses the same word in :11 to urge the friends to fall down ['be inferior to'] God, rather than assuming they know His game plan and thereby lifting themselves up above Him.

Job 13:3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty. I desire to reason with God- Job has

heard their demand that he turn to God, and he says that indeed he wishes to do so. But he implies that God will not speak to him. All this builds up towards the final wonder of God Himself appearing and speaking at the end of the book. Job here and so often wants his day in court (see on Job 5:1), to have his side heard. But he doesn't get it. And he is driven to repent for even wanting it. This 'having your day in court' is so important to people in our age. But we have no case at all, no matter how insistent we are that our version of justice is on our side, no matter how persuaded we are that we suffered wrongly and unjustly. We have no case and no valid complaint. In the bigger picture of things.

Job 13:4 But you are forgers of lies. You are all physicians of no value- Again we see a lesson in how relationships break down. The friends have argued that sin brings suffering, and therefore Job has sinned. They were not completely wrong in thinking that sin does bring down judgment, and God [at that time] did reward obedience with material blessing. But Job calls them "liars". This is the wrong category; it is calling people with another theology 'liars'. Often this is done in small time, small town doctrinal arguments between immature believers. A strongly held belief is not simply disagreed with, but it is called a "lie" and therefore the mouth that came out with it is a "liar". The friends likewise insinuate that Job is a "liar". "Physicians" is the same word as "make[rs] whole" in Job 5:18: "He injures, and His hands make whole". His disillusion with the members of his religion, his brethren, led him to seek the more earnestly to God as the only one whose hands could "make whole" (s.w. "physician").

Job 13:5 Oh that you would be completely silent! Then you would be wise- This was true, but Job himself was not being silent. At the end, he puts his hand upon his mouth and is silent (Job 40:4). When Job finally lays his hand upon his mouth, he is only doing what he had earlier told the friends to do in recognition of their folly (Job 13:5; 21:5). Through the pain and irritation of their speeches, Job came to value and appreciate the need for silence before God. But it was only when personally confronted by God at the end that he realizes that he too had spoken too much and he repents of that in silence.

Job 13:6 Hear now my reasoning. Listen to the pleadings of my lips- These appeals to hear and listen may not be simply asking them to hear his words; they may be an appeal to them to hear and repent. This desire for their repentance and understanding builds up within Job as the speeches progress. And again, this is preparing him for the Lord's final request to him- to pray for the friends and bring about their salvation (Job 42:8).

Job 13:7 Will you speak unrighteously for God, and talk deceitfully for Him?- LXX "Do ye not speak before the Lord...", another hint that the friends were represented by the Satan figure of the prologue, who likewise appeared "before the Lord". Job warns them as many need warning today- that they were wrong to express their own gut feelings and assumptions in the name of God, as if they were talking on His behalf. Job differs from them in that he makes no claim to be speaking by Divine inspiration; he is simply bemoaning his lot and trying to reason through it, and that record of his words is noted down in the drama by an inspired writer.

Job 13:8 Will you show partiality to Him?- Perhaps the idea is that they were acting

as if God were in the dock, and they were being generous to Him in their judgment of Him.

Will you contend for God?- God was not contending with Job through the friends as His representatives. The wonder of the final appearance of God is that He Himself appears and contends directly, not through any representatives such as the friends claimed to be.

Job 13:9 Is it good that He should search you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him?- The idea seems to be that if God searched out the friends, they would have to try to deceive Him, lest He find the truth about them. But Job later realizes that God does indeed search out all things (s.w. Job 28:27). He begins here by saying that *if* He were to search things out, He would not find a nice scene in the hearts of the friends. But Job moves on to realize that indeed this is what God is doing, on a cosmic scale- searching out all things.

Job 13:10 He will surely reprove you if you secretly show partiality- "Reprove" is a legal term, used for legal 'pleading' in court (s.w. Job 16:21; 40:2). Job clearly considers the friends to be guilty, and we are set up to expect that therefore God is going to open a legal case against the friends. And this is exactly what happens when God finally appears at the end of the book.

Job 13:11 Shall not His majesty make you afraid, and His dread fall on you?- "Fall" is the same word translated "inferior" in :2*:* "I am not inferior to you". Job may mean that he is not falling down before *them*, but before God. For he uses the same word in :11 to urge the friends to fall down ['be inferior to'] God, rather than assuming they know His game plan and thereby are lifting themselves up above Him. At the end of the book, as noted on :10, God does appear in majesty, and they are indeed afraid before Him.

Job 13:12 Your memorable sayings are proverbs of ashes, your defences are defences of clay-

The memorable sayings and defences are what the friends have said so far, suggesting they were often quoting or alluding to traditional sayings which we may not be able to clearly discern from the text before us.

LXX "And your glorying shall prove in the end to you like ashes, and your body like a body of clay". They were bodies of clay; but only through their humiliation at the end of the book would they appreciate this in reality rather than merely as theory. And we see this happening in the events at the end of the book. And it is so with us today; the mortality of man can never be a mere theological proposition. It must be believed and felt, with an appropriate humility, rather than having to be reminded of it through Divine humiliation.

Job 13:13 Be silent, leave me alone, that I may speak. Let come on me what will-

Job now speaks with the reckless bravado of a drunk man, saying that he will speak his case before God come what may, he will put his life in his hand to argue with God (:14), and even though he is sure God will slay him for this, he will still wait [not "trust"] for some future point when somehow he will be justified and will prove God wrong (:15).

LXX "Be silent, that I may speak, and cease from mine anger". In this case Job is wrongly thinking that his anger is legitimate because once he has blown it all out, he

will then be silent. This was wrong, because at the end of the book he lays his hand on his mouth and recognizes that he has spoken wrongly. We too can falsely justify sin or unwise talking on the basis that once we've done it, we will then somehow stop being angry and get over our problem.

Job 13:14 Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand?- The simple sense is as in GNB "I am ready to risk my life". That risk of life was in order to justify himself before God (:15). This was demonstrated at the end as being indeed wrong and punishable by death. Job did indeed risk his life, and was saved from condemnation by grace alone. However, taking "my flesh in my teeth" may be a figure drawn from a wild beast taking its prey in its teeth and carrying it off to safety; meaning therefore 'Why should I seek anxiously to preserve my life?'.

Job 13:15 Even if He slays me, still I will trust in Him-

Job is to be recognized [at least at this point] for realizing that we serve God for nothing, because we are His, and not in view of any personal reward- neither in this life nor beyond. Should we be condemned at judgment day, our attitude should be 'Thank You for the honour of having served You'. Even though God counts him as His enemy, even if God slays him, he will still trust Him (Job 13:15,24). This is trust, relationship, in the face of every reason to give it up; and in the face of a total lack of explanation from God as to *why*. In the face of every human cry of injustice, deprivation of legitimate rights etc.

In the context, however, Job is saying that he is going to take God to court, even if he dies. Even if God slays him for doing so, he will "wait" ['trust'] for some future day, when he would defend his ways before God, to God's face (:15). His idea of some future judgment day is developing, although always, immediately after these flashes of insight, he returns to his wrong thinking. In this case, saying that even at that future meeting, he will justify his ways before God. He is confident this must happen and that he must be 'saved' because he is innocent and not a Godless man / hypocrite (:16). Such a person wouldn't even dare to go before God in judgment, but he feels he is innocent and therefore he can do this (:16b). In his legal case with God, Job is confident nobody can enter any plea against him, his case is solid and nothing can be said against it (:17-19). In fact of course, only God can say anything like this (Is. 50:8 alludes here).

The language of ‘slaying’ takes us back to the Mosaic commands about how a ‘slayer’ of a man might be killed by the ‘avenger of blood’. Job saw God as slaying him; yet he also sees God as the ‘witness’ in the case (Job 16:19), and the avenger of Job’s blood (Job 19:25). Job even asks God to not let the earth cover his blood, so that God as the avenger of Job’s blood may avenge Job’s death (Job 16:18). Job does not see ‘Satan’ as his slayer, and God as the avenger of his blood. Instead Job – in a quite breathtaking set of associations – sees God in all these things: the slayer, the legal witness to the slayer, the avenger of blood, and the One who will enforce the doing of justice in this case, the One who will not let the earth cover Job’s blood. If Job really believed in a superhuman Satan, in Satan as the bad guy and God as the avenger of the injustice, he surely would’ve expressed himself differently. As Job imagines God as it were taking vengeance on Himself, so he came to portray for all time the way that evil and good are indeed both ultimately from God.

"Trust" here is the usual Hebrew word translated to wait or be patient (Job 13:15; 14:14; 30:26). Even if God slew him, Job would still be patient or wait (Job 13:15), he would patiently wait for his "change" to come at some point after his death (Job

14:14), and waited for light to somehow come out of his current darkness (Job 30:26). This was the legendary "patience of Job" which we are bidden follow (James 5:11). He was impatient, but he was "patient" in the Hebrew sense of enduring in faith; faith that even if things didn't work out at all in this life, even if God was apparently unfair in this life, he would be finally restored at the resurrection. This was his 'endurance', and it is a parade example for all who struggle with the justice of God and the incomprehensible problem of suffering.

Nevertheless, I will justify my ways before Him- This was what was the matter with Job, and it was this weakness which was removed from him by Yahweh's final appearance. The connection between the two halves of the verse, and the preceding verse, is that Job was willing to be slain by God for justifying himself before God. And he would die, he says, still trusting in God, but willing to die for the sake of self justification. So many are like this today. To accept God's justification of us, His imputed righteousness by grace, is so deeply counter instinctive to men.

Job 13:16 This also shall be my salvation- Maybe we are to understand this as Job saying that if only he could justify his ways before God (:15), he would have to be saved; he would justify his ways "before Him" in that a Godless man cannot come "before Him". We see again Job moving on from his idea that there is no afterlife. He is now talking of 'salvation', however he understood that.

LXX "And this shall turn to me for salvation". See on Phil. 1:19, where this is quoted by Paul. The referent of "this..." is unclear. It could be Job's enduring hope that he would be saved finally, despite life not working out for him in this life (see on :15). This would fit the context in which Paul quotes this in Phil. 1:19.

In that a Godless man shall not come before Him- Job concludes at this point that he will finally be saved, even though God is apparently against him in this life. And he concludes that therefore he must be Godly and not Godless, seeing no Godless man would be accepted "before Him" finally. Job may be making an oblique reference to how the friends as the "sons of God" came "before Him" in worship (Job 1:6); but Job implies they would not ultimately do this at the last day. As it happened, Job's intercession for them "before Him" was to mean that they did.

"Godless" is 'hypocrite', the same word used by Bildad when he claims that Job is a hypocrite and therefore his hope has come to an end (Job 8:13).

Job 13:17 Hear diligently my speech. Let my declaration be in Your ears- This may not merely be an appeal for them to pay attention to what he is saying; but rather an appeal for them to "hear" him and repent, taking his appeal deeply within themselves.

Job 13:18 See now, I have set my cause in order. I know that I am righteous- Job had judged himself, setting in order his legal case ["cause"], but declaring himself righteous (Job 13:8). By Job 23:4, Job is realizing that he needs to set his case in order before God; but he can't find God, or get God to engage in this game of judgment. He needed the final appearance of God at the end of the book to review his case, and declare that he is in fact wrong and condemned. But by grace, God will count him as right. He was prepared for this by Elihu's speech in Job 37:19: "Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness". "Make our case" is s.w. "set my cause in order".

Job 13:19 Who is he who will contend with me? For then would I hold my peace and give up the spirit- Job is challenging anyone to come forward and contend with him in

court by proving him wrong. If they did, then he would be silent ["hold my peace"] and willingly die. This of course is exactly what happens at the end. God does contend with Job, and he is proven guilty. He lays his hand upon mouth in silence (Job 40:4), and we can deduce from his challenge here that he wanted to die. He saw then saved from that position by grace alone. The connection with the exiles is in Is. 50:8, where a similarly convicted Israel would be justified by Divine grace to the point they could again challenge any to convict them of sin, seeing that "He is near that justifies me".

Or we can read this quite differently: "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

Job 13:20 Only don't do two things to me; then I will not hide myself from Your face- This is so arrogant, to think that he could himself from God. The allusion is to Adam hiding in Eden from God. Job seeks a guarantee from God that he will not be condemned, and then says he will agree to respond to God's call (:22)- another allusion to Adam, who was 'called' to account by God after his sin. It would appear that Job was recognizing that he had sinned, that he knew that the sense of spiritual limbo he was in paralleled Adam's hiding from God in Eden, but that he would only respond to God's call and come out of hiding to confess his sin as he knew God wanted him to, if God withdrew His hand- i.e. relieved him of the immediate trials he was then experiencing. Thus Job was trying to barter with God- wanting Him to withdraw the trials in return for Job making the confession which he knew God wanted. See on Job 10:9; 9:17.

Job 13:21 withdraw Your hand far from me- From here to the end of the chapter could be addressed to God, or to the friends. If the latter, then it would appear that Job considers the friends guilty for bringing his sufferings upon him. This would confirm the connection suggested between the friends and the Satan figure. For as soon as Satan is as it were off the stage, the friends appear. See on :20.

And don't let Your terror make me afraid- Job repeats this fear in Job 9:34, and Elihu alludes to it when he uses the same phrase in assuring Job that his terror will not make Job afraid (Job 33:7). The terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). That terror should "persuade men" to accept grace, Paul argues. To have that terror unexperienced by men would mean they had no persuasion toward grace.

Job 13:22 Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and You answer me- See on :20. In the end, God does call Job; and he lays his hand upon his mouth in silence. For he has no answer, nor does he desire to speak. For God has already answered him. This is legal language (see on :3): "Then make a plea and I will certainly be a respondent; or let me make a charge and you reply to me!". This is an inappropriate way to talk to Almighty God. Job allows himself to be driven to this by his misplaced desire for justice and to have his situation 'heard'. God's responses do not 'hear' his situation but provide another perspective altogether. But for now, Job is eager to put God in the dock. Possibly Paul has this in view when he says that God will always overcome when He is put in the dock and judged (Rom. 3:4). But the allusion is also to his fantasy of a restored Eden when God would call him as He called Adam, and Job could answer with a clear conscience, knowing he had nothing to be ashamed of and had not sinned; see on Job 14:15.

Job 13:23 How many are my iniquities and sins? Make me know my disobedience and my sin-

Job goes on to complain that God is holding against him the sins of his youth (:26); so here he must mean that he hasn't done any really big sin which justified his suffering. He fails to realize that the passage of time is not atonement for sin; and he fails to learn the lesson of Adam and Eve, that 'just' one sin leads to eternal judgment and consequence, even if committed [as in Adam's case] in immaturity.

This seems an arrogant denial of sinfulness and a false accusation of God. Job, like the friends, cannot understand suffering as having any reason apart from sin. And he indignantly insists that he has not sinned. This insistence upon never moving beyond the paradigm whereby suffering reflects sin led Job to thereby falsely accuse God. And we can so easily do the same.

Job 13:24 Why do You hide Your face, and hold me for Your enemy?- Quite possibly Job is making a play on words, using the similarity between *iyyob* (Job) and *oyeb* (enemy). These two words are anagrams in Hebrew. Rearrange 'Job' and you get 'enemy'. He really thinks that God hates Job and thinks Job is His enemy. If only he knew the prologue... and had paid less subconscious attention to the position of the friends, that his sufferings meant that God must hate him.

Job feels that God sees him as enemy: "How many are my iniquities and sins? Make known to me my transgression and sin! Why do You hide Your face? Why do You treat me as Your enemy?" (Job 13:23,24). God didn't at all see him that way. And all the more in our case, we who were enemies are now reconciled by the death of God's son, God is not our enemy, and is not hiding from us but rather revealing His glory to us, more and more each day, in the face of Jesus Christ. Likewise Job's desire "conceal me until Your anger relents" (:13) has been met in the Lord Jesus, through whom we have been saved from God's wrath. Indeed, all these aspects of God's wrath

that Job so fears recur in Romans and other Pauline writings; and every one of them has been resolved in the Lord's death.

Job could appear to oscillate wildly in his positions, possibly due to his post traumatic stress. He argues his total innocence, and then admits he is a sinner and has sins of youth as well. He considers God a sadist and narcissist, and yet also speaks of how great God is and how man has no valid complaint against Him. He states that man has no afterlife, this life is all there is, and the righteous are blessed and the sinners are cursed- and then he speaks of finally meeting God. He knows there is no mediator between God and himself; but he fantasizes about having one. That fantasy is true in the Lord Jesus. He says on one hand that he wants a day in court with God, and if he can find a decent judge, then he will win the case against God; and then he says that all such ideas of getting God in the dock are futile because God is God and he is only a man. I suggest that reading and re-reading Job's speeches reveals that he was not in fact oscillating between positions. Rather does he hold certain base truths, many of which are wrong- and then he briefly fantasizes about some 'other' scenario, and then returns to his baseline position. His baseline position was that sin brings suffering, and he tells the friends that of course he agrees with them on this, he knows what they know and what everyone knows. But he fantasizes about his being actually totally innocent, and the victim of a horrible God. He states clearly that he is a sinner and also has sins of youth- but then he fantasizes about a God who is actually OK with that. He considers God to be a God of wrath who carefully records all his sins and holds them against him; and then he fantasizes about God calling to him, as He did to Adam in Eden, and him being able to respond to God and walk with God, seeing His face, despite being a sinner. His baseline position is clearly that there is no afterlife; but he fantasizes about a meeting with God at some point after death, when all the drama connected with sin, suffering, justice, "Why?" questions... is over. He knows as a baseline truth that man can never get God in court nor will God ever answer him- but he dreams, for a moment, of God in fact answering all Job's many questions. If you look at all his brief fantasies, three wonderful things are apparent:

1) We know from the prologue that God actually thinks Job is wonderful and doesn't consider him a sinner, even though he has sinned historically and still does; Job's fantasies were in fact reality at the time, if only Job would know it

2) Paul in Romans does quote the book of Job but not much. But he alludes to the ideas and problems raised in it, repeatedly. We in the Lord Jesus are saved from wrath, counted right, sin is no longer an issue, we who are sinners can in fact walk freely and joyfully with a God who doesn't consider that any issue in His relationship with us. Job's fantasies are in fact true and are our lived experience now.

3) All Job's fantasies, especially of a resurrection and final, eternally lasting peace with God- will come true in God's Kingdom. Job's fantasies are in fact the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

The implication of the argument is that Job had a right to see God's unhidden face, because God (so Job thinks) cannot convict Job of sin. Cain was hidden from God's face (s.w. Gen. 4:14); Job again feels he is being treated like Cain, with a mark set upon him (:27); when he is innocent. He totally failed to perceive his sinfulness, and was convicted of it only by the revelation of God at the end- whereby, by grace alone, God no longer hid His face but revealed Himself. God hid His face from the exiles (s.w. Dt. 31:17,18; 32:20; Is. 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; 64:7; Jer. 33:5; Ez. 39:23), and

again, His apparent hiding of His face from Job was not because Job had sinned but because he was suffering as representative of his people.

Job 13:25 Will You harass a driven leaf? Will You pursue the dry stubble?-
Chaff being driven by the wind is the figure for condemnation by God (Is: 40,24; 41:2; 64:5; Jer. 13:24; Ps. 83:14). Job feels God has condemned him because of his sufferings- he has exactly bought in to the position of the friends, and is ignorant of the Prologue. God thinks Job has been wonderful. But Job thinks God hates him and has condemned him. This so often is the tragic disjuncture between God and those who believe in Him. His demand of God, his fantasy, is to live before God without any sense of present nor future condemnation for his sins; and we have been given that experience in Christ. And Job was already there, according to the prologue.

Job argues that he is so dead and insignificant that God should stop bothering with him. But this is exactly the point- that God is indeed to interested in the dead and insignificant. The leaf driven by the autumn wind and the stubble after harvest being blown away are all pictures of judgment, and again connect Job to the judged people of Judah in captivity.

Job 13:26 For You write bitter things against me, and make me inherit the iniquities of my youth- see on Job 29:13,14. Job's denial of sin was to be totally overcome by Yahweh's final appearance. Here he reasons as many do today: 'I am not a sinner, if I did sin, well that was years ago'. We make the passage of years a kind of pseudo atonement for sin. But sin needs atoning, and "just" one sin means death. That is the lesson of Eden.

Job 13:27 You also put my feet in the stocks, and mark all my paths. You set a mark on the soles of my feet- He feels that God is watching him too closely, carefully noting every misstep in life's path. As discussed above, God saw him as perfect. His failure was to accept the friends' view, that he must in fact be a terrible sinner. Job complains that although he is associated with Cain (as in :24), this is not really fair. The mark on him that was a witness wherever he went echoes that which God put on Cain. God's preservation of Cain from death also finds a parallel in Job's feeling that God is preserving him unnaturally (Job 3:21-23; 10:9-15). See on Job 11:15; 16:17,18; 31:39. The exiles felt as Job- marked, unable to die, miraculously preserved, and yet imprisoned in stocks. The restoration prophets have the message of deliverance from the stocks, and paths directed back to Zion- towards a restoration as Job experienced. But most of them refused this and remained in Babylon, and those who did return precluded the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies.

Job 13:28 though I am decaying like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth-eaten- This is parallel in reference to Is. 50:9: "Behold, all they shall wax old as a garment, the moth shall eat them up". The "they" are any possible adversaries who might bring charges against us. This had particular relevance to all the adversaries to the rebuilding of Jerusalem. With Yahweh justifying the returned exiles, the court room was effectively empty of adversaries, all charges were to be seen in the perspective of God's ultimate justification of His people (see on Is. 50:8). These words are also found in Job 13:28, where it is God who consumes them, as it were manifesting Himself in a tiny moth. We find the same ideas in Is. 51:6, where the "they" is the 'heavens and earth' of any system, be it Persia / Babylon or an unbelieving Jewish system, which is adversarial to God's people and purpose. The contrast is with how

the clothing of Israel in the wilderness did not "wax old" (s.w. Dt. 8:4; 29:5; Neh. 9:21). The exodus and journey to the promised land is repeatedly alluded to in Isaiah as a pattern for the exiles to follow in returning to Judah, and for us in our exodus from this world and journey towards the Kingdom.

JOB CHAPTER 14

Job 14:1 Man, who is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble- Job slips back into the argument that human nature or condition is such that behaviour doesn't matter, as it will all soon be over anyway; and so it is God's problem if He wastes His time so closely concerned with our lives (:3). Job has at times a clearer view of the future, even looking forward to resurrection and judgment. But his faith in that goes up and down, with his depression always clawing him back towards a

Job 14:2 He comes forth like a flower, and is cut down. He also flees like a shadow, and doesn't continue- Is. 37:27 speaks of how the nations around Judah at Hezekiah's time were like this, and were of "small power", s.w. "few" in Job 14:1. Job was reasoning as if he were just any man with human nature. What he says about the brevity and frailty of life is true as far as it stands; but he fails to see that God's way with His chosen give them hope beyond the narrow limits of human nature. Hence the connection with Hezekiah continues- in his case, the shadow *did* "continue", its fleeing was "brought back" (Is. 38:8). Is. 40:7,8 specifically says that although the flower is cut down, the word of restoration would endure for ever.

Job 14:3 Do You open Your eyes on such a one, and bring me into judgment with You?- I noted on Job 1:6 that the 'Satan' figure refers to both fellow worshippers and also their Angelic representative in the heavenly throne room. The "eyes" of the Lord are His angels, and Job seems to be asking why God is using His Angel-eyes to take such a special interest in him; why God has asked His Angel to "consider My servant Job". When Job asks God to 'look away' from him, or remove His eyes from him (Job 7:8,19 RV and frequently in Job), this would then be understood as a reference to God's Angel-eyes, whom Job perceived as bringing about his problems. The restoration prophecy of Zech. 12:4 turns all this around, saying that Yahweh will "open My eyes upon the house of Judah" to restore them.

Job's argument is that man is so tiny and, according to him, unclean by nature (:4), that it is quite wrong of God to look in detail at puny man ["open Your eyes on such a one"], and to judge him. Man's smallness means, according to Job, that God Almighty is quite wrong to judge man. God's answers will demonstrate that His almightiness means that He does pay attention to every detail in His creation. Human might and height of position means that the powerful, exalted man will not pay attention to the small man. But God's might and height are of a quite different nature and dimension. It is, in fact, the small things that matter so hugely to Him. Thus He condemns Israel for 'murmuring in their tents'; and He repeatedly makes it clear throughout the Biblical record that internal self talk is a huge issue for Him.

Job 14:4 Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one- This is not to say that all born of a woman must be morally unclean; for all we posit about human nature we say about the Lord Jesus, who fully had human nature, and yet was holy

and undefiled. The LXX may be better, therefore: "For who shall be pure from uncleanness? not even one". And in any case, Job is wrongly assuming things about the human condition at this point. God doesn't make man a laughing stock or target practice, for example, nor is man without hope of resurrection as Job elsewhere thinks (:10). And there is a way for sinful man to be purged from uncleanness, as the law of Moses taught. It was and is a lame excuse to blame any human sin upon our nature. At best, as discussed on :3, Job is claiming 'defilement by nature', by reason of being human, as a reason why God should not judge man. Likewise, Job speaks of human predestination (:5) as a reason why God should not judge human behaviour (:3). He definitely has it wrong here. If only Job had given up trying to find *why* he was suffering, his mind would not have wandered into these unhelpful speculations and meanderings.

Job 14:5 Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months is with You, and You have appointed his bounds that he can't pass- This may be a reference to the 'wonderful numberer' Angel of Dan. 8:13 who controls the timing of all things. LXX "if even his life should be but one day upon the earth: and his months are numbered by him: thou hast appointed him for a time, and he shall by no means exceed it". The restoration prophets interpret this more positively, in that the appointed time was set to favour Zion (Ps. 102:13)- just as a time was set for the end bounds of Job's sufferings. "Determined" is the word used for the 'determined time' of Judah's judgment and restoration (Is. 10:22,23; 28:22; Dan. 9:27; 11:36). "Bounds" is the word translated "appoint me a set time" in :13. Job longed for that point to come, in that he assumed that the bound or end of his suffering was in death. When God finally appears, that bound or set time is reached- and by pure grace, Job is restored and not slain in death. And this was what could have happened for the exiles when the appointed 70 year period ended.

Job 14:6 look away from him, that he may rest, until he shall accomplish, as a hireling, his day- Job's faith in resurrection or future restoration comes and goes; in :13 he looks for a future "set time" of change of fortune, but now he just longs for death, counting the days toward it, considering that there is more hope of a tree reviving than of human restoration (:7-10). The way restoration finally comes for Job is therefore proof enough that God doesn't require perfect faith.

Job 14:7 For there is hope for a tree, If it is cut down, that it will sprout again, that the tender branch of it will not cease- Job's idea that a tree will revive because it can sprout again with a "tender branch" is contrasted in his own mind with how he considers he doesn't have such hope (:10). However, these very images are reworked into a positive take by the restoration prophets. The revived Judah were indeed to have a "tender branch", a Messiah figure. Zerubbabel, the 'sprout from Babylon', could have fulfilled the prophecies in the sort term. There was indeed "hope" for the tree of Judah, once cut down by Babylon; just as finally, we are to see that Job also was "cut down" and yet sprouted again at his restoration.

The imagery is taken over in Is. 6:13: "If there is a tenth left in it, that also will in turn be consumed: as a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stump remains when they are felled; so the holy seed is its stump". The idea is of new life being sown from a minority (ten per cent?) as a result of the destruction of the majority. The image is similar to that of the Messianic "Branch" shooting forth from the decaying stump of the house of David. A ten percent minority is also envisaged in Am. 5:3; Am. 6:9,10.

The point is that as those trees even when cut down retain the seed in their roots, which will again spring up into a great tree, so out of the judgments to come upon Judah there would arise a remnant who would grow up into the great tree of God's restored Kingdom.

Job 14:8 Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground- "Earth" is *eretz*, the land (of Israel). If merely "soil" was intended, a different word would have been used. Again, we see the drama of Job has been tweaked, under Divine inspiration, to become the narrative for the exiles. The root had indeed largely died in the land at the time of the Babylonian invasion, but it still had some life and would "bud" again (Job 14:9). Job was the man with great roots who had been cut down but hadn't completely died (Job 8:17); his roots had been dried up (Job 18:16; 29:19). He represented Judah, whose roots were throughout the land as a tree transplanted by God (s.w. Ps. 80:9). Those roots were withered by the invasions (Is. 5:24), but out of those dry roots would grow up a "tender plant / branch" (Is. 11:1,10; 53:2), using the same word for "tender" as in Job 14:7. This Messianic suffering servant was to be based upon Job, and representative of all God's restored people. They were to again spread their roots in the land of promise in a restored Kingdom (Is. 37:31; Jer. 17:8), after the pattern of Job's restoration.

Job 14:9 yet through the scent of water it will bud, and put forth boughs like a plant- Perhaps God almost playfully responds to this by talking of how oceans of waters are under His control. Clearly Job's restoration was typical of how the restored Israel could "bud" and fill the land with fruit (s.w. Is. 27:6; 35:1,2; 66:14; Hos. 14:5,7).

Job 14:10 But man dies, and is laid low. Yes, man gives up the spirit, and where is he?- I pointed out on :4 that Job's depression leads him to a wrong understanding of the human condition; and here we have another example, in his denial of any hope of resurrection of the body (as in :12); even though by Job 19:25-27 he has come to believe in it, and even by :13 he has returned to some idea of it. Again we see how both Job and the friends have truth on many points, but framed in the wrong context. Death is indeed unconsciousness; but Job is overlooking the resurrection of the body and future restoration, just as the exiles were focused only upon their present realities and not eternal ones.

Job 14:11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the river wastes and dries up- The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him

again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 14:12 so man lies down and doesn't rise. Until the heavens are no more, they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep- Job was wrong to deny so dogmatically the hope of resurrection; see on :10. But he has the closeness of relationship with God to ask that in fact his case there would be a resurrection (:13), and by Job 19:25-27 he is thoroughly convinced there will be. We hereby see his growth in understanding throughout the book.

Job 14:13 Oh that You would hide me in Sheol, that You would keep me secret, until Your wrath is past- The desires of Job were met, at least potentially, in God's willingness to hide the exiles from further personal suffering when Babylon fell, and to preserve them for His restored Kingdom. For these words are surely alluded to in Is. 26:20: "Come, My people, enter into your rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for a little moment, until the indignation is past".

That You would appoint me a set time, and remember me!- As noted on :5, that "set time" corresponds with Job's restoration, just as the exiles were to be restored at the end of 70 years "set time". See on Job 7:1.

Much of what Job says is fantasy, especially about having a day in court with God and proving God wrong. But he also realistically admits that this can never ever happen. I suggest that we have the same here, a realistically admission that [as Job understands it] this life is all we have, and there is no hope of resurrection. But he fantasies of a time when actually he will live again, and God will be kind to him and stop looking at his sins and trying to hurt him. The wonderful truth is that God did for Job, and will do, exceeding abundantly above all he asked or thought. He was already right with God, and God would resurrect him into His Kingdom and eternal relationship with Him.

Job's fantasy that one day, eternal death would be over and God would again speak with him... is wedged in between statements from Job that clearly state that he doesn't believe in any future hope. He says he will wait until "my release comes. You would call and I would answer you; you would yearn for the work of your hands" (Job 14:13-15). He clearly alludes to Adam being called by God in Eden, but this time, Job will answer God's call with a good conscience. But in :19 he will return to his baseline disbelief in a future hope: "Water wears away stone, and torrents wash away soil. So you destroy a man's hope". So in fantasy, Job dreams of a day when God would be in free, open and loving relationship with him, instead of being [as Job thought] caught up with the issue of human sin, for ever touchy and sensitive about what He thinks we've done wrong, always watching Job's sins, dredging up his past sins, and carefully watching every step he makes and noting the sins involved in it: "But now You number my steps. Don't You watch over my sin?" (:16). And as discussed on :17, he felt God kept a record of all his past sins. He has asked in Job 13:21 "Don't let Your terror make me afraid"; the terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). His fantasy is of living without fear of Divine condemnation hanging over him; hence

his demand of God to stop hiding His face from him. He wanted to see God's unhidden face. And we have been given exactly this hope and freed from condemnation in the Lord Jesus.

That dream, that fantasy, was in fact real for Job. The prologue describes God's very high view of Job as He observed his path in this life. That high view was in spite of the fact Job had sinned at times in his life and was just a mere human, as Job admits in this chapter. We too can imagine a world where we live without any fear of God for ever touchy about sin. And we live freely with Him. He calls to us, as He called to Adam in the garden, and we freely respond with no fear. That is in fact the life we can have now in the Lord Jesus, and which awaits us eternally.

Job 14:14 If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my warfare would I wait, until my release should come-

Job recognized that there would come a time when "My change come (when) Thou shalt call, and I will answer Thee: (I know) Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine hands" (Job 14:14,15 AV). It would appear from this that Job feels that there will be a call to resurrection corresponding to God's call of Adam out of hiding, after which he would confess his sins- i.e. at the judgement. God's calling to Job out of the whirlwind and Job's subsequent confession at the end of the book again encourages us to see "the end of the Lord" with Job as pointing forward to our justification at the day of judgement and the Kingdom, as well as the restoration possible for the exiles. See on Job 14:20.

Even if God slew him, Job would still be patient or wait (Job 13:15), he would 'patiently wait' for his "release" (AV "change") to come at some point after his death (Job 14:14), and waited for light to somehow come out of his current darkness (Job 30:26). This was the legendary "patience of Job" which we are bidden follow (James 5:11). He was impatient, but he was "patient" in the Hebrew sense of enduring in faith; faith that even if things didn't work out at all in this life, even if God was apparently unfair in this life, he would be finally restored at the resurrection. This was his 'endurance', and it is a parade example for all who struggle with the justice of God and the incomprehensible problem of suffering.

Job 14:15 You would call, and I would answer You. You would have a desire to the work of Your hands- This desire to be called by God and to answer repeats Job 13:22 "Then call, and I will answer". He wants to be as Adam in Eden, for Eden to be restored and for him to be called by God as Adam was, and to be able to freely answer with no conscience of sin. Restored relationship with God was what Job wanted. He wanted to have God having a yearning for him, as the work of His hands. The truth is, we know from the prologue that indeed that was always how God viewed Job. The tragedy was that he didn't trust it to be true, and was loaded with false guilt by his friends and his theology to think otherwise. The friends, as discussed on Job 11:16, thought that health and wealth in this life was all God was offering Job if he repented. That wasn't actually what Job wanted; he wanted relationship with God, and feeling God loved him. As we know from the prologue, he actually had all those things- he just couldn't see beyond the steely silence of the skies. Despite all his apparently bitter words against God, Job realizes that finally, "God is love". For he uses a very tender expression for how he believes when God finally calls him to judgment, God will have a "desire" to Job as His very own created handiwork. It was 'just' that God was apparently acting very differently at that time in Job's mortal life. This is one implication of understanding that we are God's created beings, made in His image and

likeness, and not mere results of random evolutionary chance. If indeed we are created by Him in His image, then He has a tenderness toward us, ultimately.

Job 14:16 But now You number my steps. Don't You watch over my sin?- This was how Job felt in this life, but he has prefaced this in :15 by saying that he believes that finally God would call him to judgment and show great tenderness to him. That indeed was what happened when God appeared at the end, speaking positively of the Job who had well nigh cursed Him, and restoring him. And the exiles could have experienced the same grace. We note that Job is slowly moving towards the acceptance that he does have "my sin", a realization which will come to full term when God finally appears. Earlier he has spoken as if he has nothing to apologize for before God.

Job 14:17 My disobedience is sealed up in a bag. You fasten up my iniquity-

Job imagines God as having written his sins on a papyrus scroll and sealed it up for ever: or perhaps the allusion is to small egg-shaped memorial stones inscribed with debts and kept in a sealed bag. As discussed on :13, his fantasy was to be able to live freely with God, knowing God in fact didn't remember our past sins and they were dealt with. And that fantasy was in fact true for him [see the Prologue] and could be true for every man, especially in Christ.

LXX "and marked if I have been guilty of any transgression unawares". Like David, Job felt that God took note of sins of ignorance. But although he is now beginning to accept his sinfulness, he is justifying it. He has argued that his human nature is an excuse, and now he deploys the argument that any sin found in him would be a mere sin of ignorance. He has yet to come to the final confession of sin he makes at the end, when he ceases all attempts at self-justification before the marvel of God's justification of him.

Job 14:18 But the mountain falling comes to nothing. The rock is removed out of its place- We note the progression from mountain to rocks to stones to dust (:19). Job saw man's being brought to dust as reflected in the process of erosion which can remove the greatest mountains. Again, Job is saying the truth but within the wrong framework. For although God indeed brings to dust, He revives from the dust and can work any number and nature of new creations. Again, the restoration prophets have a positive take on this; the great mountain which God would surely remove was Babylon, and He would establish the mountain of His restored people and Kingdom in Zion (Zech. 4:7; Dan. 2:45). See on Job 18:4.

Job 14:19 the waters wear away the stones. The torrents of it wash away the dust of the earth. So You destroy the hope of man- Bildad had earlier argued that "the hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13). Job seems to now be saying that man generally has no hope at all, and so whether or not an individual is a hypocrite is meaningless. See on :18. Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not

because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there *is* hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 14:20 You forever prevail against him, and he departs. You change his face, and send him away- LXX "thou settest thy face against him, and sendest him away", relevant to the sending away of Judah into captivity with the face of God hidden from them and against them. See on :18. In his humbler moments Job recognized that he was a sinner and deserved Adam's punishment of being sent out of Eden; or also to Cain's countenance falling and then being sent away from God. See on Job 31:33; 9:17; 10:9. But Job makes one very wrong statement here, although 'just' one word: "forever". God does not send away forever. This was the whole message of the restoration prophets.

Job 14:21 His sons come to honour, and he doesn't know it. They are brought low, but he doesn't perceive it about them- This may simply be a reference to the numbness Job still felt about the bringing low of his own sons.

Job 14:22 But his flesh on him has pain, and his soul within him mourns- This clearly refers to Job personally; he saw himself as representative of the whole body of God's people, or all mankind. The captive exiles likewise 'mourned' (s.w. Ezra 10:6; Neh. 1:4), but were urged not to mourn (Neh. 8:9) because it was God's intention to restore them; after the pattern of Job.

JOB CHAPTER 15

Job 15:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered- Eliphaz in this speech clearly objects to Job having made any comeback whatsoever on what the friends have so far said. This is so often the case in supposed 'dialogue'; once people are persuaded of their own narrative, they accuse any dissent therefrom to be arrogance. Which is in turn really just their own pride.

Job 15:2 Should a wise man answer with vain knowledge, and fill himself with the east wind?- This is an allusion to inspiration, seeing that "wind" in Hebrew also means 'spirit'. He implies that he and the friends are Divinely inspired, whereas Job is not. Yet the friends state often that they are merely saying what the wise sages thought. But as often happens, by reason of merely repeating their own narrative they become persuaded of its truth and beauty and imply that in fact they are speaking on God's behalf, inspired by Him, and any opposition thereto is therefore uninspired and blasphemous. We note Job never claims to be inspired by God, his speeches are a struggle with God rather than a man claiming Divine inspiration.

Job 15:3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches with which he can do no good?- This reflects a very utilitarian view of grief and language, as if even in grief a man is supposed to say things which "do good", which somehow put things right. The friends change very quickly from their initial silent grief with Job, and become very aggressive. They cannot cope with their narrative being upset, or being rejected. And then all human sympathy for the individual suffering person goes out of the window.

Job 15:4 Yes, you do away with fear, and hinder devotion before God- "You have reduced reverence and maligned meditation before God". We can read "fear" as meaning 'fear of God'. This is saying that if Job is indeed an example [as he claims] of innocence and suffering co-existing at the same time, then the whole religious structure they knew would come crashing down. And indeed it does. And that is one of the purposes of the book of Job. For we know from the epilogue that Eliphaz speaks wrongly about both God and Job. GNB "If you had your way, no one would fear God"; and yet we know from the Prologue that Job indeed feared God like none other.

This would appear to be criticism of Job's confidence that he will finally be accepted by God, even if not in this life. Whatever Job said was found wrong by the friends, and this whole drama is a parade example of how dialogue breaks down to the point that every word said is taken issue with and found wrong; and then it is extrapolated to positions never intended by the speaker. In this case, Job's apparent confidence of final acceptance is extrapolated to mean that he is hindering or 'limiting' the power of prayer ["devotion"] to God.

Job 15:5 For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the language of the crafty-

This is indeed true, that sin within the heart leads to words; from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Mt. 12:34). The friends actually say more that is technically true than Job does; their theory is wrong regarding sin and suffering, but a lot of their other statements are true. Whereas the majority of what Job says isn't true and is in fact blasphemous. Yet God at the end says that Job said what was right about Him, and the friends didn't. This is such a glaring contradiction that it begs us to examine it- and clearly Yahweh's reference is to Job's final brief words of repentance, which weren't forthcoming from the friends. We are left to reflect that how much we have technically right in our theology isn't so much the issue as whether we have humbly repented.

As noted on :4, the friends were extrapolating from Job's words to positions they imputed to him which were totally untrue. He was hardly "crafty", he blurts out whatever he feels at the moment, oscillating between faith in resurrection and utter denial of it. The whole thing is an object lesson in how not to dialogue.

Job 15:6 Your own mouth condemns you, and not I. Yes, your own lips testify against you- I discussed on Job 4:9 how the words of the friends are not altogether untrue. Although the context of these words is that Eliphaz is twisting Job's words against him (see on :3-5), he states a truth. And this is picked up by the Lord in His words to the one-talent man in the parable: "Out of your own mouth will I judge / condemn you" (Lk. 19:22). The man was condemned for keeping his talent (his spiritual knowledge of the word) to himself rather than sharing it with others. Eliphaz proceeds to make the same rebuke of Job- although he had "heard the secret of God", which may imply the gift of prophesying the word seeing that Job was a prophet, he instead "restrained wisdom unto thyself" (:8 AV). This confirms that the one talent man of the parable is based on Job, thus making him represent the rejected at judgement. No doubt the primary application of the one talent man was to the Jewish believers of Christ's day who did not capitalize on the talent they already had. The taking away of the talent and its being given to others recalls the Kingdom (i.e. the Gospel of the

Kingdom) being taken from the Jews and being given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it (cp. trading the talent).

Job 15:7 Are you the first man who was born? Or were you brought forth before the hills?- This is probably quoting a proverb, something like "Yes, yes, he is the first man, no wonder that he is so wise!". The friends ridiculed Job's evident comparison of himself with Adam: "*Are you* (the emphasis is on that phrase) the first man (Adam; 1 Cor. 15:45 alludes here) who was born?". See on Job 31:33; 9:17; 10:9. But the idea is that there was more wisdom the further back you went; the further back in history, and also the longer you had lived, the more likely you were to have wisdom. This is a very weak argument; for Adam messed up, and the wisdom of sages is often at variance with God's wisdom.

Job 15:8 Have you heard the secret counsel of God? Do you limit wisdom to yourself?- "Do you listen in on the Divine council?" may be suggesting that the friends had done, but Job hadn't. This of course returns us to the prologue to the book, where it is the Satan who is in the Divine council. And that Satan figure may, on this basis, refer to the friends who now 'give the game away' by claiming to have listened in on the Divine council. But perhaps they may mean that neither they nor Job have listened in on the Divine council; but we the readers have done, because we have read of it in Job 1 and 2. And we know that they are wrong in what they assume about it. "Dost thou hearken in the council of God?" (Job 15:8 RVmg.) is the language of the Heavenly throne room- note how this is said in the context of Job, where we have the most classic statement of the operation of the court of heaven in the opening chapters. See on Job 1:6. If indeed the friends were the "sons of God" of the prologue, the fellow worshippers who were influenced by the discussion between God and the 'Satan' figure (who was also a human worshipper, it seems, although with Angelic representation in the court of heaven). If indeed all this is in view, the argument would be that Job was wrong to be out of step with the argument of the Satan. Eliphaz's argument would then be that indeed he was only faithful to God because God had blessed him, and Job was then wrong to deny it.

Or the idea may be that Job was not the *only* one who had heard God's counsel (:9); they had also heard it. And yet they did not accurately speak forth what they had heard, or were even inspired with, as Job did (Job 42:7).

Job 15:9 What do you know, that we don't know? What do you understand, which is not in us?- These are the words Job says to them. They are all in fact on the same square regarding the relationship between sin and suffering. But any issues outside that square make them bitter enemies; just as we see in so many church disputes today. This is all a parade example of how dialogue and inter-personal discussion goes so wrong. The friends were persuaded that their narrative was right, and Job couldn't teach them anything. Any new perspective he might offer was therefore treated as an example of his pride and assuming knowledge. But all this arose from their idea that 'truth' was a closed circle of ideas which they possessed and anything outside of it was just presumed knowledge. And human nature hasn't changed to this day, especially with those who consider that they hold absolute truth.

Job 15:10 With us are both the gray-headed and the very aged men, much elder than your father- This implies Job's father was still alive. Again, the source of truth is seen as predicated upon how long a person has lived. Human experience and developed

philosophy was seen as the authority, rather than Divine revelation. And this is why their arguments are reduced to nothing by the final appearance of God speaking His own words.

Job 15:11 Are the consolations of God too small for you, even the word that is gentle toward you?- LXX "Thou hast been scourged for but few of thy sins: thou hast spoken haughtily and extravagantly", just as Ezra says that Judah had suffered less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). Again, although what Eliphaz says is true so far as it goes, he is totally wrong because he fails to perceive that the grace of being punished less than sin deserves is but a prelude to glorious restoration.

Job 15:12 Why does your heart carry you away? Why do your eyes flash- Job was indeed angry, with flashing eyes. But the expression of emotion is misinterpreted as being angry with God (:13). God's special creation, Leviathan, also had flashing eyes (Job 41:18,19). Perhaps this is God's way of saying that eyes flashing with anger is not necessarily sinful of itself, and is all part of the natural created order, and is not worthy of rebuke in itself. This is said against the backdrop of a Bedouin culture where expressions of emotion were only to be made in appropriate ways. Possibly Eliphaz is accusing Job of having the 'evil eye' which was so commonly believed in. Job will reply in Job 16:9 that in fact, it is the other way around.

Job 15:13 that you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth?- As the speeches of the friends continue, they engage less and less with Job's actual words. They argue against their perceptions of his position and deal in vague generalities. This again is typical of the breakdown in meaningful dialogue which we see all around us, whereby the participants become confirmed in their positions and build up an image of their opponent in their mind which gets progressively awful and also the more confirmed as true in their view.

Job 15:14 What is man, that he should be clean? What is he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?- Here and in :15, Eliphaz is just repeating what he has said in Job 4:17-19. I noted there the problems with his ideas, and how questionable it was that he really had the vision he claimed, and in any case, the contents of it contradict Bible teaching elsewhere so it was not of God. And again, this is how human relationships break down, as discussed on :13. The participants revert to their old arguments and refuse to engage with what is being said by their opponent, whom they progressively demonize. Eliphaz's argument that man is inevitably sinful is used to desperately disprove Job's perceived claim of being sinless. But the argument also convicts Eliphaz of sin, as he too was human.

Job 15:15 Behold, He puts no trust in His holy ones. Yes, the heavens are not clean in His sight-

Eliphaz has a very negative view of God, assuming He is hard to please, despises men, Angels and His own "heavens", and is so negative about His servants. He is wrong on both counts. Eliphaz was clearly wrong to claim God thinks the heavens are unclean. We think of Ex. 24:10, “And they saw the God of Israel, and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the very heaven in its clearness". Angels don't sin, and God had a very high view of Job, although he was a man, as we know from the prologue. But Job basically accepts Eliphaz's wrong view of God, developing it to the point that Job accuses God of being a sadistic monster.

Eliphaz is just repeating what he has said in Job 4:17-19. I noted there the problems with his ideas, and how questionable it was that he really had the vision he claimed, and in any case, the contents of it contradict Bible teaching elsewhere so it was not of God.

It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

The question "How can a man be just with God?" is the same question as 'How can a man ever be clean before a perfect God?', and is repeated in this form in Job 9:30; 15:15; 25:5; here, we have the claim that even heaven is unclean before God. The exiles had considered themselves cleansed whiter than snow because of their obedience to some parts of the Mosaic law (Lam. 4:7), but failed to accept that such cleansing to be whiter than snow is only possible by doing what David did, and casting ourselves upon God's grace outside of justification by works (Ps. 51:7). Job was to learn this lesson at the end. It was this offer which was made to Job just as it was to Judah under judgment (Is. 1:18).

Job 15:16 how much less one who is abominable and corrupt, a man who drinks iniquity like water!- Eliphaz seems to be claiming this about all humanity, in order to desperately prove Job wrong in claiming to be sinless (as Eliphaz liked to perceive Job's words). There is error all around here. For Job was not claiming to be sinless, and Eliphaz was himself human, so his argument that we are all inevitable sinners would apply to himself. But self-awareness and humility aren't present in him; he is driven to prove Job wrong, and he will use any argument to do so. The simple truth is as Job put it- God has a tender desire to man, the work of His hands (Job 14:15). And whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus. He fully shared that nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Man by nature, just standing there as flesh and blood before God, is not "abominable" to Him of himself. It is sin which is the problem; and sin is not inevitable. We must bear full responsibility for our sins and cannot just pass them off as an inevitable function of our humanity. The wrong view of human nature held by the friends affected their view of Job and people in practice. They claim man is "abominable" to God, and therefore the same word is used of how they abhorred Job, treating him as "abominable" (Job 19:19; 30:10). The lower our view of human nature, the more likely we are to despise human beings rather than value them and speak well of them because they are made in the image of God (James 3:9).

Job 15:17 I will show you, listen to me; that which I have seen I will declare- Eliphaz again is appealing to his supposed vision which he "saw", first referenced by him in

Job 4:17-19. I noted there the problems with his ideas, and how questionable it was that he really had the vision he claimed, and in any case, the contents of it contradict Bible teaching elsewhere so it was not of God. Eliphaz says that his position is what he has "seen"; but then :18 he says that it coincides with traditional wisdom. A rather fortunate coincidence! It's a classic case of confirmation bias. We say we are 'open minded', but we filter all our 'discoveries' to confirm what we already subconsciously decided to believe. "Confirmation bias is the unintentional psychological tendency to search for, interpret, favour, and recall information in a way that confirms your pre-existing beliefs. It acts as a mental shortcut, causing the brain to prioritize evidence that supports current opinions while conveniently ignoring or discrediting contradictory fact". And in the online world, it seems confirmation bias is an increasing problem, because algorithms on social media and search engines often learn what you like and feed you more of the same content, unintentionally amplifying your existing views.

Job 15:18 which wise men have told by their fathers, and have not hidden it- Eliphaz is careful to emphasize that what he 'has seen' in his vision is perfectly in line with the wisdom of the sages of old. This is so important in legalistic societies- to always speak in line with accepted, historical wisdom. There is no humility in this, no openness to truth or to the possibility that Divine revelation may in fact contradict all we once held as 'truth'. This is the power of God's final appearance and words at the end of the book.

Job 15:19 to whom alone the land was given, and no stranger passed among them- Eliphaz claims that his "fathers" were given the *eretz* alone and no other ethnic group. This could sound like an early form of the land dispute amongst the children of Abraham which we see to this day. We marvel at the relevance of this ancient book. Adding this point was irrelevant as to whether Eliphaz is speaking rightly about God, but for him it was obviously significant. GNB "Their land was free from foreigners" suggests Job's land had been taken over by foreigners; and so again we see the connection between Job and the exiles, whose land was taken over by the Babylonians.

Job 15:20 the wicked man writhes in pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor- This was his response to Job's statement in Job 12:6, that the tents of robbers were in peace. Clearly he has Job in view, who was oppressed by raiders, and was apparently writhing in pain constantly. Eliphaz suggests that Job must suffer this for a Divinely decreed "number of years". This is the phrase used of the number of years Judah and Israel were to suffer for their sins in exile at the hands of their oppressors (Ez. 4:5; Dan. 9:2). "Laid up" is AV "hidden". Perhaps Elihu alludes to this when he uses the same phrase to say that "the number of years" cannot be "searched out" because God is great (Job 36:26). This may refer to how Daniel tried to search out the number of years Judah ought to be in captivity, and had to conclude that the 70 years time period was flexible, depending upon Judah's repentance and other preconditions. We note Ez. 4:5 gives a different period.

Job 15:21 A sound of terrors is in his ears. In prosperity the destroyer shall come on him- In God's final revelation to the friends and Job, they all heard the terrifying sound of the approaching theophany in the thunderstorm. They were thereby convicted of Divine judgment, expressed in their own terms.

Eliphaz says that Job's sudden problems amid his prosperity were what would happen to all the wicked. This seems to be alluded to in 1 Thess. 5:3 concerning the sudden destruction of rich, spiritually self confident believers- but at the Lord's coming, not in this life. Again we see the friends stating things which are true as far as they go, but framing them in a context which makes them untrue; and this can happen today.

The friends insist that "the destroyer" [by which they surely meant an early equivalent to 'the devil' of popular belief today] had touched Job- whereas Job insists that it is *God* who had destroyed him (Job 15:21 cp. 19:10; 13:21), perhaps through the Divine Angel known as "the destroyer" (1 Cor. 10:10). I suggested on Job 1:6 that the 'Satan' may have reference to an obedient Divine Angel. In some ways the book of Job is a deconstruction of the popular Persian and Canaanite myths about a 'satan' figure. Job, both in the story of his sufferings and his specific words, seeks to demonstrate that the essential issues in life is being "just with God", and not whether or not we are touched by the hand of an evil being; for the hand of God which touched Job (Job 19:21) is the hand of 'satan' into whom God delivered Job temporarily (Job 1:12). Job says that the attitude of the friends is wrong- they should be looking into themselves, rather than fantasizing about the action of some unseen evil being they imagined: "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in *me*?... know that there is a [personal] judgment" (Job 19:28,29).

Job 15:22 He doesn't believe that he shall return out of darkness. He is waited for by the sword- The oblique references to Job continue. He has oscillated between faith in a return from the darkness of death, and yet disbelief in this. Uncharitably, Eliphaz focuses upon the low points of his statements. This too can be how we handle interaction with others- seizing upon their lowest points. Job was constantly writhing in pain (:20), so to focus upon his words at his lowest points shows a willful desire to judge and not save him. We need to learn from this not to mentally record every word spoken in a dialogue- if we are truly seeking to help and restore, rather than judge. Eliphaz was sure that it was only a matter of time before the sword of Divine judgment fell upon Job; hence God's appearance and justification of Job was so fatal for Eliphaz.

Job 15:23 He wanders abroad for bread, saying, 'Where is it?'. He knows that the day of darkness is ready at his hand- LXX "and a dark day shall carry him away as with a whirlwind"; the language of Judah's destruction, and also alluding to Job's sons being slain by a whirlwind. Eliphaz implies that that is coming for Job too. It could seem from what Eliphaz says that Job was even driven to begging for bread by this point.

Job 15:24 They prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle- Eliphaz claims that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle. But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

Job 15:25 Because he has stretched out his hand against God, and behaves himself proudly against the Almighty- As noted above, Eliphaz is imputing positions to Job,

extrapolating from Eliphaz's general impression of Job's positions and turning them into something far removed from reality- in this case, accusing Job of actively stretching out his hand against God. To stretch out the arm is an idiom for judging (Jer. 6:12 and often). The idea is that Job has judged God. Hence the first half of the verse reflects the second half- he has behaved proudly against God.

Job 15:26 he runs at Him with a stiff neck, with the thick shields of his bucklers- As noted on :25, this again is a grotesque extrapolation from Job's positions, claiming that he is proactively against God, charging at Him as a fully armed solider charges at an enemy.

Job 15:27 because he has covered his face with his fatness, and gathered fat on his thighs- Eliphaz refers to how Job was once full fleshed because of the good life he enjoyed, whereas now he was emaciated and begging for bread (:23). GNB renders :26,27 "They are proud and rebellious; they stubbornly hold up their shields and rush to fight against God". The allusion would be to Job's reckless bravado in going out to fight against God by demanding He come to court with Job, and be defeated by Job in court.

Job 15:28 He has lived in desolate cities, in houses which no one inhabited, which were ready to become heaps- LXX "and what they have prepared, others shall carry away"- the language of the Babylonian captivity and the curses for disobedience to the covenant. Job had not broken the covenant, but is suffering as if he had, as the representative suffering servant. It could be implied that Job was now living in deserted homes in deserted settlements, as well as begging for bread (:23). This would all imply a period of time during which the historical Job suffered.

Job 15:29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his substance continue, neither shall their possessions be extended on the earth- The "substance" of Israel would continue blessed if they continued obedient (Dt. 33:11 s.w.) and be removed if they were not (s.w. Is. 10:14; Jer. 15:13). Again we see Job suffering as the representative of sinful Israel whilst himself innocent, all looking forward to the nature of the Lord's work for us as the ultimate suffering servant.

Job 15:30 He shall not depart out of darkness- Job had perceived that God would and could bring light out of darkness (Job 12:22). To predict that the darkness was endless is presented here as a major sin and mistaken position. And so it was for those who thought the darkness of exile in Babylon could never end.

The flame shall dry up his branches. By the breath of God's mouth shall he go away- The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for

Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

Job 15:31 Let him not trust in emptiness, deceiving himself; for emptiness shall be his reward- This idea that we become like that which we trust or worship is again true, so far as it goes. "Trust" is the usual word for "belief"; and "emptiness" is s.w. "vanities", a term often used about idols. There is here the definite suggestion Job was an idol worshipper. This was untrue. Now Eliphaz has been driven to absolutely wrong conclusions about Job, because he is so convinced that suffering means major sin has been committed. We see a progressive imputation of sin to Job by the friends, all dramatically reversed when God appears and imputes righteousness to Job.

Job 15:32 It shall be accomplished before his time. His branch shall not be green- To die before man's time, to die young, was seen as a sign of Divine judgment. The death of the Lord Jesus at 33 reveals what a misunderstanding this was.

Job 15:33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive tree- The idea is that he would begin having fruit, but it would be shaken off before it came to maturity. The reference would be to the way Job had had children, but they had been slain in relative youth. The friends are later accused of 'wronging' Job by wicked "devices" (Job 21:27). 'Wronging' is the same word as "shake off" in Job 15:33. Eliphaz was so convinced that God would do Job 'wrong' that he developed to the point of actually devising to do wrong to Job, thus confirming the sense that the friends became the 'Satan' figure and actually did the evil to Job which he initially wanted done.

Job 15:34 For the company of the Godless shall be barren, and fire shall consume the tents of bribery- It was Job's tents that had been consumed, and so clearly Eliphaz implies Job's children had practiced bribery. Perhaps they had- for they were indeed destroyed by "the fire of God". But he is wrong to imply some kind of guilt by association whereby Job had done the same and was about to be judged for it.

Job 15:35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity. Their heart prepares deceit- Eliphaz thought there were only a few very sinful people in the world, of whom Job was one; but his words are quoted by the Spirit in Is. 59:4 concerning the whole nation of Israel; and this in turn is quoted in Rom. 3:15-17 concerning the whole human race. This same path of progressive realization of our sinfulness must be trodden by each faithful individual, as well as on a communal level. The association between Job's supposed sins and those of Israel again confirms the idea that Job is the prototype suffering servant of Is. 53, carrying Israel's sins and the judgments for them, whilst personally innocent.

JOB CHAPTER 16

Job 16:1 Then Job answered- Job only gives the first six verses to responding to Eliphaz and then addresses himself to God. Job here despairs at how Eliphaz has merely repeated his earlier speech; and his disillusion with the friends leads him in this speech to therefore turn to God more strongly and directly. And this is where disillusion with fellow believers and religious structures will lead the truly spiritual person- to the God whom we know has the answers to our unaddressed issues and questions, even if for now He is not revealing them.

Job 16:2 I have heard many such things. You are all miserable comforters!- The friends admit they are only saying what was generally accepted wisdom at the time. Job had heard this many times over. But it gave him no comfort. This leads him to seek "comfort" from God; and the restoration prophets promise such "comfort" direct from God to the exiles who had not found it in traditional answers (Is. 40:1; 66:13).

Job 16:3 Shall vain words have an end? Or what provokes you that you answer?- Job is led by the annoying, empty answers of the friends to long for "an end". And that is what he is given when Elihu and then God appear at the end. His enquiry as to what was motivating them can be read as genuine pity for them, and a desire to help them forward spiritually- even from his own desperate position. This basic desire was rewarded at the end, when he is asked to pray for the friends and thereby save them from their own stupidity.

Job 16:4 I also could speak as you do. If your soul were in my soul's place, I could join words together against you, and shake my head at you- It was against the Lord Jesus that the Jews shook their head, as He died the death of the suffering servant (Ps. 22:7). Despite his own awful situation, with all the self-centeredness which is elicited by extreme physical pain and suffering, Job thinks himself into their very soul, imagining how he would react in their situation. This basic concern for them was turned into reality when God makes Job their saviour in the end.

Job 16:5 but I would strengthen you with my mouth. The solace of my lips would relieve you- We can't be brethren in Christ who have no effect on the rest of the body. We all have an influence on others. Words of our brethren really can strengthen and relieve. Our behaviour, however passive, has a powerful effect on our brethren. We are all members of one body. See on :6. On the contrary, a whole community can be cursed for the sake of one man's sin, even if he later repents (2 Kings 24:3,4). The fact we can be guilty of causing others to stumble means that we can limit God's gracious plan for them. "Strengthen" is exactly what God wanted to do for the exiles in their suffering (s.w. Is. 35:3; 41:10).

Job 16:6 Though I speak, my grief is not subsided. Though I forbear, what am I eased?- "Relieve" in :5 is the same word translated "subside" in :6. Job is therefore pointing out that the words of another can relieve grief in a way that ones' own self-talk simply cannot (Job 16:5,6).

Job 16:7 But now, God, you have surely worn me out- Or, "wearied", the same word used of the weariness of sinful Judah (Jer. 9:5; 12:5; Ez. 24:12). Job was to be read as their representative, although not personally sinful.

You have made desolate all my company- Job had sought comfort from the friends, his "company", but he feels that the lack of comfort from them is also somehow God's testing of him. Those who despair at the lack of comfort from their fellow believers would do well to adopt this perspective; that this too is from God, and as in Job's case in this speech, it is designed to drive us the closer to Him personally.

Job 16:8 You have shrivelled me up. This is a witness against me. My leanness rises up against me. It testifies to my face- Job looked at his body, as the Lord looked upon His own body from His elevated position on the cross (Ps. 22:17). The once fat and full fleshed Job (see on Job 15:27) was now thin and emaciated. Job has absorbed the theology of the friends, to the point he believes that judgment for sin is revealed in a person's body, particularly in the state of their skin / flesh. He considers that his emaciated skin and body is a witness to the fact God considers he has sinned, and has punished him for it. This sets the scene for his desire in Job 19:25-27 for a new body, a body restored.

Job 16:9 He has torn me in His wrath, and persecuted me. He has gnashed on me with His teeth- Job 41:14 speaks of how terrible are the teeth of the creature God has made; but He alone can open the mouth of it and is fearless before its' teeth. The idea of the connection back to Job 16:9 is that God knows all about teeth. He has designed them, and even if Job thinks God is gnashing at Him like a beast, he must accept that God creates the beast and its teeth.

My adversary sharpens His eyes on me- Job sees God as his adversary / enemy; he understood God to be the Satan. God's eyes often refer to the Angels. For the connection between the satan and an Angel, see on Job 1:6. Quite possibly Job considers that he is suffering because of the 'evil eye' of the friends; again, they are the Satan. But he fails to consider that God could easily overcome that. In fact it is God's Angel eye that is upon Him. He is responding to Eliphaz's claim that Job has the evil eye (Job 15:12).

Job 16:10 They have gaped on me with their mouth. They have struck me on the cheek reproachfully- The implication could be that the friends not only gaped at him and gathered themselves to him, but also literally struck him on the cheek in rebuke of his words. The exact language of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "suffering servant" (Ps. 22:13; Mic. 5:1). I have earlier suggested that the "friends" morph with the Satan figure, adopting his mentality, and proceed to actually bring some of the sufferings upon Job. Their aggression was to the point of pulling faces and hitting him. Yet they originally came to see him to comfort him, apparently sincerely. This is how far and how quickly a false theological understanding can transform human relationships for the worse. They also spat in his face (see on Job 17:6).

They gather themselves together against me- A reference to the friends gathering themselves together to supposedly comfort Job.

Job 16:11 God delivers me to the ungodly, and casts me into the hands of the wicked- There is reason to think that Eliphaz, the leader of the friends, may have been the specific individual referred to as 'satan' in the prologue. God singles him out for especial condemnation at the end (Job 42:7). After one of Eliphaz's speeches, Job responds with what appears to be a comment upon him, rather than God, here in :9-11. Eliphaz was a Temanite, from where Job's afflicters came. See on Job 1:6. But Job

perceives that God is working through the friends; and his thoughts about them in :9,10 now therefore merge into his thoughts about God, so clearly did He see God working through them. This is a sure example as to how we can see the difficult people in our lives- as used by God. This removes some amount of personal anger with them, even though God is not forcing them to behave as they do, and they will be ultimately accountable for it as the friends were.

Job 16:12 I was at ease, and He broke me apart- The language here is pretty much blasphemous: "I was at ease, and he broke me in two; he seized me by the neck and dashed me to pieces". Job accuses God of random violence, and serious abuse of power. If only he knew the high opinion God had of him, as revealed in the prologue!

There are some very evident ways in which Job spiritually grew. In Job 3:26 he originally says that his life previous to his afflictions had not been a life of ease; but as a result of his suffering, he realized that actually it had been "at ease".

Yes, He has taken me by the neck, and dashed me to pieces- Job perceives God as a lion or beast of prey, taking him off to His lair by the neck and now ripping him apart.

He has also set me up for His target- Like the friends, Job is starting to repeat himself; for he has said this in Job 6:4; 7:20. Eliphaz blames Job's troubles upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. Eliphaz there speaks of how man's trouble comes "as the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Resheph was known as "the lord of the arrow" and the Ugaritic tablets associate him with archery (William J. Fulco, *The Canaanite God Resep* (New Haven, CT: American Oriental Society, 1976)). We would therefore be justified in reading in an ellipsis here: man's trouble comes "as the [arrows of] the sons of Resheph fly upwards". Job's response is that "The arrows of *the Almighty* are in me" (Job 6:4), and he laments that God is an archer using him as his target for practice (Job 7:20; 16:12,13). Job refuses to accept Eliphaz's explanation that Job is a victim of Resheph's arrows. For Job, if God is "the Almighty" then there is no space left for Resheph. Each blow he received, each arrow strike, was from God and not Resheph.

Job 16:13 His archers surround me. He splits my kidneys apart, and does not spare. He pours out my gall on the ground- The prophets speak of archers surrounding Zion, and the language of gall and kidneys spilled on the ground is that of Jeremiah in Lamentations reflecting on the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians. God was to threaten His sinful people that He would "not spare" (Jer. 13:14; Lam. 2:2). He finally did, in His grace. Job has earlier hinted that God would have a tender desire to the work of his hands at the end (Job 14:15), but in his weakness he has for now lost that perspective. And yet at this very nadir of faith and understanding, he becomes the representative of God's people who felt He had not spared them.

"And does not spare" is literally "without pity". Surely this is alluded to in James 5:11. In Job we see that in "the end of the Lord", He is in fact "very pitiful and of tender mercy". Again we have Job wrong. And this is yet another outburst he later has to repent of. Just as Joseph appeared hard to his brothers whilst having a heart that broke and wept for them, so is God with man.

Job 16:14 He breaks me with blow after blow. He runs on me like a giant- LXX "They...", as if Job saw God manifest in the abusers. This was the situation in the Babylonian overthrow of Judah. Just as Eliphaz had exaggerated Job's position to the

point of accusing him of running upon God as a charging soldier (Job 15:26), so Job now makes the same mistake and does the same, exaggerating positions and extrapolating to make God like a giant charging at him. This was not at all the case. But once one party in a dialogue starts distorting things grossly, the partner in the dialogue tends to do the same in other contexts. And this is a lesson for us today.

It was so hard for Job to accept that God and not any orthodox 'Satan' figure was his adversary. It's one thing to deduce from the Bible that both good and disaster comes from the Lord, as per Is. 45:5–7. It's of course quite another to accept it in real life, and Job is an inspiring example. Job 16:9–14 is so powerful – the poetry speaks of Job's awesome and even angry realization that *God* is in fact [in a sense] his enemy / adversary. "Here Job... identifies God as his enemy rather than his advocate. From his perspective he is led to wonder if the God in whom he trusted is not in reality his Satan" (J.E. Hartley, *The Book of Job* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) p. 30). See on Job 19:26.

Job 16:15 I have sewed sackcloth on my skin- The language of the Messianic Ps. 69:11 about the suffering of the Lord Jesus. Sinful Israel were called to do this in repentance (Jer. 6:26); they refused to do so, and so they were covered with sackcloth at the time of their judgment (Lam. 2:10). Job was sorry for himself, and didn't use sackcloth as a sign of repentance but of self pity. This was to be transformed at the end when he really repents unconditionally.

And have thrust my horn in the dust- His horn may refer to his reproductive organ, so desperate was he to express his grief.

Job 16:16 My face is red with weeping. Deep darkness is on my eyelids- "On my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:16 AV). Job felt he was facing death right before his eyes, and the shadow of that death was cast over his eyes. But God disagrees, challenging Job that he has not in fact seen "the doors of the shadow of death" (Job 38:17 s.w.). Job had only seen death from a personal, human perspective. God sees death for what it really is, and it is far more terrible than man perceives. For from God's perspective it carries with it the tragedy of the eternity which a man has missed, if he has rejected God. And God is saying that Job hasn't see death from that perspective.

Job 16:17 Although there is no violence in my hands, and my prayer is pure- Job oscillates between accepting he has sinned, and protesting his innocence. The final appearance of God leads him to the unqualified conclusion that he is indeed a sinner, and this was God's intended outcome for the exiles in captivity. Job's oscillation however is understandable once we perceive that he is being set up as representative of God's sinful people, represented by the friends. He is suffering the judgment for sins when he himself is innocent, pointing forward to the Lord's representative sacrifice.

The Hebrew phase translated "not for any violence" occurs only once elsewhere- in the prophecy of the suffering servant who "had done no violence" (Is. 53:9). The suffering servant of later Isaiah is without doubt based upon Job, who was repeatedly called "My servant" and highly praised by God (Job 1:8; 2:3; 7:2), just as God praised "My servant" in Is. 42:1-4. Both Job and the suffering servant are declared "righteous" by God (Is. 42:6).
Isaiah's servant figure represented both Israel, and the Lord Jesus, who was their

representative. That servant figure is presented as weak and fallible, blind and deaf, as Israel were; but the servant is also the Lord Jesus, who was perfect but also totally representative of weak Israel. He thus became the way to their salvation. Job was counted perfect to start with, but throughout the dialogues he blasphemes and says many wrong things; but at the end he repents, and his prayer results in the salvation of the friends. He shared their wrong views and attitudes, but was seen as perfect; he was their representative. The Lord Jesus didn't sin, unlike Job. But He likewise identifies with us so that we may identify with Him, in baptism and in a life lived in Him. And so the blaspheming, cursing Job is at the very same time the representative of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant; and through his sufferings, his people [= the friends] are saved. This is all God's intricate and amazingly achieved work. The connections between Job and Isaiah's suffering servant are worth listing:

- "Surely the justice due to me is with Yahweh, and my reward with my God" (Is. 49:4,5) is so often the language and argument of Job
- The servant was considered "stricken" of God ["yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted", Is. 53:4; "stricken for the disobedience of My people", Is. 53:8], just as Job was (Job 19:21)
Job was considered to have been chastised by God (Job 5:17); the same word used of the servant's "chastisement" ("the chastisement of our peace was upon him", Is. 53:5).
- Job was "despised" by his people (Job 19:18) was the Lord (Is. 53:3) by brethren. They "forgot" him and 'stayed away' from him (Job 19:13,14); as God's people "hid their faces" from the servant (Is. 53:3).
- The buffeting / smiting of Job upon the cheek implied by Job 16:10 is what they did to the suffering servant, who was also smitten on the cheek (Is. 50:6; 53:4).
- They spat in the face of the servant (Is. 50:6); the Hebrew word is used only of Job and the suffering servant: "They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face" (Job 30:10; 17:6, RSV).
- Job suffered "not for any violence" in his hands (Job 16:17); and the phrase is only used elsewhere of the suffering servant suffering not for any violence: "because he had done no violence" (Is. 53:9).
- Job's prayer was pure (Job 16:17); just as there was no guile found in the mouth of the servant (Is. 53:9).
Men were astonished / appalled at Job's sufferings (Job 17:8); as they were at those of the servant (Is. 52:14 s.w.)
- Job's "Who will contend with me?" (Job 13:19) is the very same question posed by the suffering servant (Is. 50:8)
- The "travail" of the soul of the suffering servant (Is. 53:11) is the word used for Job's toil / travail (Job 7:3).

We naturally enquire why the blaspheming Job during the time of his sufferings should be made such a detailed type of the sinless Lord Jesus. But more correctly, Isaiah's suffering servant is being constructed upon the image and language of the suffering, sinful Job. The servant in Isaiah is indeed the Lord Jesus; but the same servant is frequently criticized as sinful, blind, deaf, dumb- a useless messenger who doesn't do what his master asks. The servant is sinful Israel. But the servant is also the Lord Jesus; in that in His death, He totally represented and identified with sinful Israel, supremely in His death on the cross. And there, He was identified with Job *during Job's time of suffering*. Which was when the otherwise righteous Job was at his lowest point spiritually, blaspheming God, falsely accusing God... And this is the wonderful thing about the Lord's death. There He identified not simply with "us" and

the people of God generally, but specifically with us *at our very lowest points, in the depth of our sins, at the nadir of our spirituality*. We find all this hard to grasp, because we naturally move away from obnoxious people, those who speak or act badly toward us. And we might possibly resume the relationship when they treat us better. God's movement is quite the other way- toward us, to save us. Just as a parent walking with a child will show the child far more attention when they stumble and fall, than when they are walking calmly and sensibly. It's the Footprints in the Sand poem...

Job 16:18 Earth, don't cover my blood- The crying out of blood means he is apparently appealing to God for justice and the revenge of his wrongly shed blood (as in Dt. 21:1-9), in that he thinks he is about to die and his death will be unjust and a case of murder. But he considers God to be a murderous monster, who is slaying him. His appeal is therefore to someone other than God, to investigate his death and take vengeance on God. And the wrongful shedding of blood had to be punished by death- he wanted God punished with death. How blasphemous is that... That being he appeals to is the "witness" he fantasizes about in :19; the one he fantasized about in Job 9:32,33, who was higher than both God and himself, who could place his hand upon both God and man, acting as an "umpire" between God and man (Job 9:33). The language of "umpire" suggests Job considered God was not playing by the rules and was unfairly winning against him...

Here he seems to associate himself with unfairly persecuted Abel, whose blood cried out for justice (Gen. 4:10). And yet he earlier compares his seeking of death and not finding it, as a marked man, with the judgment of Cain. He feels he is being treated as Cain when he is in fact as Abel. This is exactly what happened to the Lord in hearing our sins. See on Job 11:15.

Let my cry have no place to rest- Job makes the amazing comment: "Although He slays me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13:15). The language of 'slaying' takes us back to the Mosaic commands about how a 'slayer' of a man might be killed by the 'avenger of blood'. Job saw God as slaying him; yet he also sees God as the 'witness' in the case (Job 16:19), and the avenger of Job's blood (Job 19:25). Job even asks God to not let the earth cover his blood, so that God as the avenger of Job's blood may avenge Job's death, continuing the allusions to the avenger of blood scenario. Job feels he is innocent blood. Job does *not* see 'Satan' as his slayer, and God as the avenger of his blood. Instead Job – in a quite breathtaking set of associations – sees God in all these things: the slayer, the legal witness to the slayer, the avenger of blood, and the One who will enforce the doing of justice in this case, the One who will not let the earth cover Job's blood. If Job really believed in a superhuman Satan, in Satan as the bad guy and God as the avenger of the injustice, he surely would've expressed himself differently. As Job imagines God as it were taking vengeance on Himself, so he came to portray for all time the way that evil and good are indeed both ultimately from God.

Job 16:19 Even now, behold, my witness is in heaven. He who vouches for me is on high- See on :18. Job in his depths came to know God as his "witness in heaven"; in his former life, "when the eye saw me, it gave witness [s.w.] to me" (Job 29:11). But Job was brought to learn that the only ultimate witness in life is God, and it is His testimony and not man's which is meaningful.

However, the witness in Heaven who is on Job's side in Job 16:10 could be another reference to the redeemer / advocate or negotiator that Job had dreamt of

having in Job 9 and who he more strongly believes in by the time of Job 19. "He who vouches for me" is rendered “advocate” (NASB), “he who testifies for me” (ESV). He speaks of this person in Job 16:21: "that he [the witness in heaven] would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour!". We could translate Job 16:20 as referring to this mediator: "my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend"; NIV "My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend". Such an entity is clearly not God Himself, because Job imagines this person maintaining Job's "right" with God. He views God very negatively, so the witness in Heaven "who vouches for me on high" is not God, but this imagined, hoped for person. Job fantasized about such a person "like me" in Job 9:32-35: "For there is not a person like me to whom I could answer: "let us come together in judgment." Would that there were an umpire between us who would lay his hand on the two of us, taking from upon me His [God's] rod and not allowing His dread to terrify me. I would speak and not be afraid of him [the imagined umpire]". But in Job 16, Job seems more positive about the existence of this being. And Job appears to have the same person in view in Job 19:25: "I know that my redeemer lives: and finally he will stand upon the earth...". Job is very negative about God, but very positive about this personal "redeemer", who is "my" personal redeemer. The redeemer is not God, but this imagined "umpire", thanks to whom Job believes that he will somehow see God's face despite being "in the flesh". GNB of Job 19:25-27 makes this clearer: "I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense [a legal term; he has in view the court of Heaven]. [And therefore, because of this "someone"] even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this body I will see God. I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger". Job's image of this being develops; from an "umpire" in Job 9:33, to a passionate mediator / interceder (Job 16:18-21), to a redeemer and saviour in Job 19:25-27. Yet Job's belief in this imaginary interceder for him before a monster of a God seems to have receded again by Job 31:35, when Job again laments: "Oh that I had one to hear me!".

Elihu appears to say that such an intermediary is indeed the way to rightness with God: "If God has by Him an ambassador, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and [then] He [God] is merciful to him [man], and says, ‘Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom" (Job 33:23,24). The Hebrew is difficult, but the idea seems to be that Elihu suggests that indeed there may be such a mediator "by" God, at His right hand in Heaven, who could save Job- with the possible implication that it is him. We are intentionally left wondering about Elihu. God makes no use of him in reconciling Job to Himself. Job wanted a witness and advocate in the court of heaven, to try to get God back on Job's side. But we know from the prologue what went on in the court of heaven- God was totally "for" Job anyway. Job didn't have the Lord Jesus in view, and God engaged with Job directly, without mediation. But the fantasies of Job about such a person, and Elihu's confirmation of the details, all lead us naturally to think of the Lord Jesus. What Job so desperately wanted, even though he himself didn't actually need this person- we have, in the Lord Jesus. The advocate for Job in the heavenly court was in fact none other than God Himself, as we readers know from the prologue. God was not in fact angry with Job and in need of an advocate to somehow placate Him and make Him see sense. But all the same, despite in a sense not 'needing' such an advocate- it is what we want. Before the work of the Lord Jesus, God still saved men like Job even though there was no advocate like the Lord Jesus. But what we see from Job is the human desire for such an intercessor. And so even that has been provided in the Lord

Jesus, who ticks all the boxes of Job's desires and wish list for a qualified mediator. He is the "faithful witness" in Heaven whom Job dreamed of (Rev. 1:5; 3:14).

Job again dreams of this figure in Job 23:7: "There the righteous one might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge [i.e. God]". "The upright / righteous one" is the imaginary advocate Job fantasized of having. "There the upright *might* reason" suggests now Job again recognizes that in fact this figure doesn't exist. Likewise in Job 17:3 he feels he has absolutely nobody to take his side before God: "I am being honest, God. Accept my word. There is no one else to support what I say" (GNB). He dreams that this person might be able to eternally save him from his judge, i.e. God. He entertains the old popular [but wrong] idea of an angry God who is placated by an advocate. And then accepts he is fantasizing. Such fantasy is quite psychologically credible for someone enduring extreme suffering as Job was.

Job 16:20 My friends scoff at me. My eyes pour out tears to God- The emphasis is upon "God"; he had poured out his tears to the friends and they had scoffed at him. So his experience of disillusion with his brethren didn't turn him away from God, as so often happens; instead it drove him to throw himself more intimately upon his God.

Job 16:21 that He would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour!- Job sees his enemy as his "neighbour", surely referring to the friends. Again we have the hint that they had effectively morphed into the satan figure bringing some of the actual distresses upon him. Job felt like having a court case with them before God. But God's final appearance is to hold a court case against them all, Job included. Clearly the lesson is that instead of judging our brother and wanting justice established with him, we should concern ourselves with God's judgment of us, and our injustice before Him.

Maintaining the right is legal language. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

AV "Oh that one might plead for a man with God, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour!". "Plead" is the same word translated "umpire" in Job 9:33. The word suggests 'one who is right', a reasoner, an advocate, one who pleads, a reprover (Job 40:2 s.w.). Job's request is not simply for a mediator; he would have used a different word if so. He seems to want to put God in the dock, but knows this is not

appropriate; he wants someone else to do this who can legitimately do it. And he is rebuked for this in Job 40:2: "He that reproves / pleads with God, let him answer it!". And Job could not answer; indeed, "let him answer it!" could be a legal summons to Job to answer before the court of heaven. "Oh that one might plead..." (AV) is perhaps Job returning to his recognition that his desire for this 'pleader', this "umpire", is just fantasy. He actually didn't have such a person in Heaven. But we do... in the Lord Jesus. Job dreamed of an advocate who could plead with God for him, as a man pleads for his neighbour / friend. And indeed, what a friend we have in Jesus... He pleads for us because we are His friends. "I say to you my friends... You are my friends... No longer do I call you servants... but I have called you friends" (Lk. 12:4; Jn. 15:14,15).

Job 16:22 For when a few years have come, I shall go the way of no return- This may be a purposeful challenge to the statements of Eliphaz in the previous chapter, that Job is about to be smitten with death at any moment. Job instead gives himself a few years. We note that Job directly engages with the words of the friends, whereas they attack him in terms of vague generalities

JOB CHAPTER 17

Job 17:1 My spirit is consumed. My days are extinct, and the grave is ready for me- LXX "I seek for burial, and obtain it not". To have no burial and to have their corpse thrown on the open field was the very punishment several times threatened to Judah's leadership. Again Job oscillates; in Job 16:22 he has just given himself a few years, but now within the same speech he considers himself already as without spirit and at death's door. This is typical of a depressed sufferer, and confirms that there was a historical Job who suffered these things.

Job 17:2 Surely there are mockers with me. My eye dwells on their provocation- Even in deep illness, a man can still dwell on the unkind words of others. This is one lesson of Job- the power of words. LXX "strangers have stolen my goods", also relevant to the captivity at the hands of Babylon. This further confirms the idea that the satan figure of the prologue has morphed into the friends, and it was they personally who brought some of the sufferings upon him.

Job 17:3 Now give a pledge, be collateral for me with Yourself. Who is there who will strike hands with me?- The person in view is clearly God, as :4 continues to address Him. To strike hands is parallel with giving a pledge as in Prov. 6:1. Job is here inviting God to enter court with him, and to pay a pledge, a kind of caution money required before the court sits, in case He is indeed found guilty. And that bond money is to be God Himself. This is indeed arrogant of Job. He is asking God to stake His very own Divine self, all He stands for, and risk losing it if Job is right. When God finally appears in judgment, Job is quite rightly humbled. But for all this arrogance of a moment, it is the friends whom God condemns and justifies Job. We cannot justify arrogance or sins of depression or hot blood, they remain as sins. But we notice, we are forced to notice, that God passes over them in Job's case and sees the man's core devotion to Him. It is the arrogance and lies of the friends, their hatred of their brother, which is to Him so hard to forgive unless, as it were, He has the 'help' of Job in forgiving them himself and praying to Him for their restoration. We learn so very much from all this.

GNB: "I am being honest, God. Accept my word. There is no one else to support what I say". He feels, as his baseline position, that he has no advocate in Heaven. He dreamed and fantasized of one, but such a person wasn't there. See on Job 16:9.

Job 17:4 For You have hidden their heart from understanding, therefore You shall not exalt them- Job considers the friends have been stopped from understanding the real facts and truths about Job's case, because God doesn't want to exalt them. God can indeed close eyes of understanding, but He does so in response to the attitudes of the people concerned; just as He hardened Pharaoh's already hardened heart. We see that God is capable of working directly upon the mind of man, to give or take understanding.

In Job's first four replies to the friends, he at times addresses God directly. Here in Job 17:4 we have the last example of this; in his next four replies, he never addresses God directly. Perhaps we see him slipping away from his personal relationship with God, going down the rabbit holes of overthinking and endless introspection without looking up to God. All that is ended when God speaks to Job directly, and refuses to let him refuse to answer Him. And this is the pattern of us all in various periods and moments of our life with God.

Job 17:5 He who denounces his friends for a prey, even the eyes of his children shall fail- Perhaps the idea is that in the envisioned court case of :3, Job is not going to denounce the friends before God. Job may here be quoting a proverb known at the time. Job is angry with the friends in his speeches, but has a basic desire to save them and not to see them dragged by him into court for condemnation. This basic desire to save people needs to be in us too, and if it is, as with Job at the end (Job 42:7,8), then God will use us to save people. This is what is so essential in all evangelism; technique and evangelism materials may be as perfect as man can make them, but without this basic desire to save others, it is all useless.

GNB "In the old proverb someone betrays his friends for money, and his children suffer for it. And now people use this proverb against me; they come and spit in my face".

Job 17:6 But He has made me a byword of the people. They spit in my face- The friends have earlier been accused of striking Job (see on Job 16:10), and the "they" here refers likewise to the friends (:5). They were so furious with him that they spat in his face, thereby again connecting him with the future sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant after the pattern of Job. Their aggression was to the point of spitting at and hitting him. Yet they originally came to see him to comfort him, apparently sincerely. This is how far and how quickly a false theological understanding can transform human relationships for the worse. LXX brings out the application to the exiles, using the very phrase often used of Judah in exile: "You made me a byword among the nations".

Job 17:7 My eye also is dim by reason of sorrow. All my members are as a shadow- Failing eyesight appears to also have been experienced by the Lord on the cross. "Shadow" is literally a shade, and is very often used in the sense of giving shade and comfort to others. Through his sufferings, Job was to become a shade for salvation to the friends who were abusing him, just as the Lord achieved for His enemies through His crucifixion.

Job 17:8 Upright men shall be astonished at this. The innocent shall stir up himself against the godless- This matches the astonishment of the Jews at the ghastly physical appearance of Christ on the cross (Is. 52:14). Job begins to have the sense that his sufferings are somehow for the sake of others; and this is revealed as the key to his suffering, as an innocent man suffering as if he has committed sins he hasn't, so that he might thereby become a representative saviour. Just as the Lord Jesus did, to a far greater extent. So now he muses that his sufferings will stir up other innocent people to action. He is starting to come towards the climax of the book, when he is asked to pray for and intercede to save the friends (Job 42:7,8).

Job 17:9 Yet shall the righteous hold on to his way. He who has clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger- Job has been lamenting the decline of his physical health, to the point he feels he is now facing death (:11). But he has held on to his way spiritually and insists he has clean hands. So he knows that at some future point, he must "grow stronger and stronger". This implies a resurrection. See on :17.

Job 17:10 But as for you all, come on now again; I shall not find a wise man among you- Paul alludes to these words in lamenting that there was not found a wise man amongst the church at Corinth, who could correctly judge his brother (1 Cor. 6:5). This is an identical context- the friends couldn't judge their brother Job rightly because they were themselves morally compromised and lacked wisdom. We can infer that Paul understood Job to mean that there was not a wise man amongst the friends *to judge him rightly*. For that is how Paul uses this quotation.

Job 17:11 My days are past, my plans are broken off, as are the thoughts of my heart- The word for "plans" is not the Hebrew word which would be used if "plans" were simply meant. In nearly all of the other 28 occurrences of the word in the Old Testament, the word means "wickedness" or "lewdness". Job again moves closer towards the final confession of sin he will make, and away from his earlier self righteousness. He seems to be saying that death will finally end his sin, because his sin is parallel with his thoughts, and they will perish at death. Or it could be that he was so carrying the guilt of others, as their sin bearer, that he feels a wicked sinner when in fact he wasn't; just as the Lord was to carry the sin of His people in Himself on the cross. The difference of course was that although Job is presented as "perfect" before God in Job 1:1, he was not Jesus, and he had sinned, and he minimized that sin- until the final appearance of God elicits this realization from him.

Job 17:12 They change the night into day, saying 'The light is near' in the presence of darkness- The argument was that because Job was in darkness, then light had to come soon; whereas Job felt he was about to die, before the dawn broke (:11,13). The friends never deploy this argument; Job is transferring his own thoughts onto the friends, and then knocking down the argument. And they then do just the same to him (see on Job 18:3). This again is an example to us of what happens when dialogue goes wrong. The whole dialogues are a masterful example to us in this respect. The restoration prophets again seize upon Job's words here and reframe them; the darkness of the exile was indeed to soon end in the day of Zion's glad morning of restoration. And so it happened with Job.

Job 17:13 If I look for Sheol as my house, if I have spread my couch in the darkness-

Job was lying on a couch (Job 7:13), and felt that he was already lying in the darkness of the grave. The deserted house he was lying in (see on Job 15:28) was effectively *sheol*, the grave, for him.

Job 17:14 if I have said to corruption, 'You are my father'; to the worm, 'My mother', and 'my sister'- Job felt he was in a living death and therefore the idea that hope was just around the corner (12,15) was meaningless, because death had already come effectively, and he felt as if already in *sheol*.

Job 17:15 where then is my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it?-
This firm rejection of any future hope is Job's baseline position. His expressions of future hope elsewhere are his fantasies. The wonderful thing is that his fantasies about a future hope, justice, reconciliation with God etc. were all wonderfully true. God will do for this man exceeding abundantly above all he thought or dreamed of.

Job believed as a baseline position that all man has is this life; he therefore considered that he had lost all hope of ever having his blessings returned, and therefore his life was over. Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there *is* hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12).

Job 17:16 Shall it go down with me to the gates of Sheol, or descend together into the dust?- Job saw *sheol* as death, the grave, the time of turning back to dust. And he felt he could take no hope with him there. Here again we have Job at the low point of his oscillation between believing in a resurrection, as he does in :9 and often, and yet denying it. Or at best, placing it under serious question. But for all his fluctuating faith and spirituality, he is the one justified in the end; and the self confident friends are condemned. We learn at least that perfectly consistent maintenance of faith and hope is not necessary for God to impute righteousness and save us by grace. Job is rightly condemned at the end and does repent, but the up points of his faith cycle are noted by God.

JOB CHAPTER 18

Job 18:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered- Bildad doesn't even engage with Job's words after briefly doing so in :4, but rather just vents his anger in this speech, threatening Job with all manner of condemnation; and the longer he rants on, the more convinced he becomes that Job is "wicked" and doesn't know God (:5,21). This is the problem when we don't engage with the words and arguments of another, or pay mere lip service to doing so; we can fall headlong into a feeding frenzy of angry accusation, resulting in doing what God condemns- condemning our brother, imputing sin rather than righteousness to a person we have created in our own minds, who merely bears

the name of the one who began merely with a theological difference with us.

Job 18:2 How long will you hunt for words? Consider, and afterwards we will speak- This again is imputing to Job an image which the friends like to assume he has, rather than engaging with what he has actually said. Job appears to be blurting out his feelings, not hunting for words to say.

Job 18:3 Why are we counted as animals, which have become unclean in your sight?- Again as noted on :2, this is a case of attacking a straw man image of an opponent. For Job has not treated them as animals. They have themselves proclaimed all men as "unclean" by birth (Job 15:14), and yet they decide Job has called them unclean, and they object to it. But as Job transfers his feelings back onto the friends in Job 17:12, so they are doing the same to him. They may posit that all men are unclean, including themselves; but if Job is even supposed to have said this, then he is to be condemned. This again is an example to us of what happens when dialogue goes wrong. The dialogues begin and end with Job and the friends in silence. The implication is that all that was said had been not said. The silence at the start and the end would have been more noticeable if indeed "Job" was initially a drama, a play for voices.

Job 18:4 You who tear yourself in your anger, shall the earth be forsaken for you? Or shall the rock be removed out of its place?- This is the only point in this speech where Bildad makes any attempt to engage with the actual words of Job; see on :1. And he quickly moves on to generalize about Job as a wicked person for the rest of his speech. In any case, he is only superficially engaging with Job's words. Job has said that he felt as if God were tearing him apart like a wild beast (Job 16:9); but Bildad twists this, or simply misremembers it, to Job saying that he was tearing himself apart. Job has argued that the process of erosion wears down the greatest mountains and removes them (Job 14:18,19), and so likewise the strongest man is eventually worn down to dust. But Bildad denies this; perhaps he was ignorant of the process of erosion, and considered it bunk science. For him, present realities are all that count. Mountains aren't removed, in his experience. And yet they are, by faith (Mt. 17:20); and the great mountain which God would surely remove was Babylon, and He would establish the mountain of His restored people and Kingdom in Zion (Zech. 4:7; Dan. 2:45). The exiles disbelieved this, and thus were like Bildad, seeing only what was immediately before their own eyes. Bildad considered that the *eretz* ("land") could never be "forsaken"; but that is just what happened. The very phrase is used of the land being forsaken, because God's people had forsaken Him (Lev. 26:43). The hope of the restoration prophets was that the land would no longer be forsaken (Is. 62:4). But just as Bildad considered such a thing impossible, so God's people had done. Again, Job is presented as the righteous remnant amongst the exiles, and the friends as the generally unbelieving exiles who were finally intended to be saved by the prayers of the remnant.

Job 18:5 Yes, the light of the wicked shall be put out, the spark of his fire shall not shine- Much of Bildad's condemnation of Job in :5-21 appears to be taken from the "wisdom of the Beni Kedem", the children of the east (1 Kings 4:30). Bildad has decided Job is sinful and very wicked, because of the extent of his sufferings. And he brings in now descriptions of the wicked man taken from other sources. Through these allusions and quotations, he is lead to yet further condemn and slander Job.

Job will later respond that his experience is otherwise: "How seldom does the lamp of the wicked fail, nor does the calamity they deserve befall them" (Job 21:17). Both Bildad and Job are appealing to human experience. And that yields no answer to the question of Job's suffering.

Job 18:6 The light shall be dark in his tent. His lamp above him shall be put out- Light becoming dark is exactly the phrase used about the judgment coming upon Judah (Is. 5:10; 13:10; Jer. 13:16). Indeed this had happened to Job, but insofar as he was representing God's people who were to suffer this.

Job 18:7 The steps of his strength shall be shortened. His own counsel shall cast him down- An oblique reference to the way Job was apparently dying before his time, with a shortened life. Here we have another connection between Job and Hezekiah, who had the same experience, but like Job was restored out of it. Yet Hezekiah didn't make use of that restoration, just as the exiles didn't.

Job 18:8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he wanders into its mesh- I noted on :5 that Bildad has concluded that Job is wicked because of the extent of his sufferings; and he begins quoting or alluding to standard condemnations of the wicked from the wisdom of the east. And this leads him to ever more falsely accuse Job. For it was simply not so that Job was falling into his own trap. For he had lived justly and uprightly before his trials (Job 1:1). If only Bildad knew the prologue! God insisted that Job suffered "without cause". One reason why we are not to judge is that we really cannot judge. Situations may appear one way, when from Heaven God sees them quite differently, and indeed, the opposite.

Job 18:9 A snare will take him by the heel. A trap will catch him- I noted on :8 that this idea that Job had fallen into his own snare was totally untrue. But it was how he was judged and considered by men. In this respect, he was completely identified with the sins of Israel, who indeed fell into their own snare (Is. 8:14; 24:17,18; Hos. 5:1). He was a representative figure.

Job 18:10 A noose is hidden for him in the ground, a trap for him in the way- Jeremiah alludes to this in complaining that the Jews had hid snares for him (Jer. 18:22). He often alludes to Job and saw himself as Job- persecuted by his own people, whom he vainly tried to reform.

Job 18:11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall chase him at his heels- This looks ahead to Jerusalem, represented by Job, surrounded on every side by her enemies. The "terrors" are imagined to be demon-like figures under the control of "the king of terrors" (s.w., :14). As noted on :14, this wrong idea is being deconstructed.

Job 18:12 His strength shall be famished. Calamity shall be ready at his side- The destruction of Jerusalem by famine may be in view, prefigured by Job being so hungry that he had to beg for bread (see on Job 15:23).

Job 18:13 The members of his body shall be devoured. The firstborn of death shall devour his members- The phrase recalls the destroying Angel who destroyed the Egyptians and would have also destroyed the Israelite firstborn were it not for the

blood of the Passover lamb. The satan figure was associated with an obedient Divine angel who brought the trials upon Job (see on Job 1:6). "Devour" is the same Hebrew word used of how Job's wealth was "consumed" by Divine fire (Job 1:16). Again, Job is representative of an apostate Israel who likewise had their members (s.w. "branches") devoured by the fire of Divine judgment (s.w. Ez. 19:14; Hos. 11:6).

Job 18:14 He shall be rooted out of his tent where he trusts. He shall be brought to the king of terrors- Rashi "He shall be torn away from his wife, she will cause him to walk and will send him away (from her) to the grave, to the king of the demons". The next verse, "There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his", would then mean that his wife would remarry, and the new husband would live in Job's tent. We can suppose that this was not an unrealistic prediction of how things were with her...

Significantly, it is the friends who make allusion to the 'Satan' figures and gods as if they are real, whereas Job in his responses always denies their reality and sees God as the direct source of His sufferings. Bildad speaks of how Job's troubles are to be associated with "the king of terrors"; Eliphaz blames them upon the "sons of Resheph" (Job 5:7); but Job's response is that the source of the evil in his life is ultimately from *God* and not any such being. See on Job 5:7. The Bible personifies death as a person; that is the king of terrors (Ps. 49:14; Is. 28:15), rather than the superhuman being of the friends' imagination.

Job 18:15 There shall dwell in his tent that which is none of his. Sulphur shall be scattered on his habitation- Living in early times, the friends were likely aware of the fate of Sodom. Job's children and wealth had been destroyed by Divine fire, just as Sodom was, and perhaps sulphur was also used. God's sinful people are likewise identified with Sodom (Is. 1:10; Ez. 16:46; Am. 4:11), the destruction of Jerusalem was seen as that of Sodom (Lam. 4:6), just as the friends here identify Job with Sodom.

Job 18:16 His roots shall be dried up beneath. Above shall his branch be cut off-

The context is the claim that the wicked are left with no family and no descendants. This leads Job to dream of having a kinsman redeemer in Job 19, someone who would continue his name. The theme of 'drying up' or 'withering' is significant. Bildad considers Job to have been 'dried up' by God's judgment (Job 8:12), and the word is used of how God withered or dried up Judah at the hands of their invaders (Jer. 12:4; 23:10; Ez. 17:9,10,24; Zech. 11:17; Lam. 4:8; Is. 40:7,8- although the prophetic word of God requiring their restoration would endure, despite their drying up). The dry bones of Judah in captivity were withered or dried up (Ez. 37:11). So Job's 'drying up' was again, a sharing in the representative suffering of God's people. Job's personal response to his 'drying up' was to reflect that God dries up waters and also sends them forth as floods (Job 12:15 s.w.); He can give and He can take, just as Job had initially realized (Job 2:10). Just as He dried up Job / Israel, so He could abundantly send forth waters; just as He did at the Red Sea. Restoration and salvation was just as easy for Him as destruction, to put it another way. The drying up of Job was also understood by him as referring to his death (Job 14:11), but God could raise him from the dead and have a desire to him again (Job 14:15). Eliphaz wrongly argues that the Divine 'drying up' of a person means permanent extinction (Job 15:30), as does Bildad (Job 18:16); but Job always sees the 'drying up' as part of a Divine action which also has a counterpart, the pouring out again of

waters, or resurrection of the dried up, withered bones. Likewise Judah in captivity thought that their drying up, their dry bones, were incapable of revival (Ez. 37:11); but the message is that they could indeed be revived, and their drying up was but a presage to their eternal revival.

This connects with the thought of Job's words in Job 14:8: "Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground". "Earth" is *eretz*, the land (of Israel). If merely "soil" was intended, a different word would have been used. Again, we see the drama of Job has been tweaked, under Divine inspiration, to become the narrative for the exiles. The root had indeed largely died in the land at the time of the Babylonian invasion, but it still had some life and would "bud" again (Job 14:9). Job was the man with great roots who had been cut down but hadn't completely died (Job 8:17); his roots had been dried up (Job 18:16; 29:19). He represented Judah, whose roots were throughout the land as a tree transplanted by God (s.w. Ps. 80:9). Those roots were withered by the invasions (Is. 5:24), but out of those dry roots would grow up a "tender plant / branch" (Is. 11:1,10; 53:2), using the same word for "tender" as in Job 14:7. This Messianic suffering servant was to be based upon Job, and representative of all God's restored people. They were to again spread their roots in the land of promise in a restored Kingdom (Is. 37:31; Jer. 17:8), after the pattern of Job's restoration.

Job 18:17 His memory shall perish from the earth. He shall have no name in the street- This was the most awful fate for an oriental sheikh or leader. Is. 26:14 uses this language about Babylon, who initially refused to let the Jews return. Bildad's idea was that Job would have a shameful death, his name forgotten and his body just cast out with no decent burial. He was lying on the ash heap outside the city where the garbage was burnt, and he would die there and his body likewise be burnt. All this is picked up by Job in his fantasy that although this would be the case, he might have a kinsman redeemer in Heaven who would somehow reverse that shame by getting his body resurrected in glory; see on Job 19:24.

Job 18:18 He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world- The idea of being driven away into darkness is that of condemnation, as is used of the driving of God's condemned people into exile (Is. 8:22; Jer. 23:12). Again, Job suffered the condemnation of the wicked without being wicked as charged. And just as the Lord's death made Him be perceived as an accursed criminal, although He was innocent, so the friends' judgments of Job made him appear "wicked" when he wasn't.

Job 18:19 He shall have neither son nor grandson among his people, nor any remaining where he lived- Clearly an oblique reference to the fate of Job's children. Perhaps the desolation and emptying of homes and areas in Israel and Judah is in view, after the people were carried into exile.

Job 18:20 Those who come after shall be astonished at his day, as those who went before were frightened- "Astonished" is s.w. "desolation" in the descriptions of the fate of the land when its people would go into exile (Lev. 26:34,35; Lam. 1:4). The promise of restoration was that the new covenant would change this and restore the desolate (Jer. 33:10). Bildad failed to see this, assuming that all judgment was to be eternal. The idea of ultimate restoration was out of his mind, as it was with the faithless exiles.

Job 18:21 Surely such are the dwellings of the unrighteous. This is the place of him who doesn't know God- "The dwellings" would refer to the family / house. These continued claims that Job would die without family are behind his fantasy in Job 19:24 for a kinsman on his side, a relative, who would also be his redeemer. Clearly Job did "know God". We see here for all time the danger of dashing headlong along a path of reasoning about a person which leads us to a totally wrong and slanderous position about them. Job 36:26 uses the same phrase in what appears to be Elihu's take on this- which is that in fact God is too great to be known by any man. His final appearance makes it clear that to know God is to repent and accept His grace.

JOB CHAPTER 19

Job 19:1 Then Job answered- This speech sees Job bitterly lament his treatment by God and the friends. Indeed everything was so unfair. But out of all this deep self pity, he comes to the classic expression of his faith in resurrection and judgment in :25-27. Taking any of his statements alone would lead to the impression that he was almost narcissistic in his self-pity, but it is out of this down cycle that is born the expression of faith and yet deeper understanding of :25-27. Even though it was expressed at this point as a fantasy.

Job 19:2 How long will you torment me, and crush me with words?- If nothing else we see here the power of words. The friends had come to comfort, but ended up crushing him. Eliphaz had earlier concluded that Job was "crushed" (s.w.) because of his sins (Job 5:4) and so he thought he could crush Job with words as well. Even if Job had indeed been condemned, his friends ought still to have sought to save him. Through this experience he came to bear the "torment" which the exiles would during the Babylonian invasion and captivity (s.w. Is. 51:23; Lam. 1:4).

Job 19:3 You have reproached me ten times. You aren't ashamed that you attack me- The Hebrew for "reproached" carries the idea of shame; it is elsewhere translated to make to blush / put to shame. Job on one hand is rightly resisting false shame and false guilt. And yet he has just admitted that they have crushed him, or he has allowed them to crush him, with their words (:2). On one hand we may reject false guilt, or say that we do- when all the same, we take it. This is just so true to human psychological experience. David seems to have realized this, and so he actually prays for God's help so that people don't take false guilt: "Don't let the oppressed be put to shame; let those poor and needy people praise you" (Ps. 74:21 GNB). The implication is that false guilt impedes our praise of God; for we feel too unworthy to even praise Him.

There have not yet been ten speeches by the friends. So "ten times" is being used to mean 'totally' or 'many times', as in Gen. 31:41; Num. 14:22; Neh. 4:12; Dan. 1:20. We must understand that Semitic languages don't use numbers always in the strictly literal sense which European languages tend to. The friends were so sure that Job was condemned that they lost all sense of shame and personal guilt in how they treated him.

Job 19:4 If it is true that I have erred, my error remains with myself- Perhaps he means 'You have no evidence I have erred, apart from the fact I am suffering'. Earlier, Job recognizes his sins, and speaks of the sins of his youth. Now he puts that under

question, and will conclude his speeches with a very long clearing himself of any possible sin and protesting his righteousness. This is what happens under false accusation- we come to deny any sinfulness and become self righteous. It's all so psychologically credible.

The aggression of the friends was because they thought they had the right to join in the apparent Divine condemnation of him; rather than leaving the matter between God and Job. This mentality is seen all around us today. We note however that Job is still qualifying his sinfulness ["if it is true..."]; and his final repentance reflects a total shedding of this kind of careful self qualification.

Job 19:5 If indeed you will magnify yourselves against me- The Messianic Psalms record David and the Lord Jesus feeling that their enemies had magnified themselves against them (Ps. 35:26; 38:16; 41:9; 55:12). Ps. 41:9 applies the term to Judas, who was typified by the friends as the Lord Jesus was by Job.

And plead against me my reproach- Pleading is legal language. Job had done nothing wrong to the friends, but he feels they had come into court to quote his "reproach" as evidence he had sinned, and therefore were demanding his judgment. When they should have left any possible sin as a matter between Job and God (:4).

"Reproach" is "shame". Job on one hand insists he has nothing to be ashamed of, whereas the friends say he is shamed in the eyes of men because he was very sinful. The way Job now talks of "my" shame shows that he has in fact picked up and absorbed the false guilt put upon him by the friends. Our freedom from shame through the Lord's work on the cross is so very powerful. It should free us from all false guilt.

Job 19:6 know now that God has subverted me, and has surrounded me with His net- This is Job's response to Bildad's earlier claim that Job's own feet had led him into a net or snare (Job 18:8). Job here blasphemously accuses God of having abused him, throwing around His superior power. If only Job knew the prologue... he would have known how far wrong he was. God loved him and had a hugely high opinion of him. "Subverted" translates a Hebrew word which clearly means to be perverse or wicked with another person. Elihu sternly rebukes Job for this statement, saying that God will *not* "pervert judgment" (Job 34:12). Again we marvel at the grace of how God later says that Job has spoken what was right about Him (Job 42:7). Whilst that statement may refer simply to Job's expression of total repentance, we would still expect it to be qualified by some clause to the effect that "although earlier Job accused me of many awful things". There is no such clause in Job 42:7. The absence of it, bearing in mind Job's wrong statements about God which Elihu has reminded us of, is surely noticeable and intended to be noticed. We are left marvelling at the extent of grace and imputed righteousness, through faith by grace. And how God was so thrilled with Job's few words of repentance, uttered from the heart. This is in the end what God looks for. That is to speak right about God, even if we have spoken wrongly about him for chapter after chapter of our lives as Job did.

Job 19:7 Behold, I cry out because of injustice, but I am not heard. I cry for help, but there is no justice- Job now turns to lament how he feels God has treated him, having complained of how the friends have unjustly treated him. Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not

always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

*Job 19:8 He has walled up my way so that I can't pass, and has set darkness in my paths- J*ob is feeling confined, imprisoned, blocked in. But this was what happened to Judah in their judgment (Hos. 2:6); Job although righteous was the representative of Judah. See on Job 10:11,12.

Num. 22:22 describes how an Angel of God stood in a narrow, walled path before Balaam, so that his donkey fell down beneath him. That Angel is described as a "satan", an adversary, to Balaam. Job comments how the sufferings which the 'Satan' brought upon him were God 'walling up my way that I cannot pass' (Job 19:8). The connection is clear- and surely indicates that Job's satan was a satan-Angel, acting as an adversary to Job just as such an Angel did to Balaam. See on Job 1:6. Job and Balaam have certain similarities- both were prophets (in Job's case see Job 4:4; 23:12; 29:4 cp. 15:8; Amos 3:7; James 5:10,11); both had genuine difficulty in understanding God's ways, but they to varying degrees consciously rebelled against what they did understand; both thus became angry with God (in the Angel), and were reproved by God through being brought to consider the Angel-controlled natural creation.

Job 19:9 He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head- "Stripped me" is s.w. "fell upon" in describing how the troops of Job's enemies fell upon his children and wealth (Job 1:17). It was God who did this, Job perceives; they were "His troops" (:12). The same word is used of the stripping of God's people of their glory (Ez. 16:39; 23:26; Mic. 3:3), which only happened because they themselves did not strip themselves of their clothing in repentance (s.w. Is. 32:11; Ez. 26:16). The stripping of Job, which also recalls the stripping of the priest Aaron of his clothes and "crown" [mitre] when his priesthood ended (Num. 20:26,28), was therefore to elicit repentance in him. And this is what was finally achieved at the end of the book. See on Job 40:10.

Job 19:10 He has broken me down on every side, and I am gone. My hope He has plucked up like a tree- Originally, Job believed that his "hope" was predicated upon his upright ways (Job 4:6). But Job through his sufferings comes to feel he now has no "hope" (Job 7:6; 14:19; 17:15; 19:10). The friends suggest that Job had only the "hope" of the hypocrite, and this "hope" would perish (Job 4:6; 8:13; 27:8). Job had integrity, and on that basis he thought he had "hope". He suffered, and he lost that "hope", because he assumed that his sufferings meant that he was not in fact righteous. And yet he often reflects that he is righteous and is suffering unjustly. And

so he is led to the realization that the "hope" of the righteous is by God's grace and not because of the "integrity of [Job's] ways". Judah in captivity likewise lost their "hope" (Ez. 19:5; 37:11). But the message of the restoration prophets was that "there *is* hope in your end" (Jer. 31:17); they were prisoners or exiles in "hope" (Zech. 9:12). And we may get the possible whiff of restoration of hope in Job; for now he compares himself to a tree plucked up, whereas in Job 14:7-10 he has said that a tree has hope of sprouting again, but he has no hope at all. Now, he at least sees himself as the tree. These were baby steps towards faith in restoration. Or we could conclude that having no hope was Job's baseline position. He repeatedly says that he will never get out of the grave. He has no hope. His following words about having a redeemer are therefore his fantasy.

Job 19:11 He has also kindled His wrath against me. He counts me among His adversaries- Job feels God's wrath kindled against him (Job 19:11). The innocent Job experienced the judgments of God's people, against whom God's wrath was kindled (Dt. 11:17; 2 Kings 23:26). Significantly, we find Elihu's wrath kindled against both Job and the friends (Job 32:2,3), but the wrath of God was kindled only against the friends (Job 42:7). Elihu is therefore not fully reflecting God's position about Job. I have repeatedly demonstrated that the innocent Job was suffering the judgment for the sins of God's people. In the end, this came to full term in the salvation of the friends on account of Job's intercession. God's wrath was not personally against Job, it was against the friends. But Job suffered God's wrath against him, because he was to be the saviour of the friends by offering sacrifice for them and praying for them. This looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job; experiencing the judgment for our sins, and through the representative nature of His sacrifice, being able to save us.

Job 19:12 His troops come on together, build a siege ramp against me, and encamp around my tent- See on :9. Job represents both the Lord Jesus Christ and Israel. He was representative of both. This is nicely shown by how the language of 19:12-14 is reminiscent of the descriptions of the Roman armies (Christ's armies- Mt. 22:7) surrounding Jerusalem in AD70. There then follows a description of Job's sufferings which has clear links with that of Christ's crucifixion in Ps. 69. "He hath put my brethren far from me (cp. Ps. 69:8), and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me". Note how the last phrase links with Christ's description of Judas as "my own familiar friend", implying there may be a connection between the one-time friends of Job, and Judas. Both epitomized the Jewish system, and both were at one stage trusted by Job/Jesus. Other descriptions of Job's sufferings in the language of Ps. 69 include Job 30:9 "Now am I their song, yea, I am their byword" (cp. Ps. 69:12); Job 22:11 "abundance of waters cover thee" (cp. Ps. 69:1,2); Job 2:11 the friends came "to mourn with him and to comfort him", although Job said he turned to them for comfort in vain (16:2). The Hebrew in Job 2:11 is identical to that in Ps. 69:20, describing Christ looking in vain for comforters.

Job 19:13 He has put my brothers far from me. My acquaintances are wholly estranged from me- The brothers of Job turned against him (:17) because they all considered him "smitten of God" just as the suffering servant was considered (Is. 53:4); the Lord Jesus likewise had this experience, being initially rejected by his

brothers (Jn. 7:5). Yet it was this total loss of human relationships that led Job to fantasize about a *go'el*, a relative, a kinsman redeemer, in :25-27. Between :13-20 we will read how having lost all his children, absolutely everyone in his social and family circle had turned against him. He speaks of his "close ones", his wife, his servants, his siblings, his friends, the kids in the village... "All members of my circle abhor me" (:19). And so often it is the breakdown of human relationships, the experience of 'divorce' with those once close to us... which leads us, desperately, to the Lord Jesus. So often it is bereavement, breakdown of relationship with children or marriage breakdown... which leads men to Christ.

Job 19:14 My relatives have gone away. My familiar friends have forgotten me- This total rejection by everyone was indeed lamentable, but it led to Job turning the more intensely toward God, despite the apparent distance of God from him. And this apparently hopeless situation of being rejected by all his family in Job 19:13-16 was reversed at the end when all his relatives again came to him (Job 42:11). The way they give him a piece of money and an earing appears to be some kind of gratitude for his salvation of them. They thus recognized their guilt and expressed deep gratitude that although they had rejected him, his sufferings and their rejection of him had led to their salvation. For we can deduce from the gift of a piece of money that they feel they have sinned, and he has saved them. So again, his restoration was the restoration of others, the friends and his family who had rejected him. He had born the sufferings for their sins, and thus becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, who suffered the judgments for sin in order to save those who had rejected and abused him.

Job 19:15 Those who dwell in my house, and my maids, count me for a stranger. I am an alien in their sight- His family considered him a stranger and alien, not a relative any more. Hence his fantasy about finding a relative, a kinsman redeemer. This is quoted in the Messianic Ps. 69:18 concerning the Lord's sufferings on the cross.

Job 19:16 I call to my servant, and he gives me no answer. I beg him with my mouth- The begging was for bread; see on Job 15:23. This is how desperately low Job became. "Beg" is the word for 'grace'; see on :21. He had cried out to God for justice and had no answer (:7); and even his former servant wouldn't answer him. This lack of answer leads him to fantasize about a responsive "redeemer" who will respond to him (:25-27).

Job 19:17 My breath is offensive to my wife. I am loathsome to the children of my own mother- "Loathsome" is not the best translation, the Hebrew word is usually translated to be gracious to. Perhaps the idea is that he asked his brothers for grace, but wasn't afforded it. The usage of the word suggests Job for the first time is thinking about grace, undeserved favour; and this is what he is led to realize at the end when God appears. But this was one of the baby steps towards that. See on :21.

LXX "And I besought my wife, and earnestly intreated the sons of my concubines. But they rejected me for ever; whenever I rise up, they speak against me" (:17,18). This nuances his earlier claim to have no eyes for any woman apart from his wife.

Job 19:18 Even young children despise me. If I arise, they speak against me- Job was finally to be the saving hero of his society. Likewise the exiles who had been despised were to be praised by all in the restored Kingdom (Is. 41:9 s.w.). All because Job was

the suffering servant, despised and rejected of all and yet finally saviour of those who despised him, just as the Lord Jesus to a far greater extent (Is. 53:3). See on Job 16:17 for more connections with the suffering servant.

Job 19:19 All my familiar friends abhor me. They whom I loved have turned against me- This abhorrence of Job by the friends is related to the way they considered mankind to be "abominable and corrupt" (Job 15:16). "Abhor" is the same word as "abominable". The simple truth is as Job put it- God has a tender desire to man, the work of His hands (Job 14:15). And whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus. He fully shared that nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Man by nature, just standing there as flesh and blood before God, is not "abominable" to Him of himself. It is sin which is the problem; and sin is not inevitable. We must bear full responsibility for our sins and cannot just pass them off as an inevitable function of our humanity. The wrong view of human nature held by the friends affected their view of Job and people in practice. The lower our view of human nature, the more likely we are to despise human beings rather than value them and speak well of them because they are made in the image of God (James 3:9).

It must be noted that the satan never occurs again, under that name. The real adversary of Job was his "friends"; and in God's final judgment, it is they who are condemned, not 'satan'. It is therefore reasonable to see a connection between the satan and the 'friends' of Job; they too walked to and fro in the earth in order to come to him, as it seems satan did at the beginning. And we pause here for another lesson. The great satan / adversary of Job turned out to be those he thought were his friends in the ecclesia. And so it has been, time and again, in our experience: our sorest trials often come from the words of our brethren. Without underestimating the physical affliction of Job, his real adversary was his brethren. Rather than bemoaning his physical affliction, he commented how his friends had become his satans (Job 19:19) And so with the Lord Jesus, whom Job so accurately typified. Again, without minimizing the material agony of His flesh, the essential piercing was from His rejection at the hands of those He died for. For other reasons to connect the satan with the friends, see on Job 1:6.

Job 19:20 My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh. I have escaped by the skin of my teeth- Job was just about hanging on to life, and so he had the hope of restoration. This was the position of the exiles. From their living death they would be given new skin and flesh in revival (Ez. 37:6,8) after the pattern of Job- if they wished to follow his example of repentance. But probably we are better to translate "with the skin of my teeth", as if all he has in his mouth is his gum skin- all his teeth having fallen out.

Job 19:21 Have pity on me, have pity on me, you my friends-The crying out for pity / grace went unheard- hence his fantasy about a kinsman redeemer. The word for "grace" is used four times in quick succession (:16,17 and twice in :21). Job is now appealing for grace, even if he is deemed guilty. Job for the first time is thinking about grace, undeserved favour; and this is what he is led to realize at the end when God appears.

For the hand of God has touched me- "Touch" is the word used by the satan in Job 1:11, showing again that the hand of the Satan was the hand of God, and Job understood this. The friends insist that "the destroyer" [by which they surely meant an early equivalent to 'the devil' of popular belief today] had touched Job- whereas Job insists that it is *God* who had destroyed him (Job 15:21 cp. 19:10; 13:21). In some

ways the book of Job is a deconstruction of the popular Persian and Canaanite myths about a 'satan' figure. Job, both in the story of his sufferings and his specific words, seeks to demonstrate that the essential issues in life is being "just with God", and not whether or not we are touched by the hand of an evil being; for the hand of God which touched Job (Job 19:21) is the hand of 'satan' into whom God delivered Job temporarily (Job 1:12). Job says that the attitude of the friends is wrong- they should be looking into themselves, rather than fantasizing about the action of some unseen evil being they imagined: "Ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in *me*?... know that there is a [personal] judgment"(Job 19:28,29).

Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on 'up there' which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God's hand forms and can pierce the "crooked serpent" and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It's as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the "hand of God" which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical 'Satan' figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the 'Satan' figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

Job 19:22 Why do you persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?- The friends ended up playing God. They presumed to judge Job according to their own limited and inaccurate theology, by assuming that he must have sinned in order to receive such terrible trials from God. Zophar claims to have revealed Job's guilt, and then says that "the heavens"- an ellipsis for "God"- have revealed Job's guilt (Job 20:27). Job figured out what was happening when he complained to them: "Why do you hound me as though you were divine?" (Job 19:22 NAB). But something good came out of all this for Job. The way the friends played God set up a kind of dialectic, from which Job came to perceive more powerfully who God really was- and, moreover, how in fact this God would ultimately save him rather than destroy and condemn him, as the friends falsely thought. By 'dialectic' I mean that the way the friends presented a false picture and manifestation of God's judgment led Job to react against it, and thereby come to a true understanding of God's judgment. Having stated his perception that the friends are indeed playing God (Job 19:22), Job goes straight on to make a solemn and important statement. The solemnity of it is witnessed by his request, albeit as a fantasy, that what he was now going to say would be inscribed in rock with the point of a diamond as a permanent record (Job 19:24). And that solemn statement was that he knew that God would be his vindicator at the last day, that he would "see God", that he would have a bodily resurrection, and that at that time it would be the friends who would be condemned (Job 19:25-29). This supreme statement of faith, hope and understanding, albeit as a fantasy, was elicited from Job because of the rejection he suffered from his friends, and the way they so inaccurately and wrongly played God in wrongly condemning him on God's behalf. Job thus came to long for the judgment seat. There are few believers who have reached that level of intimacy with God- but Job did, thanks to the way his friends so cruelly turned against him. And this is a major lesson we can take from being the victim of slander, misunderstanding and misjudgment by our own brethren.

Job 19:23 Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were inscribed in a

book!- The reference is not to a book as we think of a book, but to a permanent writing, i.e. his epitaph on his tombstone. Although it is tempting to think that the existence of the book of Job is proof enough that his wish was granted. His request, however, shows baby steps towards realizing that his sufferings can be used for a greater and wider purpose. He was not just suffering for himself. And finally his salvation of his friends and family [possibly leading to the resurrection of his slain children] was realized by him to be the outcome of this sufferings. He, the innocent, had born their sins in his own body, just as the Lord did. Earlier he had offered sacrifice for his children, but this was not enough; a representative sufferer was needed. For now, he is only just beginning to move towards this realization.

Job 19:24 That with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever!- An "iron pen" is only found again in Jer. 17:1, where Judah's sin is written with an iron pen. The desire for suffering to be remembered was strong amongst the exiles as it was with Job. Perhaps Job is wishing that he would have a gravestone where his words were engraved as an inscription; an iron stylus and lead were exactly what was used on such inscriptions. "My words" (:23) would then refer not to all his words, but to the words about Job, the epitaph on the gravestone. Instead, as the friends have implied, he as a hated, miserable sinner would have no decent burial and not be buried in a family tomb; and burial was so significant to those of Job's time. Bildad and others had implied this by speaking of how the name of the wicked would be destroyed at their death, and their bodies cast out with no mourners for them (Job 18:15-19). Job was living on the ash heap outside town, and when he died, his body would be burnt and left where he died. His wife had turned against him, and he now had no children to make a memorial for him. The connection with the exiles is in the promise to the childless eunuchs that they would be given by God "a monument and a name better than [that given by] sons and daughters [on a memorial stone]" (Is. 56:5). And so he fantasizes that he does in fact have a *go'el* a redeemer, a kinsman, a relative, somewhere, who somehow would get him something far better than a decent burial- this relative, this kinsman, would redeem his body from death and give him a resurrection of his battered body. And thus this *go'el* would do what a *go'el* was supposed to do- preserve Job's name eternally, just as Boaz did to Mahlon in the book of Ruth. And so Bildad's aspersion that Job's name would be no longer remembered would be proven wrong. Although he accepts dying with no memorial in this life, he goes on to talk of the redeemer / witness he imagines he has in Heaven, who would somehow bring him to a bodily resurrection. And an eternal relationship with God so wonderful that it eclipses all sadness at dying with no burial and his body despised. Job frequently broods upon his upcoming death; he ends all his speeches by speaking about it, and how permanent it would be (Job 7:21; 10:21,22; 14:20-23; 17:11-16; 19:23-27). His baseline position was that he would soon die and there would be no resurrection. But people in extreme trauma often entertain fantasies, and here we have his fantasy about a resurrection thanks to a distant relative, who must be in Heaven seeing he is not on earth. And Job's fantasy is in fact going to be reality for him, for God will do exceeding abundantly above all that man asked or thought.

Job 19:25 But as for me- Given the context, the idea may be that whether or not his suffering achieves anything for others, he is confident of his own salvation at the end.

The witness in Heaven who is on Job's side in Job 16:10 could be another reference to the redeemer / advocate or negotiator that Job had dreamt of having in Job 9 and who he more strongly believes in by the time of Job 19. He speaks of this

person in Job 16:21: "that he [the witness in heaven] would maintain the right of a man with God, of a son of man with his neighbour!". We could translate Job 16:20 as referring to this mediator: "my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as one pleads for a friend". Such an entity is clearly not God Himself, because Job imagines this person maintaining Job's "right" with God. He views God very negatively, so the witness in Heaven "who vouches for me on high" is not God, but this imagined, hoped for person. Job fantasized about such a person "like me" in Job 9:32-35: "For there is not a person like me to whom I could answer: "let us come together in judgment." Would that there were an umpire between us who would lay his hand on the two of us, taking from upon me His [God's] rod and not allowing His dread to terrify me. I would speak and not be afraid of him [the imagined umpire]". But in Job 16, Job seems more positive about the existence of this being. And Job appears to have the same person in view in Job 19:25: "I know that my redeemer lives: and finally he will stand upon the earth...". Job is very negative about God, but very positive about this personal "redeemer", who is "my" personal redeemer. The redeemer is not God, but this imagined "umpire", thanks to whom Job believes that he will somehow see God's face despite being "in the flesh". GNB of Job 19:25-27 makes this clearer: "I know there is someone in heaven who will come at last to my defense [a legal term; he has in view the court of Heaven]. [And therefore, because of this "someone"] even after my skin is eaten by disease, while still in this body I will see God. I will see him with my own eyes, and he will not be a stranger". Job's belief in the imaginary interceder for him before a monster of a God seems to have receded again by Job 31:35, when Job again laments: "oh that I had one to hear me!".

The *go'el* was the powerful relative whom Job fantasized about after realizing everyone in his life was against him. The *go'el* was able to save him from slavery, restore lost property, raise up his name if he died childless [as Job assumed he now would, having lost his children], and get vengeance upon his murderer. And Job often calls God his murderer. His fantasy about a redeemer involved his idea that God should be tried, found guilty and killed in vengeance for having murdered Job. Whatever "faith" we want to see in Job at this point [and I see it as fantasy rather than faith], he was in the grip of a blasphemous bitterness with God. But Job saw this witness / redeemer as "in heaven" (Job 16:19), in the Divine Council. We know from the prologue that no such advocate figure was needed there because God was 100% on Job's side. God needs no mediator, including the Lord Jesus, in order to save man. He saved men in the time before Christ. The Lord Jesus and His death was to commend God's love to man and thereby save the more. It wasn't that pre-Christ, man was saved by God imagining that red blood of His future son and therefore turning away from wrath.

Elihu appears to say that such an intermediary is indeed the way to rightness with God: "If God has by Him an ambassador, a mediator, one of the thousand, to declare to man what is right for him, and [then] He [God] is merciful to him [man], and says, ‘Deliver him from going down into the pit; I have found a ransom" (Job 33:23,24). The Hebrew is difficult, but the idea seems to be that Elihu suggests that indeed there may be such a mediator "by" God, at His right hand in Heaven, who could save Job- with the possible implication that it is him. We are intentionally left wondering about Elihu. God makes no use of him in reconciling Job to Himself. Job wanted a witness and advocate in the court of heaven, to try to get God back on Job's side. But we know from the prologue what went on in the court of heaven- God was totally "for" Job anyway. Job didn't have the Lord Jesus in view, and God engaged with Job

directly, without mediation. But the fantasies of Job about such a person, and Elihu's confirmation of the details, all lead us naturally to think of the Lord Jesus. What Job so desperately wanted, even though he himself didn't actually need this person- we have, in the Lord Jesus. The advocate for Job in the heavenly court was in fact none other than God Himself, as we readers know from the prologue. God was not in fact angry with Job and in need of an advocate to somehow placate Him and make Him see sense. But all the same, despite in a sense not 'needing' such an advocate- it is what we want. Before the work of the Lord Jesus, God still saved men like Job even though there was no advocate like the Lord Jesus. But what we see from Job is the human desire for such an intercessor. And so even that has been provided in the Lord Jesus, who ticks all the boxes of Job's desires and wish list for a qualified mediator. He is the "faithful witness" in Heaven whom Job dreamed of (Rev. 1:5; 3:14).

Job again dreams of this figure in Job 23:7: "There the righteous one might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge [i.e. God]". "The upright / righteous one" is the imaginary advocate Job fantasized of having. "There the upright might reason" suggests now Job again recognizes that in fact this figure doesn't exist. He dreams that this person might be able to eternally save him from his judge, i.e. God. He entertains the old popular [but wrong] idea of an angry God who is placated by an advocate.

I know that my Redeemer lives-

"I know" can be understood as 'I discern / perceive / conclude that...'. In this case it is not so much an expression of concrete faith, as the expression of a hunch Job has come to. He hasn't sinned, yet God is made with him- as he imagines. And so there must be someone, somewhere, surely... to reason with God and resolve the situation.

God was the redeemer of His people from slavery and captivity (Ex. 6:6; 15:13). Job felt his sufferings had placed him in some kind of slavery or captivity, from which he needed redemption or 'buying out'. And he believed that God was that redeemer. In these feelings, he becomes the exact representative of the suffering exiles in slavery and captivity. A redeemer from slavery was typically a close relative (Lev. 25:48; s.w. "kinsman" in Ruth 4:8), and this is how Job came to perceive the God whom he felt was so apparently silent and distant. He is a parade example of not being ultimately fazed by the apparent silence of God. The exiles were intended to rejoice that they had a redeemer, again, after the pattern of Job (Is. 41:14; 43:1,14; 44:6,22,23 etc.); and their redemption from Babylon was ultimately to be from death itself (Hos. 13:14).

In the end- AV "latter day" is wrong. There is no Hebrew equivalent here for the idea of a "day". The idea is simply, in the future.

He will stand upon the earth- We could understand the 'standing' in the context of the long running legal allusions throughout Job's speeches. Job's fantasy was of his redeemer 'standing' before God in Job's defence. "Earth" here is the word for dust, it is the word used when Job says he repents in "dust" and ashes (Job 42:6). And again by Abraham: "I who am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27). He desperately wants a powerful mediator who is all the same of dust, like him. His idealized fantasy actually comes to reality in the nature and person of the Lord Jesus. If the land or physical planet earth was in view, then *eretz* would probably have been used as it is elsewhere in Job. "Stand" doesn't have to imply resurrection; the idea is of being 'raised up', as the Messiah was to be raised up from amongst His brothers (Dt. 18:15; Jer. 23:5). Putting the ideas of the verse together, Job looked for a Messiah-Saviour figure

similar to himself to be raised up in the future, who would be the living God manifested in human dust and ashes like Job's (Job 7:21; 17:16). The Lord Jesus was not God Himself nor did He personally pre-exist, but Job's idea is that this person was to be his representative, of his own dust, but raised up by the living God. His sufferings led him to long for someone exactly like the Lord Jesus- and that longing ultimately came true.

Job 19:26 After my skin is destroyed-

We could translate this as "Even after my skin is flayed from my flesh I shall behold God". In the spirit of "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him". He sees God as being terribly brutal to him. But believes he will somehow at some point "see God".

In Job 2:4–6 we have the 'Satan' commenting that Job's flesh and skin need to be harmed; but in Job 19:6,26 we have Job stating his faith that even though *God* destroys his flesh and skin, yet God shall ultimately save him. See on Job 16:14.

Then in my flesh shall I see God- Job understood God to be a personal being, and that in a bodily form he would 'see' Him. Seeing his body was to be destroyed in death, this can only mean he was fantasizing about a resurrection of the body. And yet he was to be brought to realize the 'now but not yet' nature of the Kingdom experience; for he came to realize that man can even now "see God" through repentance and acceptance of His great salvation: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee" (Job 42:5 AV). See on Job 42:5. And yet throughout Job's speeches, he fantasizes about having his day in court with God, but complains that this is impossible as God is God and avoids such a meeting. The desire to "see God" doesn't just refer to physically seeing God; it is rather a fantasy that his friendly "redeemer" can force God to meet Job, and Job will see God in court, face to face with his [false] accuser, as Job sees it. In Job 23:3-7 he laments that he cannot "find" where God is, so that he can bring the legal case against Him. All this fantasy was of course quite unnecessary if he had known or believed the prologue- that God loved him, and was totally on his side in the court of heaven. So much of our headspace is taken up with fantasies about things and situations which we need not ever think about, if we are more deeply and simply convinced of God's love for me. And that through the Lord Jesus, we stand justified in His sight right now. May we know it to be true, far deeper than we do.

The desire for a cleansed flesh / skin and a new body is emphasized. "Flesh" and "skin" each appear three times in this unit (:20,22,26). This emphasis by Job is to be understood in the context of passages like Job 16:8: "You have shrivelled me up. This is a witness against me. My leanness rises up against me. It testifies to my face". Job has absorbed the theology of the friends, to the point he believes that judgment for sin is revealed in a person's body, particularly in the state of their skin / flesh. We recall that his entire flesh was covered with boils (Job 2:7) and had a black appearance (Job 30:30). He considers that his emaciated skin and body is a witness to the fact God considers he has sinned, and has punished him for it. This is why he says that his skin will indeed be destroyed, and yet in a bodily form he will "see God"- he dreamed of a time when the consequences of sin would no longer be experienced in his body. This fantasy is in fact the good news of the Gospel- eternity in a bodily form, but not a body as we currently have, which reflects judgment for sin.

Job 19:27 whom I, even I, shall see for myself. My eyes shall see it, and not a stranger's. My heart is consumed within me-

Job labours his passionate desire to personally meet and see God: “I shall see for myself”, “my eyes shall behold”, “I and not another”. He says the same thing three times, so deeply does he want personal relationship with God. We note all the personal pronouns; this is the essence of personal relationship. David shows the same wonder, with a double emphasis upon "I": "I, even I shall behold Your face in righteousness" (Ps. 17:15). To see God's face is the hope held out to us at the end of the book of Revelation. Ps. 11:7 likewise: "The upright will behold His face". Whatever value Job's sufferings may have had for others, Job was rejoicing in the intensely personal nature of salvation. He whose eyes and body were fading into death would in a corporeal form see God for himself. "And not a stranger's" connects with what we noted on :23; Job had begun to realize that his sufferings were for others' benefit, even though he didn't know who, they were still strangers to him. His point is that notwithstanding that, he was now beginning to grasp the utter wonder of his personal salvation.

As Job's emphasis on the coming of Messiah and judgment increased, so his concentration on his present sufferings decreased. His heart was consumed within him with desire for that day. 2 Tim. 4 can be regarded as Paul's most mature spiritual statement, written as it was just prior to his death. In 2 Tim. 4:1,8, Paul's mind was clearly on the second coming and the certainty of judgment. He realized, in that time of undoubted maturity, that the common characteristic of all the faithful would be that they all *loved* the appearing of Christ. But do we *love* the appearing of Christ as Job did? Is it *really* all we have in life? Is our conscience, our faith in the grace of God, our real belief in the blood of the cross, so deep that we *love* the idea of the coming of judgment, that we would fain *hasten* the day of His coming? Job's *love* of the Lord's coming grew very rapidly. Before, he was too caught up with bitterness about his unspiritual fellow 'believers', effectively justifying himself in the eyes of his ecclesia and his world, full of passive complaints about his own sufferings... and so he didn't *love* that day as he later came to. You and I personally will be in God’s Kingdom, with our arms around each other in the rubble of Jerusalem. We will personally be there. We will see Abraham there (Lk. 13:28); as Job says, with our own eyes we will behold our Lord, and not through anyone else’s eyes (Job 19:27). Our eyes shall behold the King in the beauty which we personally perceive in Him (Is. 33:17).

The desire to 'see God' must be seen in the context of Job's earlier demands to have God appear in person in court. Job has complained that God is refusing to attend, and not letting Job 'see' Him in court. Job asks God to provide him with a legal case, with a list of his sins (Job 13:23), and then goes on to complain "Why do You hide Your face?" (Job 13:24). He wants to see God- in court. God's answer is going to be that by nature, He is inscrutable. He cannot be questioned. His grace must simply be accepted.

Continuing down that path of interpretation, it has been proposed that this passage is simply Job again desiring for immediate vindication, assuming that even if he has a redeemer who one day comes to earth, it will be too late for him:

"I know that my vindicator lives and will at last arise upon the earth. But (that will be) after my flesh has
been stripped away (like) this. But I would see God while still in my flesh. I want to see Him for myself; and my eyes behold (Him) and no other. Oh! My desire is overwhelming!".

"My heart is consumed within me" could mean that he faints at the thought of meeting God. 'To faint' is what the phrase means in Ps. 73:26; 84:2; 119:81,123.

Job 19:28 If you say, 'How we will persecute him!'; because the root of the matter is found in me-

GNB offers: "My courage failed because you said, "How can we torment him?" You looked for some excuse to attack me". If this is referring to the friends, we again see them presented as the satan. Or we can read :27,28 as his heart groaning until the friends say "Why do we persecute him, seeing no evidence has been found [against Job]?". He so wants to be right with men legally, to be seen as right by them. If he had known the prologue, he would have known that God saw him as right with Him. And that is absolutely all that matters.

Having begun by complaining about the friends and then moved to rejoicing in God's future salvation of him, Job now returns to address the friends. Here and in :29 he appeals for them not to judge him but to repent and prepare for judgment day. This is not at all out of context with the passionate rejoicing in personal salvation he has just expressed in :25-27. The connection is in that he desperately wanted the friends to be there too, to share his wonderful hope. But whilst they continued condemning him, they would unlikely be there; for God has always operated the principle that those who judge / condemn will themselves be condemned (Mt. 7:1), and that is just what they were doing. And Job wants them to stop that and be saved. The situation arose because they considered that Job was totally at fault, and they were intended to persecute him on God's behalf. If they had realized that we are not to judge in the sense of condemning, and left the possible sins between God and Job (see on :4), then they would not have worked themselves into the situation they were now in- thinking it was their duty to persecute Job. This is one of several passages where Job speaks as if the friends were responsible for his physical persecution (cp.:22); as if they had brought the calamity which the opening chapters make satan responsible for. See on Job 1:6, and note how the satan figure morphs into the friends as the book continues.

Job 19:29 be afraid of the sword, for wrath brings the punishments of the sword, that you may know there is a judgment- With his mind on some future day of meeting with God and being vindicated (:25-27), Job warns the friends in the next verses that in such a case, they will be condemned. I suggest that this expresses a deep concern in Job for the final salvation of the friends; see on :28. He urges them to be aware that the wrath they have could lead to their own punishment by the Divine sword of judgment. And he wants them to realize "there is a judgment". His basic desire to save them is rewarded. God does appear in judgment and condemn the friends, and asks Job to save them by his prayers and sacrifices for them.

JOB CHAPTER 20

Job 20:1 Then Zophar the Naamathite answered- Job has just uttered a wonderful statement of ecstatic joy at the prospect, albeit as a fantasy, of his personal, future salvation, and then has gone on to appeal for the friends to repent and stop judging him, so that they might share it (Job 19:25-29). Zophar is so proud and angry that all he can do is lash out at Job, totally ignoring Job's faith, hope and appeal. This is characteristic of how the friends generally refuse to engage with Job's actual words and arguments, because they are so obsessed with their own narrative they have spun about Job. And this refusal leads Zophar to crudeness (:7,15) and basically predicting

the violent destruction of Job, with heaven and earth united in witness against his evil (:24-28).

Job 20:2 Therefore do my thoughts make me answer, even by reason of my haste that is in me- Elihu opens his response with something similar, leading us to see Elihu as summarizing the arguments of the friends and Job.

Job 20:3 I have heard the reproof which seeks to shame me. The spirit of my understanding makes me answer- The "reproof" was Job's genuine appeal to the friends to stop condemning him because they might thereby miss out on the wonderful personal salvation which Job rejoiced in (Job 19:25-29). To be told 'You are too judgmental' made Zophar even more judgmental and angry. And again we see how theological disagreement leads the friends to feel "shame". Destroying the opponent becomes necessary in order to avoid shame.

Job 20:4 Don't you know this from old time, since man was placed on earth- We the audience become almost bored by the way the friends keep on claiming that ancient sage wisdom is the source of truth, and any new revelation must be wrong just because it is new. But this sense of weariness at their repetition is intentional. We are led to realize that indeed, dialogue cannot progress if the participants simply return to the same old arguments all the time and refuse to engage with the responses.

Literally, since Adam was placed on the earth; there are further allusions to Adam in :6,18. "Though his excellency mount up to the heavens", alluding to Adam's initial status (:6); and there is likewise an allusion to the curse upon Adam in :18: "To labour shall he return, but he shall not eat... earth his recompense: yes, nothing shall he taste". Zophar argues that sin always merits immediate retribution, and that that principle started with Adam. He fails to understand Paul's inspired observation that in Adam, all have sinned. We all sin in essence as did Adam, and that includes Zophar. The friends make the classic mistake of considering their sins to be mere surface level sins, compared to the apparently major sins of Job. This belief means that we never come to personal repentance nor meeting with God. It is especially hard for religious types who consider their own sins as mere slight infringements. It's what makes churches and churchgoers such hypocrites and goody two shoes people who are in fact the biggest disadvertisment for the true church.

Job's response is to point out that the wicked often prosper. And that travellers from all over the earth have shared such stories. Travel was seen as a source of wisdom in those days, as was old age and lines of tradition. But again Job's counterargument isn't that strong. Because the very wicked do not generally have great lives over the long term. Both sides are generalizing rather than accepting that all men are sinners. They say it is an old given truth that sin brings suffering. Job replies that human observation shows the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. Both the friends and Job are appealing to human experience. And that yields no answer to the question of Job's suffering.

Job 20:5 that the triumphing of the wicked is short, the joy of the godless but for a moment?- Job's relatively brief period of prosperity is interpreted as meaning that Job was "wicked... Godless". Again we see how the wrong theology (in this case, that suffering implied personal sin) led to a headlong dive into ever more false assumptions, and condemning an upright man.

Job 20:6 Though his height mount up to the heavens, and his head reach to the clouds- This was of special relevance to the captives in Babylon. These words are used of Babylon's king who was to fall (Dan. 4:22), an event the restoration prophets associate with Israel's restoration. Again, the friends state certain truths which are even quoted in later scripture, but they hold those truths within the wrong frames of reference when it comes to Job. And this is the problem with 'truth' about a matter being held isolated from a wider framework, and without connection to the things of the spirit. For God seeks worshippers in "*spirit* and truth". See on :9.

GNB "They may grow great, towering to the sky, so great that their heads reach the clouds". This is one of several allusions in Job to the tower of Babel. Likewise there are allusions to the destruction of Sodom. The argument that "Sin always brings retribution in this life, and righteousness brings blessing in this life" was not altogether wrong, especially in the context of the time when Job and his friends were living. The fact was that this was not a consistent principle in God's dealings with man; and God doesn't deal consistently as man understands it. He operates on a higher level of morality and ethics, and we see only parts of His ways. This is why life has so many loose ends, twists and turns that appear to have no reason; to humble us and make us trust. See on Job 21:30.

Job 20:7 yet he shall perish forever like his own dung. Those who have seen him shall say, 'Where is he?'- Bildad's anger is such that he becomes crude in his vicious desire to curse Job. We recall that just shortly before, he had been sitting in silence with Job seeking to comfort him as a friend and fellow worshipper. This is how quickly relationships can go wrong, and false suppositions and lack of engagement with a person as an individual can lead to them going down a totally different track.

Job 20:8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found. Yes, he shall be chased away like a vision of the night- This is perhaps in response to Job's fantasy about a future resurrection at the end of Job 19. Bildad is dogmatic that after Job's death, there can be no restoration, and he bitterly stresses this in the following verses. Later events were to show him how wrong he was. And he then is thereby presented as a warning to the exiles who tended to believe that restoration to the land of promise was impossible for them.

Job 20:9 The eye which saw him shall see him no more, neither shall his place any more see him- Again, this is a true enough picture of death, and shows the error of all primitive fears of ghosts of the dead haunting their previous living places, reincarnation etc. But that truth is misused by Bildad and is seen without the wider context of God's power to restore and resurrect. See on :6.

Job 20:10 His children shall seek the favour of the poor. His hands shall give back his wealth- Job's wealth had been taken from him by Temanite invaders, from the same area as Eliphaz the Temanite. His hands didn't give it back. This is another hint that the Satan figure morphs with the friends, and they were actually the ones behind the stealing of Job's wealth, on the basis that they believed that as a sinner, it ought to be taken from him. See on :15.

Job 20:11 His bones are full of his youth, but youth shall lie down with him in the dust- AV "full of the sins of his youth". Job has earlier admitted the possibility that he

had sinned in youth, so perhaps he had indeed sinned as a young man. Seeing they could see nothing apparently sinful in Job at that time, they concluded he must have sinned earlier, or was sinning in a way hidden from them. They were desperate to impute sin, finding possible fault in everything; whereas the way of love and of the spirit is to seek to impute righteousness as God does to us, and as He does to Job at the end. This of itself was a huge rebuke to how the friends had done just the opposite.

Job 20:12 Though wickedness is sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue- As noted on :11, the implication is that although they had to admit there was no sin in Job's current lifestyle, they concluded that his sufferings meant he had either sinned in youth, or was hiding his current sins from them.

Job 20:13 though he spare it, and will not let it go, but keep it still within his mouth- The idea is that Job has sinned secretly and will not let that sin go but savours it. He is accused of keeping something sweet in his mouth as long as he can (:12), just to enjoy the pleasure of something sweet.

Job 20:14 yet his food in his bowels is churned. It is cobra venom within him- As noted on :6, there is truth in these statements, in this case, that sin becomes its own punishment; the sin secretly kept in the mouth and enjoyed as a tasty morsel, turns into the venom of judgment when swallowed. But it is truth without context, just as a Bible text without context is a pretext... for various wrong thinking and behaviour.

Job 20:15 He has swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again. God will cast them out of his belly- It was in fact Israel who had taken riches but not by right, and would vomit them up again (Jer. 17:11). Job had not done this, but was treated and judged as if he had. Again we see how he was suffering as an innocent representative of his peoples' sins. If indeed it was the friends who had seized Job's wealth wrongfully (see on :10), then Job becomes so powerfully their saviour at the end. He suffered the judgments for what they had done, although he had not done those things; and so he bore their sins. Through his prayer and offering for them at the end, he thereby saved them. He was suffering for the salvation of his friends, although at the time it seems he didn't realize it. The Lord Jesus did the same to a far greater extent, but He learned the lesson of Job and was aware that His sufferings were for our salvation. See on :16,18; Job 42:7.

Job 20:16 He shall suck cobra venom. The viper's tongue shall kill him- We sense the intense hatred Zophar feels for his one time friend and brother; earlier he speaks of Job dying and decaying like his own dung. This is what happens when people get obsessed with a theological position, in this case that suffering means sin, and then persecute anyone who disagrees, be they their own friend and brother. As noted on :15, this was the judgment of Israel in their apostasy (Dt. 32:32,33; Is. 59:16; Jer. 8:14; 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:5). Like the Lord Jesus, who also drunk gall on the cross (s.w. "venom"; Ps. 69:21), Job was suffering the judgment for others' sins, so that he might finally save them.

Job 20:17 He shall not look at the rivers, the flowing streams of honey and butter- Honey and butter were the blessings for obedience to the covenant; Job was suffering as if he had been disobedient to the covenant, just as the Lord did.

Job 20:18 That for which he laboured he shall restore, and shall not swallow it down. According to the substance that he has gotten, he shall not rejoice- Bildad was clearly jealous of Job's wealth, adopting the thinking of the Satan who suggested these things originally. But he justifies this by saying that Job has taken his wealth from others, and the Bedouin bands who had stolen it were in fact just taking back what Job had taken wrongfully from them. If indeed it was the friends who had seized Job's wealth wrongfully (see on :10), then all Bildad is saying becomes true for him. And he is therefore only to be saved by Job, the innocent, bearing the judgments for his sins.

Job 20:19 For he has oppressed and forsaken the poor. He has violently taken away a house, and he shall not build it up- Bildad assumes Job must have done something like this, to deserve his sufferings. Job engages with what Bildad says and denies it (Job 29:12; 31:17). Again we note that Job engages with the actual words of the friends, whereas they tend to attack him in terms of the straw man image of him they had built up in their minds, ignoring him as a person and the actual words he says. This is typical of how dialogue goes wrong.

Job 20:20 Because he knew no quietness within him, he shall not save anything of that in which he delights- AV "quietness in his belly". Bildad is back to his crude comparison of Job's sin and wealth with tasty things he had secretly eaten (:15) which now swallowed, were working within his stomach to produce death by his bowels excreting them all.

The Hebrew *shalev*, "quietness", is very similar to *selav*, the word for the quail given in the wilderness. The following verses appear to allude to the incident of Num. 11:31-35, when the murmurers were showered with quail which they then couldn't eat and which became their judgment. Compare :21-23 with Num. 11:33: “And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, before it was chewed, the wrath of the Lord was kindled against the people, and the Lord smote the people with a very great plague”; Ps. 78:26-30: “He rained flesh upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea: so they did eat and were filled- but, while the meat was in their mouth, the wrath of God came upon them". I suggest that Job lived before this time, but the poet has worked in this allusion.

Job 20:21 There was nothing left that he didn’t devour, therefore his prosperity shall not endure- The satan had begun by saying that God had given Job wealth, but if that wealth was taken away, he would curse God. The satan then morphs into the friends, the "sons of God" present in the prologue, and they continue the role of the satan as the story progresses. But Zophar has now moved beyond the original suspicion. He now paints Job as a man who had not so much been given wealth by God, but had greedily devoured the wealth of others and was now paying the price, and justice was making him relinquish all his ill gotten wealth. Again we see a parade example of how dialogue breaks down. An initial suspicion (however legitimate the suspicion) becomes exaggerated into a totally different accusation, which has no basis in reality and is outright slander, however confidently presented.

Job 20:22 In the fullness of his sufficiency, distress shall overtake him. The hand of each one who is in misery shall come on him- Zophar is reasoning that those who had been reduced to misery by Job could now legitimately put their hand upon him. In the prologue, Job is placed in the hand of the satan, with the reminder that this hand is

ultimately God's hand. Zophar now defines that "hand" as the hand of those whom Job has supposedly grabbed wealth from and reduced to misery. Again we have the suspicion that some of the trials were brought upon Job by the friends, who reasoned themselves into the assumption that they were the ones from whom Job had taken wealth. This is the classical outworking of envy and jealousy; 'you are wealthy... you have more than me... I am poorer than you... because... *you took my wealth from me and added it to your own!*'.

Job 20:23 When he is about to fill his belly, God will cast the fierceness of His wrath upon him. It will rain on him while he is eating- A clear reference to how "the fire of God" had consumed Job's wealth and children, at the very apex of his prosperity. God casting wrath through His Divinely controlled "angels of evil" is the very phrase used of His judgment of His sinful people (Ps. 78:49; Ez. 7:3). We noted the connection between the Satan and such "angels of evil" on Job 1:6. Again, Job is presented is experiencing the judgments of God' sinful people, whilst personally innocent.

Job 20:24 He shall flee from the iron weapon. The bronze arrow shall strike him through- Zophar claims that Job was going to flee from the arrow of Divine judgment, but would all the same be struck through by it (Job 20:24,25). God's response was that His creatures didn't flee from His arrows (s.w. Job 41:28). Neither did Job flee from God; he uses the same term to describe how the wicked vainly tried to flee from God (Job 27:22). He was in harmony with the natural creation. Zophar was wrong. Job didn't flee from God but quite the opposite- he keeps begging God to reveal Himself, and He does so at the end of the book.

Job 20:25 He draws it forth, and it comes out of his body. Yes, the glittering point comes out of his liver- The assumption is that Job is about to die because of his sins. If only they knew the prologue, where God had declared Job perfect and decreed that his life would not be taken from him... This is the trouble with judgmental attitudes to others- they progress in their severity, and can end up totally out of step with God's judgments and position in Heaven.

Zophar is gloating in the judgment that he was sure would come upon Job. We marvel at how quickly he has transformed his position from the man who came and sat down with Job seven days in silence, perhaps sincerely seeking to comfort Job in his affliction. But now by this point, the friends have reasoned themselves into a position where they not only think Job's sufferings are legitimate and deserved, but gloat at the prospect of his further and final sufferings, with his liver pierced by God's arrows, and the arrow coming out of the other side of his body. This is how far the relationship broke down, all because of a refusal to understand Job as a person and engage with what he was actually saying and who he really was.

Terrors are upon him- "Terrors" are again the judgment of God upon an apostate Israel, whom Job was suffering for whilst innocent, after the pattern of the later Lord Jesus (Dt. 32:25 s.w.). Those "terrors" were likely understood by the friends as some kind of demonic beings. God deconstructs this by explaining that the great beasts He has created likewise were 'terrible' (s.w. "terrors"). But the simple point was that He had created them and was totally in control (s.w. Job 39:20; 41:14).

Job 20:26 All darkness is laid up for his treasures. An unfanned fire shall devour him. It shall consume that which is left in his tent- This implies Job still had some wealth concealed in his tent. But that seems unlikely, seeing he was literally begging for

bread (see on Job 15:23) and squatting in deserted houses (see on Job 15:28). Again the friends are dogmatically asserting what they had previously begun by surmising. This again is how relationships go wrong when there is no actual engagement with what the person really is saying and their actual location in reality.

Job 20:27 The heavens shall reveal his iniquity. The earth shall rise up against him- The friends became assured that God, "the heavens", knew Job was a sinner, and "earth" would rise up against Job in harmony with "heaven". Again, the dialogue broke down because of their assumptions, which they came to assume were supported by God, and therefore their reasoning went full circle- they, as the "earth", were rising up against Job in harmony with "heaven". They are unaware of the prologue, where the council of Heaven had declared Job innocent of iniquity.

Job 20:28 The increase of his house shall depart. They shall rush away in the day of His wrath- Rashi "shall go into exile", again making Job a symbol of the exiles. Zophar assumed the day of God's wrath was upon Job, whereas in fact His wrath was kindled against Zophar and the friends ("My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends", Job 42:7; as Elihu's wrath was likewise, Job 32:2).

Zophar is alluding to the destruction of Job's house / family. The friends have moved on from the original concern of the satan, who morphs into them. The initial question was whether Job only believed in God because God had materially blessed him. And so God gave all Job had into the hand of the 'satan'. The removal of Job's wealth was never intended to be an outcome of God's wrath. Rather was it part of an experiment, if you like, to teach the satan and the friends something. But they had moved far further from that position, and were talking in terms of Divine wrath and judgment against Job. This moving on from original questions and concerns about an individual is exactly what we see in relationship breakdown today. The original issues are unrecognizable compared to the accusations which the original issues morph into.

Job 20:29 This is the portion of a wicked man from God, the heritage appointed to him by God- As explained on :28, the removal of Job's wealth was in order to test Job and reveal him to God and man. It was not a judgment of a wicked man; the prologue is at pains to point out that Job was "perfect" (Job 1:1) and not a "wicked man".

JOB CHAPTER 21

Job 21:1 Then Job answered- I have consistently noted how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they pay little attention to his words and attack him in terms of the straw man they have created. See on :2.

Job 21:2 Listen diligently to my speech. Let this be your consolation- As noted on :1, Job engages with what the friends have said, whereas they attack him in terms of vague generalities without such specific engagement with his words. In this chapter he specifically answers what Zophar has said in Job 20. He argues that (contrary to what Zophar has just claimed in the previous speech) in fact the wicked are rarely cut down in this life, instead they prosper (:17,18). And their children often don't suffer for the sins of the parents but instead profit from them (:19-21).

Job 21:3 Allow me, and I also will speak; after I have spoken, mock on- This may be an invitation to them to hear what he has actually said and only then "mock on",

rather than continually attacking the straw man image of him they had created in their minds (see on :1,2). "Mock" is the word for "scorn" used of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job (Ps. 22:7). The application to Hezekiah's time is that the people of Judah were likewise scorned by their enemies (Is. 37:22); and to the exiles in that they too were mocked by the opponents to the rebuilding by men who came from the same ethnic background as the three friends (s.w. Neh. 2:19; 4:1).

Job 21:4 As for me, is my complaint to man? Why shouldn't I be impatient?- He may mean that he was not so much complaining about the friends, as complaining about God. Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins. No trial is so great that we cannot bear it; a way of escape will be made lest we are overpowered (1 Cor. 10:16). "For the sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil" (Ps. 125:3). Every sin is avoidable and culpable. We of course consider our point of endurance to be far lower than God does.

There is surely an intended contrast between Job's self admitted impatience, and the comment of James about Job's patience / endurance. Just as there is an intended contrast between God saying that Job had spoken what was right about Him- when chapter after chapter, Job has been cursing God. On one hand we could argue that God counted Job righteous, all through his months of cursing Him (Job 7:3 "months of vanity"). Or we can conclude that Job's patience / endurance was in finally repenting. In the longer run of human life, he picked up again and kept running with the Lord.

Job 21:5 Look at me, and be astonished. Lay your hand on your mouth- Here we have another connection with the suffering servant of Isaiah, upon whom men would look and be astonished. See on Job 16:17. When Job finally lays his hand upon his own mouth (Job 40:4), he is only doing what he had earlier told the friends to do in

recognition of their folly (Job 13:5; 21:5). Through the pain and irritation of their speeches, Job came to value and appreciate the need for silence before God. But it was only when personally confronted by God at the end that he realizes that he too had spoken too much and he repents of that in silence.

Job 21:6 When I remember, I am troubled. Horror takes hold of my flesh- This horror was at the thought that although the wicked were not judged in this life, they would face a terrible future condemnation, and despite his own desperate illness and situation, he looked out of himself as did the Lord on the way to the cross, to deeply mourn the future judgment of the wicked at the last day. Here we have a wonderful window onto Job's basic loving, saving concern for others. No wonder he was the one chosen to be their representative saviour, suffering the judgment of their sins, and then invited to pray and sacrifice to bring about the salvation of the friends and his own family who had rejected him. If we too have a heart that bleeds for the condemnation of others, we will be used to save them. This is the prime qualification for all evangelism. It is this which God will use, rather than having apparently persuasive technique and evangelism materials.

Or he could mean that he remembers the glory of his former life, and compares it with his sitting on the ash heap with nothing and awaiting death. The depth of his fall is terrifying to him.

Job 21:7 Why do the wicked live, become old, yes, and grow mighty in power?- The answer to this question is what had made Job shudder in :6. The answer is that they will come to their judgment at the last day, as they clearly don't face it in this life. In Job 21:7-9 he feels that the wicked are blessed; in Job 27:13-17 he is sure that the wicked must some day be punished. But it was out of this dialectic that he came to truth. Likewise on one hand he fantasizes about a resurrection from the dead, but at other times he reveals his baseline position- that he has no hope for any life after death.

Job 21:8 Their child is established with them in their sight, their offspring before their eyes- It was and is a great blessing to see your children grow up and become established with their own families (as ultimately in 2 Sam. 7:12-16). In contrast to Job's children who were dead. The point is that Job is answering Zophar's claims that the wicked are punished through the suffering of their children, but Job is saying that this simply doesn't correspond to observable reality. Note that he engages with the words of the friends, whereas they largely ignore his words. See on See on :1,2,17.

Job 21:9 Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them- Their houses compare with Job's, which fell down as a result of the Angel-satan whirlwind. Earlier in Job 9:34 Job pleaded: "Let Him take His rod away from me, and let not His fear terrify me". He felt he was suffering the punishment of the wicked in this life, and therefore he was drawn towards the conclusion that he would not therefore suffer it at the last day- but rather then be saved.

Job 21:10 Their bulls breed without fail. Their cows calve, and don't miscarry- Miscarriage was understood as a Divine curse (s.w. Gen. 31:38; Jer. 15:7; Hos. 9:14; Mal. 3:11). It had come upon Job, but apparently not upon "the wicked". But the references just quoted in the prophets show that it was to come upon the apostate people of God. And this is Job's point. Judgment doesn't immediately come, but it

will. And he was suffering those judgments because he was representative of sinners whilst himself innocent, in the spirit of the future Lord Jesus.

Job 21:11 They send forth their little ones like a flock. Their children dance- Again Job is answering Zophar's claim that the children of the wicked are punished, just as Job's children had been. But as noted on :1,2,8,17, Job is saying that this is just not true according to observed reality. There is a longer term Divine game plan here and Job is ever more clearly seeing it.

Job 21:12 They sing to the tambourine and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the pipe- This is the language of partying. Job's children had partied regularly like this, and the fire of God had consumed them in judgment. This could be a tacit recognition from Job that his children had indeed sinned, his sin offerings for them had not of themselves been efficacious, his children had been slain "in an instant" (:13); but there still remained the mystery, that the same sin leads to immediate judgment for some, but not for others. He could even be implying that because his children had suffered it in this life, there would be future hope for their salvation. And this connects with the possibility that his slain children were resurrected, thanks to his being their sin bearer in his own body, when all things in his life are restored at the end. See on Job 42:13.

Job 21:13 They spend their days in prosperity. In an instant they go down to Sheol- The idea is that they die an easy, quick and painless death. Job was dying a hard and slow death, inching ever closer to *sheol* rather than going there "in an instant".

Job 21:14 They tell God, 'Depart from us, for we don't want to know about Your ways- Again as noted on :12, Job may be admitting that his children had indeed cursed God in their hearts, renouncing Him (Job 1:5). For he seems to be saying that his children had been judged in this life for their sins, but those who did the same as they had but who avoided such judgment would be judged and condemned at the last day. There may be in 1 Tim. 5:24 the idea that if we are judged for our sins in this life, we shall not be in the last day; and the reverse is true. This again could support the possibility discussed on Job 42:3 that Job's slain children were resurrected when he was restored. See on :23. His sin offerings for them couldn't achieve this of themselves; but his representative suffering for them could. And this of course looks ahead to the work of the Lord Jesus, saving those whom Mosaic sacrifices of themselves couldn't save.

Job 21:15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? What profit should we have, if we pray to Him?'- Note the parallel between praying to God and serving Him. Those who feel incapacitated to physically serve God can take comfort from the fact that the Bible presents prayer as serving God. Again as noted on :14, Job may be admitting that his children had indeed cursed God in their hearts, renouncing Him (Job 1:5). These words are misquoted by Elihu in Job 35:3 as if Job has said this about himself and about there being no profit in serving or praying to God. Yet Elihu claims to speak on God's behalf. We can however understand Elihu as merely reiterating the position of the friends, as a kind of summary at the end of their dialogues; and at the same time giving a foretaste of the speeches of God which are to come. He therefore serves as a literary device in the story, particularly required for an illiterate audience hearing or viewing the drama presented, and having inevitably forgotten the details of all the positions previously presented.

The idols and the Gentile nations amongst whom the exiles lived would not "profit" them (Is. 30:5,6; 44:9,10); but as the book of Esther makes clear, they were profiting well, apparently, from remaining amongst them. But the only real "profit" would be if they quit all that and returned to Zion (Is. 48:17 s.w.). But they saw no "profit" in being forgiven and restored as God's people (s.w. Job 35:3). Rather they considered the temporal "profit" of life in Babylon as far greater profit.

Job 21:16 Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand. The counsel of the wicked is far from me- The idea may be as GNB "They claim they succeed by their own strength, but their way of thinking I can't accept". Job is saying that citing the various calamities of the wicked, as Zophar has just done, is not relevant to him personally as he doesn't act and think as the wicked to.

Job 21:17 How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out, that their calamity comes on them, that God distributes sorrows to them in His anger?- The answer of course is intended to be 'Not often!'. He argues (contrary to what Zophar has just claimed in the previous speech) that in fact the wicked are rarely cut down in this life, instead they prosper (:17,18). And their children often don't suffer for the sins of the parents but instead profit from them (:19-21). We again must note how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they increasingly ignore his words and attack the image of "Job" which they have falsely created in their own minds. See on :1,2,8.

This is Job's answer to Bildad's claim that he has observed that "the light of the wicked shall be put out, the spark of his fire shall not shine" (Job 18:5). Both Bildad and Job are appealing to human experience. And that yields no answer to the question of Job's suffering.

Job 21:18 How often is it that they are as stubble before the wind, as chaff that the storm carries away?- This is the language of the latter day destruction of the wicked at judgment day (Is. 17:13; Dan. 2:35). Job is saying that they do not have their judgment in this life, unlike his sinful children who did have it in this life; but they will be judged at the last day. He is driven towards his understanding of the last day by his own experience of injustice and the very differing judgment which sinners experience. All our struggles with the injustice of life today are designed to bring us to a similar focus- upon the return of the Lord Jesus as the just judge, and the establishment of eternal justice.

Job 21:19 You say, 'God lays up his iniquity for his children'. Let him recompense it to himself, that he may know it- GNB "You claim God punishes a child for the sins of his father. No! Let God punish the sinners themselves; let him show that he does it because of their sins". This was particularly relevant to the exiles, who considered they were unjustly suffering for their fathers' sins, and whose arguments are likewise challenged in Ez. 18. And in Job's immediate context, he is tacitly admitting that his children had indeed sinned and been punished- but not for his sins, but for their own sins, which he clearly was not involved in. But he wanted God to show this was the case, he wanted God to explain *why* his children had been killed. This is all so psychologically credible; to want to know *why* God took the lives of your ten kids... And there is no answer to these "why?" questions in God's response.

Job 21:20 Let his own eyes see his destruction. Let him drink of the wrath of the

Almighty- GNB "Let sinners bear their own punishment; let them feel the wrath of Almighty God". See on :19.

Job 21:21 For what does he care for his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off?- The idea is that in fact the wickedness of the sinner is often not visited upon their children. Job argues (contrary to what Zophar has just claimed in the previous speech) that in fact the wicked are rarely cut down in this life, instead they prosper (:17,18). And their children often don't suffer for the sins of the parents but instead profit from them (:19-21). We again must note how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they increasingly ignore his words and attack the image of "Job" which they have falsely created in their own minds. See on :1,2.

Job 21:22 Shall any teach God knowledge, since He judges those who are high?- "Even those in high places" (GNB). The three friends have similarities with the Jewish system. When Job speaks of "the wicked" he is digging at the friends, as they do at him when they speak of the wicked. Thus he implies here that they were trying to "teach God knowledge" - alluded to in Rom. 11:34 and 1 Cor. 2:16, where the Jews are mocked for thinking they can instruct God and be "His counsellor", thus linking the friends with the Jews. As Job suffered the judgments for their sins and finally redeemed them, so the Lord Jesus did for Israel.

Job 21:23 One dies in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet- The idea is that "one sinner" has an easy death, whereas others have Divine judgment in this life (:25). Job has earlier accused the friends of those being "at ease" (s.w. Job 12:5). He sees them as therefore being liable to future judgment, seeing they were not receiving judgment in this life. Job had earlier lived a "quiet" life (s.w. Job 16:12). But now that had been interrupted; he was experiencing judgment now, so that he would not face it in the last day. And earlier in this chapter it seems that he considered that this is what his sinful children had experienced when God slew them, paving the way for the idea that in fact they were resurrected thanks to his restoration- see on Job 42:3.

Job 21:24 His pails are full of milk. The marrow of his bones is moistened- Perhaps, "his buckets / pails". Job's bones are often mentioned as suffering; he was receiving judgment in this life so he didn't have to face it at the last day (as in 1 Tim. 5:24). The satan had been given specific authority to see Job's bones suffer (Job 2:5). His suffering of the condemnation of the wicked, whose bones were to suffer, was allowed on the specific understanding that God considered him righteous and not a sinner. This had been completely and willfully forgotten by the friends, who were the "sons of God" party to those initial discussions with God in the prologue.

Job 21:25 Another dies in bitterness of soul, and never tastes of good- "Bitterness of soul" is the very phrase Job uses about himself (Job 3:20; 7:11; 10:1). He clearly has himself in view. His idea is that some get their judgment in this life, as he was; and he contrasts himself with those like the friends who don't have their judgment now, but shall have it in the last day.

Job 21:26 They lie down alike in the dust. The worm covers them- The implication of Job's argument, as noted on :6, is that indeed all experience death, but the difference will be at the future judgment. Job's belief in the mortality of man and death as an unconscious state is hereby revealed, and it likely stood in contrast to the majority

views of the time. As discussed on Job 9:22 ["he destroys the blameless and the wicked"], he was in fact led to this by his experiences. Their theology was that obedience to God brings blessing, and disobedience results in curse. But that theology had failed. Job is driven to the understanding that there must surely be a future day of judgment, which meant resurrection, which meant God somehow revealed on earth at some latter day, when justice would finally be done. Likewise, he is increasingly driven to the reflection that life for all men, the good and the bad, is very brief- and for good and bad alike, ends in death: "together in the dust [all men] lie, and the worm will cover them" (Job 21:26). This clearly alludes to the curse upon man in Eden. All have sinned, and whether some sin more than others they all alike come to dust. Job suffered "without cause" and I don't discern any spiritual growth in him within the dialogues; but it would be true to say that his theology developed. And we are possibly intended to discern that.

Job 21:27 Behold, I know your thoughts, the devices with which you would wrong me- The friends are accused of 'wronging' Job by wicked "devices"; of actually planning wrong against him. 'Wronging' is the same word as "shake off" in Job 15:33. Eliphaz was so convinced that God would do Job 'wrong' that he developed to the point of actually devising to do wrong to Job, thus confirming the sense that the friends became the 'Satan' figure and actually did the evil to Job which he initially wanted done.

Job 21:28 For you say, 'Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked lived?'- "The [wicked] prince" clearly refers to Job. The friends have not exactly said these words, but Job as it were places the implication of their positions in inverted commas, as if they had really said this in so many words- when actually they had only implied it. So again we see how dialogue goes so wrong, when parties become sure that the implication of others' positions is what they have actually said- when they haven't. The friends do the same to Job, but we can say that Job does so more accurately and fairly than they do to him.

Job 21:29 Haven't you asked wayfaring men? Don't you know their evidences- Those who had travelled far were seen as wise men because of having encountered more experiences than most people, who never travelled far. The friends constantly appeal to the wisdom of the sages and of previous generations. Job now appeals to the general knowledge and observations of the ordinary people, the "wayfaring men". He is saying that observed reality simply differs to what the sages are saying.

Job 21:30 that the evil man is reserved to the day of calamity, that they are led forth to the day of wrath?- Job is arguing that the way the wicked prosper means that they must face a future "day of wrath", and that this has been figured out by ordinary "wayfaring" people (:29) because it is so obvious. God confirms this view, by saying that He has "reserved" final judgment, although He has created the things He will use in that judgment and "reserved" them until then (Job 38:23 s.w.).

Or we can go with GNB "On the day God is angry and punishes, it is the wicked who are always spared". When judgment days come, God spares the wicked, according to Job: "the wicked is spared in the day of destruction". In passing, we note that one difficulty in studying Job is the bias of translators who are set on trying to present Job as "patient" and Godly. GNB is good at not doing this. As discussed on :31, this would then be yet another of Job's blasphemous accusations that God is

unjust and actually favours the wicked. As discussed on Job 20:6, the argument that "Sin always brings retribution in this life, and righteousness brings blessing in this life" was not altogether wrong, especially in the context of the time when Job and his friends were living. The fact was that this was not a consistent principle in God's dealings with man. And reflection upon this led Job to fantasize that there will be a future day of judgment and eternal justice. Indeed he was not wrong. Although God's response majestically doesn't make that point at all, as we would expect. He is not always consistent, as man judges consistency and integrity. Even though that point is developed in the Psalms, where psalmists struggle with the same issues and take comfort in future judgment. God's repeated point is that we are to accept Him and accept our inability to reason with Him.

Job 21:31 Who shall declare his way to his face? Who shall repay him what he has done?- GNB "There is no one to accuse the wicked or pay them back for all they have done". The answer of course is that there is no such ultimate judgment or moral ombudsman in this life. Yet justice and judgment must be done- and there must therefore be a future day of judgment when God shall do this. Job is driven relentlessly towards a focus upon the last day, just as we are by our experiences of injustice. And the appearance of God in judgment at the end is a vindication of Job's desire.

Job 21:32 Yet he will be carried to the grave. Men shall keep watch over the tomb- The wicked are carried to peaceful graves without having faced judgment (:31). But therefore, the very peacefulness of their graves is a strong argument for belief in a future day of judgment, and their resurrection to face it. Job at this point doesn't see that; he argues that death is all the same permanent for both good and bad, and therefore God is unjust. And he will die without a tomb nor memorial.

Job 21:33 The clods of the valley shall be sweet to him. All men shall draw after him, as there were innumerable before him- As noted on :32, the apparent sweetness of the death and burial of the wicked, going on generation after generation, is a powerful argument that in fact there must be a day of resurrection to judgment yet to come. Or we can read with GNB "Thousands join the funeral procession, and even the earth lies gently on their bodies".

Job's position is that the wicked often prosper and the righteous suffer. Yet they all die the same death. He has no real conception of a future judgment nor afterlife. And so he concludes that God is unjust.

Job 21:34 So how can you comfort me with nonsense, because in your answers there remains only falsehood?- LXX "I have no rest from your molestation". If this reading is correct, we have more evidence that the friends were in fact the Satan, bringing the judgments upon Job. The friends initially came to "comfort" Job. But their refusal to engage with him as a person and his actual situation and words (see on :1,2) leads them to do the very opposite. And so we see how initially well meaning dialogue turns to be destructive and the reverse of "comfort". The restoration prophets announced "Comfort" to God's people who were feeling and suffering as Job (Is. 40:1; 66:13); Job's lack of comforters thereby makes him representative of the exiles.

JOB CHAPTER 22

Job 22:1 Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered- Much of this speech is utterly irrelevant to what Job has just said. Eliphaz assumes Job is protesting his righteousness, as noted on Job 21:1,2, the friends attack a straw man image they have built up of Job rather than engaging with that he has actually said. And they repeatedly forget the context of Job as explained by God in the prologue- that Job is a righteous man, and his sufferings are not judgment for sin, but rather to persuade the satan of his doubts. And the satan morphs into the friends after the end of Job 2. Eliphaz here does later mention some of Job's words (:15-20), but he misrepresents them to fit his own agenda. This again is a parade example of how dialogue breaks down and becomes more than unhelpful.

Job 22:2 Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself- These words are applied by Elihu to Job in Job 35:3. It seems an obvious and unkindly willful misquotation- until we accept the viewpoint that Elihu is not so much speaking for himself, as summarizing for the audience the arguments presented so far, with Elihu playing the role of the friends in summarizing the argument so far. See on :21. Or we can read :2,3 as Eliphaz summarizing the implications of Job's statements in Job 21 that good and bad people have the same end, in the grave, and therefore God isn't bothered about human behaviour. Job, says Eliphaz, is arguing that human action cannot impact God's feelings nor give Him pleasure (:3). Like the Greek gods, He was thought to have no emotion, made of concrete. Job has said the same in Job 7:20: "If I sin, what do I do to You, You watcher of men?". And indeed, that is a fair summary of what Job has been arguing. We know from the prologue how wrong this is- for God was thrilled with Job's righteousness. Yet this is a common human failing- to fail to perceive how sensitive God is with our behaviour.

Job 22:3 Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that you are righteous? Or does it benefit Him, that you make your ways perfect?- Eliphaz is now propelled by his obsession against Job to say things about God which are wildly untrue, and is specifically rebuked above the other friends for doing this at the end (Job 42:7). I would surmise that his words of Job 22:3 are specifically in view. For this is a complete denial of all that God reveals Himself to be. Job rightly understood that God as human creator has a tender desire to the work of His hands (see on Job 14:15). But Eliphaz speaks as if God has no interest nor feeling towards those who are righteous, so far above caring is He. And this could not be a more serious misrepresentation of the God who is thrilled by every move a man makes towards Him. See on :12.

But consider that :2,3 are Eliphaz summarizing what Job has said. The words translated "righteous... perfect... pious" in :2,3 are all found in God's assessment of Job in Job 1:8; 2:3 as perfect, upright and God fearing. It was a pleasure to God that Job was like this. Job was tragically unaware of this. For Job, God as so distant and supremely "other" that He is unmoved by human spirituality and heart for Him. The connection with the prologue shows how wrong Job was to think this. The 'satan', who may well be a figure for Eliphaz and his friends, argued that Job's material blessings came from God because Job was "righteous... perfect... pious". And yet Job, according to how Eliphaz is summarizing him, says that God is personally disinterested in mere man being "righteous... perfect... pious". So he considers that material blessing comes as it were on autopilot from an unfeeling God, as if by some

law of nature. And so Job has absorbed the theology of the friends and the satan [at this point they are likely the same entity].

Job 22:4 Is it for your piety that He reproves you- This is sarcasm. And this is the point where we know that dialogue is now no longer dialogue. Eliphaz reached this low point because he is simply ignoring all Job has said in the previous speech, and has developed his own idea that Job's sufferings are Divine reproof- when the prologue makes clear that they were for the benefit of the satan and the "sons of God", the friends party to the original discussion about Job.

That He enters with you into judgment?- The prologue has made it clear to us the readers that Job was seen by God as a righteous man. His sufferings were not Divine judgment, but a means through which to teach the friends. But Eliphaz wrongly assumes that all disaster is a reproof from God, and is a sign of His judgment / condemnation. He won't see that evil comes for various reasons. Indeed we could understand :5 as sarcastically meaning 'Do you really think that because you are so righteous, God so reproves you?'. The truth is that the only truly righteous man, the Lord Jesus, suffered more than any man.

Job's sufferings were not a rebuke nor an opening of a legal case against him from God. But God and Elihu will indeed go on to rebuke and enter into judgment with Job- not for any sins prior to his trials, but basically because he believed the friends.

Job 22:5 Isn't your wickedness great? Neither is there any end to your iniquities- This is in total defiance of the opening explanation in the prologue that Job was not seen as wicked before God. But just as people today lose their basis in Biblical principle and statement and run headlong into assumptions which lead to breakdown of interpersonal relationships, so Eliphaz has become convinced that Job is a sinner because he is suffering. The greatness of his sufferings was in order to persuade the friends / satan about Job's righteousness; but instead they are so fixated on the idea that sin and judgment are proportional that they assume that the great sufferings imply great wickedness. Initially, Eliphaz accepted Job was righteous: "Isn't your piety your confidence? Isn't the integrity of your ways your hope?" (Job 4:6). But he has reasoned himself to a point where he considers Job was in fact extremely wicked. He cannot accept that the righteous suffer, and so, sufferers must be wicked. Just as people come to hate and demonize a person they once loved... solely because of their internal paths of reasoning. When, in Job's case, he did nothing but sit in front of Eliphaz scraping his skin with broken pottery.

Job 22:6 For you have taken pledges from your brother for nothing, and stripped the naked of their clothing- Eliphaz is so convinced that Job is suffering because he sinned that he now dogmatically states Job's sins in detail. What began as internal speculation within him, he now comes out with as fact. And we see this happening all the time in broken relationships. He assumes that the stripping of Job of his clothing in Job 19:9 must have been because Job had stripped others of their clothing. The same word is used of the stripping of God's people of their glory (Ez. 16:39; 23:26; Mic. 3:3), which only happened because they themselves did not strip themselves of their clothing in repentance (s.w. Is. 32:11; Ez. 26:16). The stripping of Job, which also recalls the stripping of the priest Aaron of his clothes and "crown" [mitre] when his priesthood ended (Num. 20:26,28), was therefore to elicit repentance in him. And this is what was finally achieved at the end of the book.

Job 22:7 You haven't given water to the weary to drink, and you have withheld bread from the hungry- See on :6. The focus of the Lord Jesus upon the positive is shown by the way the Lord quotes Job 22:7 in the parable of the sheep and goats. These words are part of Eliphaz's erroneous allegations against Job- for Job was a perfect man, and not guilty on these counts. Yet the Lord extracts elements of truth from those wrong words, rather than just contemptuously ignoring them. Likewise Job 22:25 speaks of God being our "treasure… our precious silver" (RV). Surely the Lord had this in mind when saying that our treasure must be laid up "in heaven", i.e. with God (for He often uses 'Heaven' for 'God'). And James follows suite by approvingly quoting Job 22:29 about the lifting up of the humble (James 4:6).

Job 22:8 But as for the mighty man, he had the earth from you. The honourable man, he lived in it- The accusation is that Job had given land to the mighty and famous in return for favours from them, whereas he had despised the poor (:7,9). We must recall that Job was "perfect" before God and was being tested for the sake of the education of the friends. But now Eliphaz is so persuaded of his pet theory that Job's sufferings are for his sins, that he feels he can speculate about what those things were. And that allowance of himself to speculate now leads him to dogmatically make false accusation; dialogue is now no longer dialogue but a feeding frenzy of hatred and self-justification. We too can so easily descend this path.

Job 22:9 You have sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless you have broken- As explained on :8, Eliphaz began by nursing a pet theory: Job was suffering because he had sinned, and God's word of explanation about why Job was now to suffer was ignored. This led to internal speculation about Job's possible sins; and now to utterly dogmatic assertion of that which was untrue. The path to every slander is similar.

Job 22:10 Therefore snares are around you. Sudden fear troubles you- Now Eliphaz quotes some of Job's words describing his lamentable state. But still, as noted on :1, Eliphaz isn't engaging with Job's words and arguments. He is merely quoting Job's laments and descriptions of his illness, and gloating that "therefore", because of Job's sins, these things have happened. This is not engagement with the words and arguments of another.

Job 22:11 or darkness, so that you can not see, and floods of waters cover you- This may refer to fits of blindness which Job complains of, and a sensation of drowning. Or the darkness can refer to the cosmic 'power of darkness' many then believed in. It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God

declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

Job 22:12 Isn't God in the heights of heaven? See the height of the stars, how high they are!- This is similar to the terribly wrong claim in :3 that God is so far away that He is not so serious about human behaviour. Job however is then accused of misusing this to think that God is unable to see his sinful behaviour (:13). The final appearance of God is surely to demonstrate how close God is, and the height of His exaltation is no barrier to His relationship with and feelings toward man.

Job 22:13 You say, 'What does God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness?- In fact, this was the very view of the exiles, and it was this subconscious belief that God could not see them which led to their sins in the first place (Is. 29:15; 40:27; Jer. 23:24; Lam. 3:44; Ez. 8:12). So even the experience of false accusation was used by God, so that Job felt the feelings of God's sinful people. Eliphaz was proven wrong enough when the God enveloped by the "thick darkness" of the Sinai theophany saw Israel's sin with the golden calf (s.w. Dt. 4:11; 5:22). The "thick darkness" is created by God (Job 38:9), it is He who can shroud Himself from human understanding; but this doesn't mean that He cannot "judge through the thick darkness" (Job 22:13). The thick darkness was only from man's viewpoint; not from God's. The fact man feels God to be distant and shrouded doesn't mean He actually is. And this is a fundamental truth for all time, that our perceptions of God don't mean that this is what He actually is. For God was not created by man in his image and likeness, but the other way around. "The thick darkness" is the term used to describe the exile in Babylon (Is. 60:2; Jer. 13:16; Ez. 34:12). But God judged through this, and the exiles weren't hidden from God because of it. And He "reveals deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22 LXX).

Job 22:14 Thick clouds are a covering to Him, so that He doesn't see- See on :13. Again, these were false representations of Job, attacking a straw man image of Job which had no real existence and was only in the mind of Eliphaz. God created these thick clouds and could dissolve them at will, and maintains them within a perfect balance (s.w. Job 37:11,16).

He walks on the vault of the sky'- The idea is alluded to in Is. 40:22, where the context is of assuring the exiles that in fact they are not forgotten, and the God who is enthroned over Heaven and earth has the absolute power to change their situation in a moment. Eliphaz is accusing Job of considering that God's concerns are simply up in Heaven where He walks around, and He is disinterested in what happens on earth, seeing He is so far away. God almost confirms this in His response, which speaks of His creation and massive power, and has very little to say about man.

Job 22:15 Will you keep the old way, which wicked men have trodden- The friends continually appeal to past history. Their wisdom is supposedly in line with that of the ancient sages; and they consider Job's behaviour to be in line with that of previous sinners, those who lived before the flood (see on :16).

Job 22:16 who were snatched away before their time- "Snatched away" is only s.w.

Job 16:8, where Job complains his body is "shrivelled" or "snatched away". Eliphaz is claiming that Job is suffering just as those previously condemned by God had done.

Whose foundation was poured out as a stream- Literally, "whose foundation was poured out (so as to become) a stream or flood", possibly referring to how the foundations of the earth appeared to turn into gushing waters at the flood (Gen. 7:11). The friends argue that sin brings retribution, and therefore Job has sinned because he is suffering. His case proves them wrong; but the whole question is nuanced by the fact that indeed, there had been the flood and the destruction of Babel already in their period of history. Sin does bring Divine judgment in this life. And at their time, obedience did bring blessing, as we see from God's blessing of Job both before and after his period of suffering. What the friends failed to realize was the sovereignty of God- that He can make exceptions to His own principles, and in any case, the principles we observe are only what we perceive.

Job 22:17 who said to God, 'Depart from us'; and, 'What can the Almighty do for us?'- A misrepresentation of Job's words (Job 21:14,15). The friends reasoned that Job was a sinner because he was suffering, therefore he was to be seen as associated with other sinners such as those destroyed by the flood, and therefore the reported words and attitudes of those sinners must be those of Job. Like many today in pseudo dialogue, the false steps of logic all arose because they refused to engage with Job as a unique person and hear his actual words; instead they pigeon holed him within a certain category they had in their minds. And treated him as if he were like all the others they had placed him with.

Job 22:18 Yet He filled their houses with good things, but the counsel of the wicked is far from me- A sarcastic quotation of Job's words, where he had denied association with the "counsel of the wicked" (Job 21:16). The descent into sarcasm is a sure sign that genuine dialogue is over. Perhaps Eliphaz is claiming that Job had justified the sinners destroyed by the flood by noting that God had "filled their houses with good things". Whilst there may be evidence of prosperity just before the flood (Mt. 24:38,39), Eliphaz is attributing words to Job which he simply never said- although in many ways he is not unfairly developing the implications of Job's words.

Job 22:19 The righteous see it, and are glad. The innocent ridicule them- Eliphaz equates the friends with "the righteous... the innocent". But they have earlier condemned Job for claiming he is "innocent", arguing that in fact all men are impure before God. Their obsession with condemning Job led them to contradict themselves, to even condemn themselves so that they might be seen as righteous and Job as sinful. And surely "ridicule" is never appropriate for the righteous in their relationship with the wicked. Job was indeed "the innocent", but he doesn't in this sense rejoice, gloat over nor ridicule the friends. Whereas the friends do "ridicule" Job (s.w. Job 21:3). This ridiculing of the innocent by those who wrongly thought they were innocent was exactly what happened to the Lord on the cross (Ps. 22:7 s.w.), and what was done to the exile (Is. 33:19).

Job 22:20 saying, 'Surely those who rose up against us are cut off- LXX "Has not their substance been taken away"; Heb. "Truly our *adversary* is cut down". Eliphaz is saying that the righteous, himself and the friends, would rejoice in Job's death because their satan / adversary would then have been cut down. This is how completely transformed was their reasoning. They were acting as the satan to Job; for the satan

figure morphs with the friends after he disappears from the story. Job was treated now as the satan, the adversary. But thereby he came to save those who were adversarial to him. He thus bore their sins whilst innocent, which is one of the great themes of the story. And it is in this aspect that he points forward to the suffering, saving work of Lord Jesus.

The fire has consumed their remnant'- Alluding to how the fire of God consumed the wealth and family of Job.

Job 22:21 Acquaint yourself with Him, now, and be at peace. Thereby good shall come to you- Eliphaz orders Job to repent, and thereby receive "good" from God. He has overlooked Job's opening position, that the righteous receive both "good" and "evil" from God's hand (Job 2:10). Again we see the defining parameters of the prologue disregarded by the friends as they rush to judge Job according to their own assumptions about him. "Acquaint yourself with Him" is the very same Hebrew phrase just used by Eliphaz in :2: "Can a man be profitable to God?". Eliphaz has been arguing that being profitable to God is not something God is interested in and Job is wasting his time. But here he contradicts himself. There are many such bald and blatant contradictions within the words of the friends. This is what happens when a preexisting agenda becomes the basis for so called dialogue, and the other party must be condemned at all costs. Although bear in mind that Eliphaz in :2,3 was likely summarizing Job's positions.

Job 22:22 Please receive instruction from His mouth, and lay up His words in your heart- "Instruction" is "the law", the word usually used of the law of Moses. Job was to receive it, as Israel received it (Dt. 31:26 s.w.). Again he is set up as the representative of Israel, who received the law but refused to put it in their heart. This was not the case with Job personally, but he was treated as if he had done what Israel did. ,

Job 22:23 If you return to the Almighty, you shall be built up-

We the readers see a strong irony here. For all Eliphaz says about Job will come true, but his successful prayer to God for the guilty is to be for Eliphaz: "If you return to Shaddai you will be restored… you will lift up your face to God, you will pray to Him, and He will listen to you, and you will pay your vows… He will deliver the guilty; he will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands".

This is language clearly relevant to the building up of the restored Zion which would happen if the exiles returned both to their God and their land. Job had not departed from the Almighty, but he was treated as if he had committed their sins.

If you put away unrighteousness far from your tents- Eliphaz quotes verbatim from the words of Zophar in Job 11:14. This again is a parade example of dialogue gone wrong. Those on the accusing side start quoting each other as authorities, whilst continuing to ignore the actual person and words of the accused. Although quite possibly both Zophar and Eliphaz were quoting a wisdom saying common at the time.

Job 22:24 Lay your treasure in the dust, the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks- The idea is that Job should stop valuing wealth. Gold was washed down from the upper reaches and was found "among the stones of the brook"; and Job is bidden leave it there. Yet again, the divinely given defining parameters of the prologue are ignored; Job's wealth was from God and not because he sought it, and it was removed from him in order to teach the "sons of God", the friends. But they had done what so

many do in their interpersonal relationships and supposed dialogues with others; they had ignored the parameters defining the specific relationship in view, e.g. that we are to esteem our brother better than ourselves, we are to have the love which seeks to believe good rather than evil.

Job 22:25 The Almighty will be your treasure, and precious silver to you- "Treasure" is only s.w. "treasure" in :24, the word also meaning 'gold'. God was to be Job's gold and not literal gold his god. LXX "and he shall bring thee forth pure as silver that has been tried by fire". This is the image used of the intended effect of Judah's sufferings in Babylon (Is. 48:18; Ez. 22:18-22). If the LXX is correct, then Job quotes this back to Eliphaz in Job 23:10. Job is arguing back that he does not love gold over God, and that he will himself come forth as gold after the trials have finished. Unlike the friends, who generally refuse to engage with Job's words in their speeches, Job specifically engages with their words. See on :7.

Job 22:26 For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty- The exiles like Job were to finally delight themselves in God at the restoration, if they followed Job's path (s.w. Is. 58:14).

And shall lift up your face to God- Perhaps the Lord had this in view when He commended the man who like Job would not lift up his face to God (Lk. 18:13). The friends were only saved because Job was allowed to lift up his face to God for them (s.w. Job 42:8,9). This was all a powerful way of teaching the friends that they were being saved by absolute grace. The man Job, whose face they were sure God would not accept, saved them by lifting up his face to God. It was the exiles whose faces God would not accept (s.w. Mal. 1:8,9). Job was treated like them although he was not like them; he was bearing the punishment of their sins in order to save them, just as he did for the friends, whose faces were likewise unacceptable to God. LXX: "Then shalt thou have boldness before the Lord, looking up cheerfully to heaven".

Job 22:27 You shall make your prayer to Him, and He will hear you. You shall pay your vows- This turned around in a strange way; for it was due to God hearing Job's prayer that the friends were finally saved. God surely alludes back here when He says that Job will pray for them, "and him will I accept" (Job 42:8).

Job 22:28 You shall also decree a thing, and it shall be established to you. Light shall shine on your ways- LXX "And he shall establish to thee again a habitation of righteousness and there shall be light upon thy paths". Again this is the language of later Isaiah about Zion's light and the restored Zion.

The decree which is established is parallel to the prayer which is heard (:27,28). This was in fact true of Job, for it was thanks to his prayers that the friends were finally saved; when they had here insisted that God didn't hear Job's prayers. In fact it was their prayers which were not heard. But there is a wider principle here. Absolute faith in prayer which is according to God's broad desires results in our requests effectively being decrees of what is now going to happen! It is not difficult for us to know what the will of God in the sense of His desires is. We have been born again by the word of God. We were not born again by the will of man, but by the will of God. The will of God is therefore found in the word of God (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23; Jn. 1:12-14). Thus if we pray according to our knowledge of God's desires as explained in the word, we are praying according to His will- and therefore if we have faith "He hears us". The Lord Jesus said as much: "If you abide in Me, and My

words abide in you, you shall ask what *you* will, and it shall be done unto you" (Jn. 15:7). Notice He didn't say 'you will ask whatever is according to God's will, and it will be heard'. We ask whatever we desire, and we will receive. This is because our will should be the will of God if the word of God is in us. And as we mature, our experience of answered prayer gets better, because we more intuitively sense what is God's will.

Job 22:29 When they cast down, you shall say, 'Be lifted up'. He will save the humble person- See on :7. This is quoted in James 4:6. As noted earlier, the friends come out with some truths, but they are framed in the wrong context. What they say is so true it is even worthy of later quotation, but the context in which they use their 'truth' is so wrong. And this is an example for all time. The friends may be saying that Job now cannot lift up the cast down by his prayers nor save anyone (:27,28) because he is a sinner. All this was turned right around at the end, where it is the friends whose prayers cannot be heard, and who are saved from their "cast down" position by Job's prayers.

Job 22:30 He will even deliver him who is not innocent. Yes, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of your hands- There are times and places where God is willing to save people for the sake of the spirituality of a third party, but if he or she fails in this, deliverance doesn't *necessarily* arise from another place, as it would have done in Esther's time. Eliphaz perceived all this when he told Job that a truly righteous man can "save the humble person. He shall deliver even him that is not innocent: yeah, he shall be delivered through the cleanness of *thine* hands" (Job 22:30 RV). And this was proved true later on- for Eliphaz was saved due to Job's mediation for him. And it was Eliphaz who was shown by God to be "not innocent".

JOB CHAPTER 23

Job 23:1 Then Job answered- Job's reply over Job 23 and Job 24 slips into self justification and fails to engage specifically with what Eliphaz has said in his last speech. Job 24 is largely a repeat of the general observation that the wicked prosper, and the suffering of anyone is therefore no sign they are sinning. This all indicates the overall decline of the dialogue. And it is a path followed by so many failed personal interactions.

Job 23:2 Even today- As if to say that yes, I am still going to keep complaining about my situation.

My complaint is grievous. His hand is heavy in spite of my groaning- AV "My stroke is heavier than my groaning". Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be

impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on 'up there' which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God's hand forms and can pierce the "crooked serpent" and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It's as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the "hand of God" which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical 'Satan' figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the 'Satan' figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

Job 23:3 Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat!- This is Job's sarcastic response to Eliphaz's advice that Job repent and go to God (Job 22:21-23). Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found out' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness, but He still responds to the spirit of Job's request by appearing. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9).

Job 23:3 perhaps epitomizes this desire of Job for judgment day: "Oh, that today I might find him, that I might come to his judgment seat!" (NAB). He wanted the judgment seat to come that very day! The invisible hand of God is working in every life that suffers from ones' brethren 'playing God' in false judgment of us… to lead us to this wonderful and blessed attitude.

The use of the word "order" in Job's words in 23:3-6 repays examination: "Oh that I knew where I might find (God)! that I might come even to His seat!. I would *order* my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments... Will He plead against me with his great power? No". See on :10.

Job 23:4 I would set my cause in order before Him, and fill my mouth with arguments- Earlier, Job had judged himself, setting in order his legal case, but declaring himself righteous (Job 13:8). By Job 23:4, Job is realizing that he needs to set his case in order before God; but he can't find God, or get God to engage in this

game of judgment. He needed the final appearance of God at the end of the book to review his case, and declare that he is in fact wrong and condemned. But by grace, God will count him as right. He was prepared for this by Elihu's speech in Job 37:19: "Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness". "Make our case" is s.w. "set my cause in order".

Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court– Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man– above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Job 23:5 I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would tell me- Job promises to be obedient and acceptant of whatever outcome there was from his meeting with God. And when God does finally appear and in a way condemn him, he does accept this. Or perhaps the sense is simply as in GNB "I want to know what he would say and how he would answer me". Job's fantasy about having a day in court with God is quite frequent (Job 9:27-35 "Let us go to court together"; Job 10:2;13:23; 31:35-37). Such fantasies at times of huge loss and stress are quite psychologically credible. But he always comes back to reality- in :8,9 he brushes off his fantasy as unrealistic, because God makes Himself unfindable. Eliphaz understood Job's sufferings as God opening a court case against Job: "Is it because of your piety He reproves you? That He enters into litigation with you" (Job 22:4). Job's response is that he actually wants a court case with God, but God is avoiding it. He says in Job 14:1-3 that man is too tiny for God to bother bringing such a small thing into judgment with Him. So Job refuses to agree that his sufferings are a court case against him. We know from the prologue that there has already been a kind of court case about Job in the throne room of Heaven- and God has taken Job's side. Whereas Job believes that God wouldn't legally bother with tiny man, and that He would never turn up in court anyway because He abuses His power and knows He will be found guilty. If only we could see and feel how God feels about us! This is one window onto the question of "Why the cross?". It is to commend to us how very seriously God takes us, and how positive He is for us who are in Christ.

Job's legal challenge against God is the bravado of a drunken man. David begged not to enter judgment with God: "Do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for no living being can be in the right before You" (Ps. 143:2)- as if David had learned the lesson from Job. To come into judgment with God is a threat of condemnation: "Yahweh is about to take the stand to prosecute, He is about to stand to judge his

people, Yahweh is entering into litigation with the elders of his people" (Is. 3:13,14). Likewise "But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment" (Ecc. 11:9). God's final appearance was indeed an entering into judgment with Job, and he is terrified and repents. So much of the talk about 'struggle with God' is no more than the bravado of a drunken idiot. And Is. 1:18 as well as Romans 1-8 explain that God enters into judgment with man in the hope that He can somehow acquit man, rather than punish him: "Come and let us reason together / enter into judgment together, says Yahweh. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall become white as snow". God presents Himself, especially through His Son, as accuser, witness, judge and also advocate for the defence. As we see in the prologue to Job, He is very much on our side- even if we don't perceive it. The trial before God is indeed not "fair" in human terms- because it is so heavily weighted in our favour.

Job 23:6 Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, but He would listen to me-

We could render: "Do I mean that God should exhibit His almighty power against me? far from that, but that He would listen to me". He wants God to stop flaunting His omnipotent power, stop crushing him, and get on with answering up to Job's accusations. This complaint about God's abuse of power is frequent in Job (e.g. Job 9:32; 13:20). God's final answer is indeed to exhibit His power- with no further explanation.

AV "Would he plead against me...?". God, and Elihu on His behalf, *did* plead against Job by recounting God's power. Judgment before God was not quite as Job had imagined. When Elihu was established in Job's mind as God's true representative, he found that he had nothing to say, as he thought he would have. Elihu seems to refer back to this speech when he challenges the dumfounded Job: "If thou hast anything to say, answer me... if thou canst answer me, set thy words in *order* before me" (Job 33:32,5 AV). Elihu has in mind Job 23:4 "I would set my cause in order before Him". Job several times spoke of how he would fully explain himself to God, if he found Him. Yet in the presence of God and Elihu, he finds that all the words dry up. Words became irrelevant. All he can do is behold the majesty of God's righteousness, and declare his own unrighteousness. That spiritual pinnacle of Job still lies ahead for the majority of us. The desire to speak is a desire to express our *own* thoughts. Words are a construct which can trap us. Only *God's* words can liberate. There is a word*less* element in being truly humbled before the Almighty.

Job 23:7 There the upright might reason with Him, so I should be delivered forever from my judge- Job's imagination of judgment day was that there would be some upright person present who would be as his advocate, and deliver him from God as his judge. Elihu appears according to Job's wish (Job 33:6); but he condemns Job. And God then appears in person to judge Job. Elihu couldn't save Job from that. "The upright / righteous one" is the imaginary advocate Job fantasized of having; see on Job 16:19. "There the upright *might* reason" suggests now Job again recognizes that in fact this figure doesn't exist. He dreams that this person might be able to eternally save him from his judge, i.e. God. He entertains the old popular [but wrong] idea of an angry God who is placated by an advocate.

Job 23:8 If I go east, He is not there; if west, I can't find Him- We note there was no God to be found to the east, whereas He is apparently present at the other compass points, although invisible to Job. Perhaps this would be a reference to the spiritual

bankruptcy of the children of the east, from where the friends had come from. It would also be a statement from Job, as one of the greatest of the children of the east, that there was no God in his surrounding society.

Job 23:9 He works to the north, but I can't see Him. He turns south, but I can't catch a glimpse of Him- "The north" in Hebrew is 'the hidden place'. There appears to be the idea that God is indeed at work to the north and south, but Job can't glimpse God there.

Job 23:10 But He knows the way that I take- Job cannot discern the way God takes, not even the compass point He is working on; but the point is that God knows the way Job takes. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9). See on :3.

When He has tried me, I shall come forth like gold- This appears to be an allusion to Job 22:25 LXX "and he shall bring thee forth pure as silver that has been tried by fire". This is the image used of the intended effect of Judah's sufferings in Babylon (Is. 48:18; Ez. 22:18-22). If the LXX is correct, then Job quotes this back to Eliphaz here in Job 23:10. Job is arguing back that he does not love gold over God, and that he will himself come forth as gold after the trials have finished. Unlike the friends, who generally refuse to engage with Job's words in their speeches, Job specifically engages with their words.

But the context is Job's fantasy of having his day in court with God. We could translate: "If He tried me I should come forth as gold". Job's complaint is that God is avoiding meeting Job in court, because He knows Job's innocence.

Job 23:11 My foot has held fast to His steps. I have kept His way, and not turned aside- Job says this in the context of having lamented that he senses God's activity in various places, but cannot see God there (:9,10). But he has planted his feet in the footsteps left by the invisible God and not turned aside from that path. Job "held fast" to God's footprints, even though He didn't see Him, and yet he later realized that the afflictions God sent had taken hold [s.w. "held fast"] to him (Job 30:16). We see here the mutuality between God and man, achieved through the experience of suffering brought by Him.

Job 23:12 I haven't gone back from the commandment of His lips. I have treasured up the words of His mouth more than my necessary food- Job had had no fresh revelation from God since God gave the satan power over him. But there is a wider principle here. The Word of God should be our daily food - indeed, our dependence upon it, and natural desire for it, should be even greater than our instinctive appetite for physical food: "... I have treasured the words of his mouth *more* than my necessary food" was Job's feeling (Job 23:12). Jeremiah likewise: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). Making time during each day for regular Bible reading is therefore a vital thing to build into our pattern of daily life. An uninterrupted 30 minutes of Bible study first thing in the morning is bound to start us off each day in the right spiritual gear. Such faith-forming habits are vital.

However, "food" is not present in the original. The idea could be "more than (or, above) my own law"; i.e. 'more than the law of my own mind or inclination'.

Job 23:13 But He stands alone- The idea may be that God remained "alone" from Job's perspective, refusing to allow Job to come to Him and enter into dialogue.

And who can oppose Him? What His soul desires, even that He does- The dramatic story of Job thrice uses the same phrase as in Is. 43:13, concluding that "who can hinder...?" God's way (Job 9:12; 11:10; 23:13). The exiles were to understand that no human opposition or discouragement can turn back or hinder God's purpose to save His people, even if they are as Job in suffering. His saving and restorative purpose will not be hindered, if we wish to identify with it.

Job 23:14 For He performs that which is appointed for me. Many such things are with Him- Again Job demonstrates his understanding that all his afflictions were from God, not any cosmic satan being. The “thing appointed” for Job is his death, which he considers God has decided upon. So often he ends his fantasies by returning to his baseline conviction that he is about to die, and so all his fantasies about a day in court with God, a mediator, salvation etc... were vain. Rashi: "For He will complete my sentence I know that He will not draw back His hand until He completes the sentence of His decrees, the retribution that He has decreed against me". In :12,13 Job has spoken of God's foreknowledge and sees this as meaning that whatever He destined for Job must happen, and therefore all intercession and legal pleading with God is futile. Much as Job fantasized about his day in court with God. The prejudged sentence or outcome of any judgment meeting with God is going to be done, whatever evidence is presented to show God wrong.

Job 23:15 Therefore I am terrified at His presence. When I consider, I am afraid of Him- Job has lamented that he senses God but cannot see Him (:8,9). But clearly he felt His presence in a very real manner. So we conclude that the presence of God can be felt in His very absence. We like Job can sense His hand working through His very silence and apparent lack of direct engagement with us.

Job 23:16 For God has made my heart faint. The Almighty has terrified me- See on :17. We can read this 'terror' as a reference to the panic attacks which were apparently part of Job's sickness (s.w. Job 22:10). Job says that he faints at the thought that in fact God is unrighteous, and had preserved his life (:17) simply in order to afflict him for no reason.

Job 23:17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, neither did He cover my face with the thick darkness- The Hebrew in :16,17 is difficult, and GNB offers "Almighty God has destroyed my courage. It is God, not the dark, that makes me afraid—even though the darkness has made me blind". The darkness was typically associated with cosmic forces of evil. Job sees through that and perceives it is God behind the darkness. The exiles had to learn the same (Is. 45:5-7).

JOB CHAPTER 24

Job 24:1 Why aren’t times laid up by the Almighty? Why don’t those who know Him perceive His days?-

This flows right on from Job's fantasy in Job 23 about having his day in court with God. "Why are not times [for judgment] appointed by the Almighty?" would then be a complaint that God doesn't appoint a day when man can meet Him in judgment; He is not a ruler who is open to engagement with His people.

This could be read as a complaint that God's people don't realize the time periods of His operations in advance. Job sensed that his afflictions were for a period (see on Job 23:12,14), but he didn't know the end point. There is a purpose to that. All attempts to understand Bible prophecy as history and time periods predicted in advance are missing the whole point; these prophecies are so that we will understand once the fulfilment comes, rather than presenting history in advance.

Job 24:2 There are people who remove the landmarks. They violently take away flocks, and feed them- Alluding to the taking away of Job's flocks. Probably his landmarks were removed at the same time. I have suggested that the satan figure morphs into the friends, and they may actually have been responsible for the theft of Job's flocks. The Bedouin tribes were certainly from the same areas as the friends came from. Job may be hinting that the theory that sin brought judgment was wrong, because the sins of the friends against him weren't being immediately judged.

Job 24:3 They drive away the donkey of the fatherless, and they take the widow's ox for a pledge- "Drive away" is the word used of the driving of God's people into captivity (Dt. 4:27; 28:37). The exiles were wondering why judgment had come upon them, and not upon their captors and abusers. The answer of the book of Job is that they were as Job, and the wicked whose day of judgment was surely to come ultimately refer to their captors.

Job 24:4 They turn the needy out of the way. The poor of the earth all hide themselves- Turning aside the poor out of the way is the very phrase used in Am. 2:7 of how the Jewish leadership had done this to the righteous remnant. Again, the idea is that sufferings of the righteous remnant were going to be finally judged, even though it appeared as if the wicked had got away with it. This had powerful relevance to the exiles.

Job 24:5 Behold, as wild donkeys in the desert, they go forth to their work, seeking diligently for food. The wilderness yields them bread for their children- It's unclear whether those referred to are the Bedouin tribes of the preceding verses, or the desperately poor who are not helped by them (as in the subsequent verses). Possibly the ambiguity is purposeful, as if to make the point that those Bedouin tribes didn't help their own people even, and they themselves became poor and desperate. See on :6.

Verses 5-12 describe the homeless misfits, rejected by society, who scavenge for food and are poorly clothed. Job clearly saw himself as one of them, or at least, he was able to identify with them. But his final point is that "God doesn't regard the folly" (:12), or "God doesn't consider anything wrong with this folly". Initially, it is noted that Job did not charge God with folly (Job 1:22. The usage of the same word here seems to make the point that now, he was doing so. Satan was indeed correct, and he was following his wife's advice to curse God and die. His complaint is that God doesn't care for the marginalized. We know from the Mosaic Law that this is absolutely not true- and the marginalized Job is the hero of God's whole story in this book.

Job 24:6 They cut their provender in the field. They glean the vineyard of the wicked- LXX "They have reaped a field that was not their own before the time: the poor have laboured in the vineyards of the ungodly without pay and without food". The impression is that they were themselves thieves and yet were also oppressed by others; see on :5.

Job 24:7 They lie all night naked without clothing, and have no covering in the cold- Particularly relevant to the cold desert nights in the region.

Job 24:8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for lack of a shelter- This could perhaps hint that through the experience of affliction, men "embrace the rock", a symbol of God and His Son, the Messiah Jesus. Job likewise was in essence led to the spirit of Christ through his experience of the abuse of others and lack of comfort from his own brethren.

Job 24:9 There are those who pluck the fatherless from the breast, and take a pledge of the poor- Perhaps a reference to the wealthy grabbing the children in repayment for a debt; for he goes on to speak of the rich taking a pledge from the poor. Job labours the wickedness of it all, to lead up to his point that God sees all this and does nothing about it. Baby stealing was exactly the sort of thing practiced by the Bedouin Arab groups who had stolen Job's property, perhaps under the direction of the friends (see on :2). Job has accused the friends of abusing the fatherless (Job 6:27). The friends accused Job of doing so (Job 22:7). Job now insists that it is the wicked who do this (Job 24:3,9), and is dogmatic that he has in fact blessed the fatherless (Job 29:12; 31:17,21). As explained on Job 42:7, Job in various aspects suffers as if guilty for the very sins committed by the friends. He was their representative, and suffered the results of their sins, although he hadn't committed them. Therefore at the end, his prayer and further sacrifice for them was accepted, and they were thereby saved- by grace indeed.

Job 24:10 so that they go around naked without clothing. Being hungry, they carry the sheaves- Keeping the pledge of the poor so he is left naked (:9) was recognized from earliest times as wicked behaviour. It is condemned in the law of Moses. But Job is observing that those who do even such things are apparently not immediately judged, and the same death awaits both the abused and their abuser. The starving worker carries the wheat of the wealthy... and God doesn't care. Likewise the poor go thirsty whilst they tread the grape juice of the wealthy (:11). Job has no baseline belief in a future judgment or doing of justice; his reasoning assumes that this life is all man has.

Job 24:11 They make oil within the walls of these men. They tread wine presses, and suffer thirst- The wicked didn't even let their workers drink from the grape juice they were treading out. The law of Moses allowed even animals to eat bits of what they were treading out. This legislation clearly had a basis in very early standards of what was right and wrong, for the book of Job appears to be about a situation before the time of Moses.

Job 24:12 From out of the populous city, men groan. The soul of the wounded cries out, yet God doesn't regard the folly- Because God doesn't judge the abuses listed in

the previous verses, it is therefore wrong to suggest that He immediately judges sin with suffering, and rewards obedience with material blessing. That's Job's point. But Job also feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 24:13 These are of those who rebel against the light. They don't know its ways, nor stay in its paths-

The idea may be that Job has been commenting upon those who sin in broad daylight, in abusing the poor. And God pays no attention [so he implies]. Now he will go on to reflect upon those who sin in the darkness, or more secretly: murderers (:14), adulterers (:15) and robbers (:16). His point is that whether men sin openly or secretly, God doesn't care nor bring them to justice.

The implication could be that these people knew the light but refused to walk in the way of light nor its paths; whereas Job insists he has held to the true path (Job 23:11). He perhaps is making oblique reference to the friends; who may be the wicked who had stolen his flocks (see on :2). But this attacking of the partner in dialogue is an indication that the dialogue is failing: 'I held on to the true path, you didn't' is not engagement with what has been said.

Job 24:14 The murderer rises with the light. He kills the poor and needy. In the night he is like a thief- Job is appearing to overly labour his point; that the wicked are not immediately judged, nor are the righteous immediately rewarded. He almost revels in his description of wicked deeds which go unpunished, making the point that light or darkness make no difference to the wicked. Darkness is not a deterrent to them; they sin equally using both the light and the darkness. Therefore the accusation that Job has sinned in darkness is therefore untrue. But Job appears to be labouring his point. This too is a feature of how dialogue goes wrong once the actual words of our partner are ignored; lengthy digressions are made to prove a relatively minor point, and the essential thrust of the arguments is thereby lost.

Job 24:15 The eye also of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, 'No eye shall see me'. He disguises his face- As noted on :14, the idea is that the wicked sin as much in the light as in the darkness. Murderers take the light as a signal to murder (:14), whilst adulterers wait for darkness to commit adultery.

Job 24:16 In the dark they dig through houses. They shut themselves up in the

daytime. They don't know the light- As commented upon on :14, Job is far over labouring his point- that sinners sin in both the light and the darkness.

Job 24:17 For the morning is to all of them like thick darkness, for they know the terrors of the thick darkness- Perhaps the idea is that they are disappointed when the morning comes, because they have to stop their wicked works. But AV "the shadow of death" for NEV "thick darkness" suggests that the morning is the time of their death. Job envisaged a morning coming which would mean judgment and death for the wicked. In the end this was to be the hope of the exiles too, that a day of judgment would come with the arising of Messiah as the dawn (Mal. 4:2).

Job 24:18 They are foam on the surface of the waters. Their portion is cursed in the earth. They don't turn into the way of the vineyards- GNB "The wicked are swept away by floods, and the land they own is under God's curse; they no longer go to work in their vineyards". This is relevant to the Jews exiled from their inheritance in the land and their vineyards. AV "He is swift as the waters" may refer to the swift coming of Divine judgment, like a flash flood of waters. The same word is used of the judgment of God's people (Lam. 4:19).

Job 24:19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters, so does Sheol those who have sinned- In Job 6:17, Job sees the melting of the snow waters as representing the failing comfort of his three friends; now he uses the figure about the destruction of the wicked; he comes towards the conclusions that his friends, his fellow "sons of God" of Job 1:6, were in fact sinners, they are the wicked Bedouin people who have brought his trials (see on :2). And this is all preparing the way for him to finally pray for their forgiveness and salvation at the end of the book. Job, the righteous remnant amongst the captives, were to pray for and save the unspiritual majority; but they had to be convinced of how far astray their brethren really were. We note too that *sheol*, the grave, is understood by Job as the destruction of sinners; although he himself speaks of how *sheol* is waiting for him, although he believed he would be resurrected to justification in a bodily form. He therefore believed that the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23) in the grave [*sheol*, where both righteous and wicked alike go], and not eternal torment in some other place.

Job 24:20 The womb shall forget him. The worm shall feed sweetly on him. He shall be no more remembered. Unrighteousness shall be broken as a tree- GNB "Not even their mothers remember them now; they are eaten by worms and destroyed like fallen trees". As noted on :19, Job understood the judgment of the wicked as being eternal death, rather than conscious eternal torment. In Job 17:14, Job uses the same language about his own impending death. He believed that both he and the wicked were going to the same place in death; the difference was therefore in that Job would be resurrected, whereas the wicked would remain dead.

The language of judgment as a tree being broken down was relevant to the exiles, who were bidden see their hope in the revival of the cut down stump, shooting forth as the shoot who would be known as Messiah.

Job 24:21 He devours the barren who don't bear. He shows no kindness to the widow- Job appears unable to resist the temptation to dwell yet further upon the wickedness of the wicked; for this further comment upon them appears slightly out of context between verses 20 and 22. He begins to bring God into the equation, but then

in this verse flips back to relishing how wicked are the wicked, and how they avoid judgment in this life. Such an attitude would be appropriate if indeed the wicked he had in view were the friends who were seated before him (see on :2).

Job 24:22 Yet God preserves the mighty by His power. He rises up who has no assurance of life- The 'rising up' could mean that the wicked mighty people are not only preserved alive by God, but at times rise up from their temporal sufferings.

Job 24:23 God gives them security, and they rest in it. His eyes are on their ways- The apparent security of the wicked is from God, somehow; but God's eyes [a reference to the Angels?] are on their ways, and therefore [by implication] they will come to judgment. Or Job's idea may be that God sees all this sin, in great detail [for Job has described the suffering caused by sinners in some detail]- and does nothing. The good and the bad share the same fate of eternal death. And God doesn't seem to really care. Indeed, God even seems to favour sinners and make the righteous suffer- as Job has earlier complained: "He shines upon the counsel of the wicked" (Job 10:3; 12:6). And despite the suffering of innocent people which Job describes, Job complains that God apparently does nothing. Whereas Job has elsewhere claimed that he has done all he could to relieve poverty. God makes no engagement with these complaints- He simply talks of the vastness of the cosmos and His power and ultimate rightness.

Job 24:24 They are exalted; yet a little while, and they are gone. Yes, they are brought low, they are taken out of the way as all others, and are cut off as the tops of the ears of grain- This was how the Egyptians harvested corn, cutting off the entire ear of corn at the top of the stalk, and lends support to the impression that these things really happened "in the land of Uz" to a historical Job (see on Job 1:1). The death of the wicked "as all others" implies to Job that there must be a future point of justification for the righteous; for the wicked and the righteous die the same death, as other scripture also makes clear. And yet Job's point is surely that the wicked die, they are cut off, when they have come to full fruit, as mature ears of grain- unlike himself, who has been cut off in his relative youth. Eliphaz has used this figure, when claiming that if Job repented, he would come to his death "in a full age, like a shock of corn comes in his season" (Job 5:26).

Job 24:25 If it isn't so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?- Job has argued himself into an invincible position, in his own eyes. Indeed, all he says is true; but like the friends, truths are expressed but within a wrong context. Finally Job is to lay his hand upon his mouth in repentance (Prov. 30:32; Mic. 7:16) and recognize he has not spoken rightly (Job 40:4), although he earlier demanded the friends lay their hands upon their mouths before the power of his arguments (Job 21:5). God confirms this by remarking that whoever has hope of overcoming Leviathan, His great beast (perhaps representing death and human mortality) is a liar to think he has such hope (Job 41:9 s.w. "liar"). Job has forgotten his humanity, despite being 'right' in his arguments. This is the problem with possessing truth; it can lead us to wrongly forget our humanity and consider ourselves invincible.

JOB CHAPTER 25

Job 25:1 Then Bildad the Shuhite answered- Here Bildad is merely using the previous arguments of Eliphaz in Job 11:17; 15:15. This is another sign that dialogue has failed- when one side starts quoting the words and arguments of their own side, rather than engaging with the actual words of the other side. These dialogues are recorded to teach us how not to dialogue, and to see the extreme consequence of refusing to even want to understand each other.

Job 25:2 Dominion and fear are with Him. He makes peace in His high places- Again, this is true, but it is a truth used in a wrong context. For Bildad's argument here is a repeat of what Eliphaz has said, that God is so great and high, considering even the Angels unclean, that He is really not that concerned with man, and Job's idea that God ought to be passionately concerned about him is therefore blasphemous.

Job 25:3 Can His armies be counted? On whom does His light not arise?- The armies presumably refer to His Angels (as GNB). Job didn't disagree with this; he has just argued in Job 24:14-17 that indeed God's light is everywhere, but sinners refuse to walk in it, and the presence of darkness or His light is no deterrent to sinners. But that argument is totally bypassed by Bildad here because he is set on repeating earlier arguments of his friend Eliphaz. Again, this is all a parade example of dialogue gone wrong.

Job 25:4 How then can man be just with God? Or how can he who is born of a woman be clean?- We know from the prologue what Bildad didn't- that Job, born of a woman, was considered absolutely just with God. Being born of a woman doesn't make you irredeemably unclean before God. Paul surely has this wrong argument in view when he describes the Lord as "born of a woman" (Gal. 4:4). Bildad considers God's greatness and vastness (:3) to be such that He wouldn't pay much attention to man. But he, and Job, contradict themselves by then arguing that God is mad with Job. Bildad isn't engaging with Job's arguments now, he is simply repeating the false statements of Eliphaz that the human condition is such that we can never be just with God. Bildad has forgotten the parameters imposed by God in the prologue- that in His eyes, Job was perfect. The final justification of Job with God, by grace, was an answer enough to this wrong view of human nature. See on :6.

The question "How can a man be just with God?" is the same question as 'How can a man ever be clean before a perfect God?', and is repeated in this form in Job 9:30; 15:15; 25:4. The exiles had considered themselves cleansed whiter than snow because of their obedience to some parts of the Mosaic law (Lam. 4:7), but failed to accept that such cleansing to be whiter than snow is only possible by doing what David did, and casting ourselves upon God's grace outside of justification by works (Ps. 51:7). Job was to learn this lesson at the end. It was this offer which was made to Job just as it was to Judah under judgment (Is. 1:18).

Job 25:5 Behold, even the moon has no brightness, and the stars are not pure in His sight- It can be argued that the book of Job is a dialogue concerning evil and suffering, with three popular views being represented by the three friends. These views are examined and corrected by the personal history of Job, as well as by the epilogue and prologue to the book. Eliphaz seems to be representative of the idea that Job is being hit by supernaturally controlled evil- Eliphaz speaks of a force of

darkness (Job 22:10,11) and sinful or faulty Angels living in an unclean Heaven (Job 4:18; 15:15). Yet the *answer* to all this is that the Satan figure is under God's control, all Job's misfortunes come from *God* and His Angels- one of whom may have been called 'the adversary' ('Satan')- are in fact perfectly obedient to Him and not disobedient. And finally, Eliphaz and the friends are rebuked for their various wrong understandings, with God declaring Himself supreme and ultimate sovereign. Likewise Bildad's view of Angels in Job 25:5 "The stars are not pure in God's eyes" is corrected by God in Job 38:7, when He says that "the morning stars sang together and all the Sons of God shouted for joy".

Job 25:6 how much less man, who is a worm, the son of man, who is a worm!- Bildad is simply wrong to argue that because man is a worm, therefore he is of no particular value to God, seeing that his nature means that he can never be clean nor just before God (see on :4). This is not the case. The Lord Jesus had human nature but was clean and just before God, showing for all time the possibilities intrinsic within human nature. The same word is used of how He on the cross felt as a worm (Ps. 22:6). It is the very message to the exiles: "Fear not, you worm Jacob, and you men of Israel: I will help you" (Is. 41:14). Though their sins were red as the crimson worm (s.w.), they would be made white as wool (Is. 1:18). The lowness of man is no barrier to being clean before God, nor to being revived and used by Him.

JOB CHAPTER 26

Job 26:1 Then Job answered- The speech of Job recorded in Job 26-31 is the longest in the book. The pattern of each of the three friends giving a speech and Job replying, spread over three speeches, appears to slightly break down in that Zophar doesn't give his third speech. We note that Bildad's final speech was very brief, and was really only quoting previous words from Eliphaz (Job 25). This could all create the intentional impression in the drama that the friends were running out of steam in their arguments. Job now makes a very long speech... but that is not his victory nor justification. That is only provided by God's appearance at the end, when Job repents of his words. It is usual for the genre of drama to play with audience expectation and dash it to make a point. That is what is happening here, with Bildad's final speech really a flop, and Zophar not giving the speech which the structure of the drama requires him to make. And we are also led to expect Job's final long speech to be his justification, seeing most of what he says is true in itself. But this too is a dashed expectation; for God appears and condemns them all, and then justifies Job by grace. But see on Job 27:11.

Job 26:2 How have you helped him who is without power! How have you saved the arm that has no strength!- The reference may again be to Cain, who was cursed with the ground being "without power" to him (Gen. 4:12 s.w.), as an apostate Israel were (s.w. Lev. 26:20). In this case Job would be saying that even the condemned in this life could be helped to revival. That was what he had learnt of God, and he expected men to act with a similar saving grace. Elihu confirms the argument by saying that although God has all power, He doesn't despise those who have none (Job 36:5). The exiles were also without "power" (Lam. 1:6 s.w.), represented by Daniel in just that position (s.w. Dan. 10:8,16,17), with "no strength" (Ez. 19:14), but would "renew their strength / power" (Is. 40:31 s.w.). That revival would not be by human power but

by God's spirit (Zech. 4:6), after the pattern of Job's revival. The Zion who had "no strength" would put on strength (s.w. Is. 51:9; 52:1).

Job 26:3 How have you counselled him who has no wisdom, and plentifully declared sound knowledge!- Job felt he had been deprived of everything, including wisdom and knowledge. But this was not because he was unwise; he is presented as a perfect man (Job 1:1). God is able to give and take wisdom, as is seen in the natural creation (Job 39:17 s.w.).

Job 26:4 To whom have you uttered words? Whose spirit came forth from you?- To ask this question is to imply that they were false prophets (1 Kings 22:24). And God confirms this at the end, in saying that the friends had not spoken rightly about Him (Job 42:7).

Job 26:5 Those who are deceased tremble, those beneath the waters and all that live in them- AV "Dead things are formed from under the waters". "Waters" are a clear figure for judgment. Job's great theme is that out of death, there can be revival and restoration. Death itself is no barrier to this revival. This was the lesson taught to the exiles by the vision of the dry, dead bones of Israel reviving. The LXX therefore speaks of "giants be born from under the water".

Job in :5-13 will tell the friends that he needs no reminder from them as to how great God is- he gets it, or so he thinks. Job argues that he comprehends how huge God is, and he therefore accepts that he cannot bring God to judgment. God's response is simply to show how little Job understands His greatness. Job of course claims to admit that God is far more than he comprehends: "Lo these are the outskirts of His ways; and how small a whisper is that which we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?" (Job 26:14). But in reality, God will later mock how little Job understands and how Job's conception of His greatness is still pathetically small. Part of Job's conversion was to understand that he had only heard of God "by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You".

Job 26:6 Sheol is naked before God, and Abaddon has no covering- This is a deconstruction of Mot, the god of death; see on Job 10:8. He sees God is the real attacker, not, therefore, Mot or any other such being. Note too how Num. 16:31–35 describes *God* as swallowing up Korah, Dathan and Abiram into death in the earth – as if to deconstruct the idea that Mot did things like this. But in the context noted on :5, death is no barrier to God's work of revival and restoration.

Job 26:7 He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth upon nothing- This continues the ideas of :5,6; God can revive and restore from death, He can create matter, and can hang great weights upon nothing. Emptiness and deserted space can be used by Him. And this was the challenge of faith to the exiles. To believe that the empty space of the Jerusalem temple and the ruined land could again be stretched out by God as a tabernacle is stretched out, and revived (s.w. Is. 54:2); just as Job's ravaged body and life could be restored in a moment. Creation itself had been brought about from that which was "without form" (Gen. 1:2, s.w. "empty space"), and so the new creation of Job and Israel would be likewise.

Job 26:8 He binds up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not burst under them- Job likes to reason from the hints found within the natural creation, and Elihu

and God Himself will speak to him in these very terms which he clearly so appreciated. Here, Job's point is that great weight can be carried by that which is nothing, and will not be broken by the great weight. This is in harmony with the preceding verses; Job believed that God would and could revive from nothing, from death itself.

Job 26:9 He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it- As so often in the drama of Job, truths are presented but without context. This is indeed true; but Job and the exiles had to learn that the cloud that came between God and themselves was that of human sin (Is. 44:22), even though God responded by bringing that cloud (Job 36:32). The years of exile were the day of cloud (Ez. 34:12; Lam. 3:44). But through that cloud, the light of God's saving glory was still visible (Job 37:15). GNB "He hides the full moon behind a cloud".

Job 26:10 He has defined a boundary on the surface of the waters, and to the confines of light and darkness- GNB "He divided light from darkness by a circle drawn on the face of the sea". Job understands that it is *God* who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (Job 30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that *God even marks out the boundary between light and darkness* (Job 26:10) – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The 'darkness', however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God's power. God confirms Job's understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil] in bands of darkness (Job 38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. See on Job 38:10.

Job 26:11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at His rebuke- Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on 'up there' which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God's hand forms and can pierce the "crooked serpent" and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It's as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the "hand of God" which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical 'Satan' figure. The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the 'Satan' figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared.

Job 26:12 He stirs up the sea with His power, and by His understanding He strikes through Rahab- Rahab is a term used for Babylon and so this becomes all the more relevant to the restoration context. "The sea" was understood by the contemporary people to be awfully mysterious, and a radical power in its own right. Just as Babylon and the forces arraigned against Job seemed invincible and a law to themselves. Just as we may consider we are in the hands of forces which are mysterious and too great for us to grapple with. But Job's simple faith was that God was in total control of all those things. "He stirs up the sea..." is quoted in Is. 51:15 of God's power available for the exiles against Babylon.

"The sea" is a reference to Yamm, the sea monster. Perhaps this is picking up Job's bitter question in Job 7:12: "Am I Yamm or am I the Sea Beast, that You should put a watch on me?". To which Job is now saying that yes, this is how God is treating him. Quite possibly God alludes to this complaint when He speaks of His relationship with Leviathan, another sea beast, possibly meant to be understood as Yamm. God simply says that He likes playing around with Leviathan. Just as we read in Ps. 104:26,27: "this Leviathan You fashioned to play with. All of them look to You to give them their food in its season". "Could *you* play with [Leviathan]?" God asks Job (Job 41:5,19). God is not against Leviathan, He is a friend of Leviathan. Job and the friends have a simplistic view of good and evil, as many do today, imagining a cosmos split between God and the Satan. The book of Job often deconstructs this, showing God to be all powerful, all the scary monsters thought to be interfering with Job are in fact all at peace with God and under His control. Of course this is all stated in the account of God creating the sea monsters at creation (Gen. 1:20,21). And man was created to have dominion over all God's creations both in the sea and on the land (Gen. 1:26).

Job 26:13 By His Spirit the heavens are garnished. His hand has pierced the swift serpent- See on :11. Here the hand and Spirit of God are equated- both are Angelic phrases, and thus provides further evidence that the Angels actually performed the creation. Many passages clearly identify God's spirit with His power. In order to create the earth, "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:2,3). God's spirit was the power by which all things, e.g. light, were made. "By His spirit He has created the heavens; His hand has formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). A comparison of Mt. 12:28 and Lk. 11:20 shows that "the finger of God" and "the spirit of God" are parallel - God in action is His spirit. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6).

Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- " with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24). This was exactly the brief given to satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7).

Job 26:14 Behold, these are but the outskirts of His ways. How small a whisper do we hear of Him! But the thunder of His power who can understand?- There are only some things which God makes known to us about Himself; we do not have the total truth about God, we see but parts of His ways and hear only a little portion of Him (Job 26:14). Our perception and definition of "the truth" needs to bear this in mind. Absolute truth claims aren't simply ignorant, they lead to all manner of relationship breakdown, arrogance and deformation of spirituality both in ourselves and others. See on Rom. 1:19. Job is right that that we know so little of God nor can we understand. But then Job's words demand that understanding and demand to hear far more than a whisper of Him. Or possibly Job has the idea that although we know but the outskirts of God's ways, our lack of understanding His ways shouldn't matter-

because His power is so great, and He is on our side. But what he understood in theory, he failed to live by.

To complete the cycle, we now expect a speech from Zophar. It isn't here. And Bildad's final speech is very short. We are thereby given the message that Job and the friends have all gone down rabbit holes. The whole dialogue breaks up and we need God's intervention. This will come after Job now gives his speech of self justification.

JOB CHAPTER 27

Job 27:1 Job again took up his parable and said- In what sense is Job's pouring out of his very personal reflections about his situation "a parable"? I suggest the answer is that we are intended to understand his situation as parabolic or representative of other situations; particularly that with the exiles in Babylon, who would also be led to restoration if they followed Job's path.

Job 27:2 As God lives, who has taken away my right- Job is specifically criticized by Elihu for saying this (Job 34:5 s.w.). I have suggested that Elihu was not always specifically reflecting God's viewpoints, but instead is a literary device within the drama who serves to summarize the arguments so far delivered. "Right" is literally "judgment". Job has lamented that he sought in vain for God to meet him in judgment. But the very same phrase is used of how by grace God would 'take away Israel's judgments' in no longer condemning them (Zeph. 3:15). It was therefore a good thing that God did not meet Job in judgment; and by grace He was to justify Job and take away his judgment of condemnation.

The Almighty, who has made my soul bitter- The phrase used by Hezekiah, another possible fulfilment of the suffering servant based upon Job (Is. 38:17). Job blames his bitterness with God on God Himself- not the satan.

Job 27:3 For the length of my life is still in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils- This is obviously referring to the record of God's creation of Adam in Gen. 2:7. See on Job 10:9; 9:17. Job may be wrongly suggesting he is merely suffering because he is a son of Adam, whilst personally innocent. Although in Job's case he did need to repent, his situation pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job who was the second Adam.

Job 27:4 surely my lips shall not speak unrighteousness, neither shall my tongue utter deceit-

We can read all this now as Job swearing that he will never admit any of the accusations against him are true, and he goes on now to basically say that he has not only been innocent in the past, but he will never be anything but innocent. This is the problem with false accusation. We may know that to be false, but that doesn't mean we never sinned or never will sin. We can be led to the very self righteousness of Job which God and Elihu will later rightly condemn. The dialogues [including Job's responses] progressively deteriorate as they develop, until only Divine intervention can bring Job and the friends to learn what they have to. Human dialogue didn't achieve that and only clouded the issues, driving all concerned down rabbit holes.

Job was bending all his self will to avoid not sinning with his lips, as he is initially commended for doing (Job 2:10). But finally he is taught that for all that steel willed self control, he must lay his hand upon his mouth and realize he has not spoken rightly (Job 40:4). He may have controlled his specific words, but the general thrust of his understanding had been so badly wrong.

Job 27:5 Far be it from me that I should justify you. Until I die I will not put away my integrity from me- The friends had specifically accused Job of things he had never done (e.g. Job 22:5-9). He would not justify them by saying they had been right after all; he is a great example of not taking false guilt. For in such situations, people often break down and accept guilt for what they never actually did. He held on to God's view of him which had been made clear in the prologue- that he was "perfect", of integrity, and he would not be made to feel as if that was not the case. What he had to learn was that he was after all a sinful human and that high estimation of him had been the result of imputed righteousness by grace. And he had to be taught that in God's final appearance to him.

Job 27:6 I hold fast to my righteousness, and will not let it go- God had stated in Job 2:3 that Job held fast (s.w.) to his integrity. And here Job uses this word about himself. He will not "curse God, and die". His argument against the friends, that he did maintain his integrity still, was effectively arguing back against this position of the Satan.

"Hold fast" is the same word as in Is. 56:2: "And the son of man who holds it fast". To "hold fast" means to keep covenant (2 Chron. 7:22). The "it" the exiles were to hold fast to was God's righteousness and not their own (Is. 56:1). But they refused to do so because like Job, they held fast (s.w.) to their own righteousness (s.w. Job 27:6).

My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live- Paul was like Job, determined to "have always a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man" (Acts 24:16); but later he learnt the lesson of Job, and realized that although his conscience doesn't condemn him, this is not to say he is ultimately right before God (1 Cor. 4:4). For the final appearance of God convicted Job of sin, of the fact that his status as "perfect" before God was by imputed righteousness through grace; and that his spotless personal conscience was not therefore the ultimate decider of his acceptability before God. Just as we must learn that at the last day, we will be judged by God's word and our conscience will not as it were jump out of us and judge us.

Job realized his sinfulness, and yet at the same time he was in a quandary over whether he really had sinned. In Job 27:6 he even feels that his heart does not reproach him over any of the days he has ever lived (RV). This is such an accurate caricature of so many Christian consciences, of so much of our self-examination, both individually and collectively. We of course have to admit that we are sinners, riddled with weakness in so many ways; and of course we *do* admit this. And yet there is a quandary over whether we really are big time sinners. We feel ourselves to be little sinners, whatever we may theoretically admit. And as such, we fail to appreciate the grace of God's salvation, and therefore we fail to dynamically respond to this as we should do, and thereby our community and our own lives are characterized by the all too evident apathy with which they are; there is so little of the real flame, the fire of true spirituality, which there might be. And dear Job, like us, for all his good works, for all his being such a truly and really nice guy and brother, through and through... he had to be brought down to his knees: "I am vile... I know (*now*, by implication) that

thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee... therefore have I uttered that I understood thee; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not" .

Or we can translate the second half of the verse "My heart reproaches [me for] not one of my days". This is very doubtful. How can we look back on our lives and find not one day where our heart rebukes us for how we lived that day. This increasing refusal to accept he has ever sinned comes to a climax in Job 31, which is why the friends give up arguing with someone so conceited, and Elihu steps in to rebuke Job on God's behalf. Earlier Job had admitted that he is a sinner and had "sins of my youth". Job implies that he has not only always been perfect, but he always will be. The arrogance and spiritual self assurance is terrible.

Job 27:7 Let my enemy be as the wicked. Let him who rises up against me be as the unrighteous- I wonder whether this specific enemy was Eliphaz. He is singled out by God at the end (Job 42:7), and the other two friends largely repeat his arguments in their speeches. He was from Teman, the very place from where the bands of marauders had come upon Job's encampment. He was one of the sons of God of Job 1:6 who had heard the Satan's opening arguments, and it seems he and the friends replaced the satan in the narrative; and therefore the distress brought by the satan may partly have been brought by Eliphaz and his team. He had risen up against Job, and therefore the descriptions of "the wicked" given by Job were all relevant to him and the friends.

Job 27:8 For what is the hope of the godless, when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?- GNB "What hope is there for the godless in the hour when God demands their life?". This appears to have been a source for the Lord's parable of the rich fool. "The godless" is AV "the hypocrite". This would be so true of the friends if indeed they were the ones behind Job's loss of cattle at the hand of the Bedouin tribesmen.

Job 27:9 Will God hear his cry when trouble comes on him?- Job 27:9,10 seems to be saying [although the Hebrew text is rather obscure] that every man on his deathbed cries to God in some kind of prayer; but a belief in the mortality of man will result in the righteous man having lived *a life* of prayerful crying to the Father, which will be in context with his final cry to God in his time of dying. The final truth was that God did not hear the cry of the friends- but He asks Job to pray for them, and He heard Job's cry for them.

Job 27:10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty, and call on God at all times?- As noted on :9, "at all times" means that the wicked only cry to God on their deathbeds and not "at all times" in their lifetimes. The exiles like Job were to finally 'delight themselves' in God at the restoration, if they followed Job's path (s.w. Is. 58:14). But Job is saying that whilst sinners refuse to repent, then they can never do this; and that was the fate of the exiles.

Job 27:11 I will teach you about the hand of God. That which is with the Almighty will I not conceal- See on Job 6:10. Some consider that there is textual corruption in Job, and Job 27:11-23 are Zophar's apparently missing third speech. But I would argue otherwise, apart from a dislike of positing textual corruption in order to explain away what may otherwise be hard of explanation. The speech of Job recorded in Job 26-31 is the longest in the book. The pattern of each of the three friends giving a speech and Job replying, spread over three speeches, appears to slightly break down

in that Zophar doesn't give his third speech. We note that Bildad's final speech was very brief, and was really only quoting previous words from Eliphaz (Job 25). This could all create the intentional impression in the drama that the friends were running out of steam in their arguments. Job now makes a very long speech... but that is not his victory nor justification. That is only provided by God's appearance at the end, when Job repents of his words. It is usual for the genre of drama to play with audience expectation and dash it to make a point. That is what is happening here, with Bildad's final speech really a flop, and Zophar not giving the speech which the structure of the drama requires him to make. And we are also led to expect Job's final long speech to be his justification, seeing most of what he says is true in itself. But this too is a dashed expectation; for God appears and condemns them all, and then justifies Job by grace.

Job 27:12 Behold, all of you have seen it yourselves; why then have you become altogether vain?- The intensity of accusation and language gets worth on both sides. He calls them "altogether vain" in that they had come to argue and reason from a purely secular, Godless perspective. But Job has used the same word for "vain" about his own vain life experience: "My days are vanity" (Job 7:16; 9:29). Their comfort was likewise "in vain" (Job 21:34). But God through Elihu will rebuke Job also for speaking "in vain" (Job 35:16). What Job accuses the friends of, he is himself guilty of. And it is only through the experience of judgment with God that he comes to recognize this- just as we may repent of some things in this life but not others. And it will be the purpose of the day of judgment to reveal this to us. Particularly as we see others judged, we will learn so much- for in them we will see elements of ourselves.

Job 27:13 This is the portion of a wicked man with God, the heritage of oppressors, which they receive from the Almighty- The "this" refers to the description of the fate of the wicked which we now have in :13-23. Nearly all the descriptions have reference to Job's own experience. But his point is that he the righteous is suffering exactly the judgment of the wicked; he is now starting to realize that his sufferings were on behalf of others, even perhaps of the friends. And this comes to final term when at the end, he becomes their saviour, by grace. And yet the "wicked man" he has in view is surely the friends, whom he has just called "altogether vain" (:12). Only recently in the dialogues have the friends called Job "wicked" (Job 22:5). They have upped the language about him, and he now responds to them likewise. This is typical of dialogue and relationship breakdown. For the first time in a conversation, one side uses an expletive- and then the respondent will do likewise. It all builds up to a sense of relief when Job and the friends cease their dialogue.

Job 27:14 If his children are multiplied, it is for the sword. His offspring shall not be satisfied with bread- Seeing his own children had been destroyed by the sword, Job presumably was accepting that he was among the "wicked", as he does elsewhere (e.g. Job 9:2). Hos. 9:13,16 repeats such language regarding the punishment of sinful Israel: "Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer". Dt. 28:41 has the same idea.

Job 27:15 Those who remain of him shall be buried in death. His widows shall make no lamentation- Alluding to how Job's wife turned against him and was making no lamentation over his grief.

Job 27:16 Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare clothing as the clay- The sense is "Even if he..." had done these things. Job clearly has himself in view (see on :13), hence his conditional language (also in :17).

Job 27:17 he may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver- The friends insisted Job was not innocent (s.w. Job 4:7). Job said he was. So he recognizes that whilst it appears that his wealth is being taken away by others because he has sinned, there will yet come a day when he is justified, and 'divides the silver'; and he as the innocent (Job 9:23) will condemn his hypocritical friends (Job 17:8). It was perhaps in recognition of this that those who had once rejected him come and give him silver (Job 42:11).

Job 27:18 He builds his house as the moth, as a booth which the watchman makes- Again Job refers to himself (Job 4:19; 13:28), recognizing that indeed he is suffering the judgment of the sinner, whilst personally righteous. Being consumed by a moth was to be the fate of apostate Israel (s.w. Is. 50:9; 51:8). But they could follow the path of Job to restoration, despite feeling and being condemned to death.

Job 27:19 He lies down rich, but he shall not do so again. He opens his eyes, and he is not- Perhaps as GNB "One last time they will lie down rich, and when they wake up, they will find their wealth gone".

Job 27:20 Terrors overtake him like waters. A storm steals him away in the night- A reference to the terrors or panic attacks which Job complained of (Job 6:4; 31:23), and the whirlwind storm which had suddenly taken away Job's family and wealth.

Job 27:21 The east wind carries him away, and he departs. It sweeps him out of his place- Job felt he too had been swept out of his place (Job 7:10). The wind from the east was the wind which swept in out of the wilderness to destroy Job (Job 1:19).

Or, "As a storm hurls...". This is how Job felt God had treated him, hurling him as with a storm (Job 9:17; 30:22, “You lift me up to the wind; you... dissolve me in the tempest”. Likewise :22 speaks of God shooting at the wicked, which is how Job feels God is treating him in Job 6:4; 16:13: “His arrows compass me round about, He does not spare". Or again in :23, "men shall clap their hands" against the wicked, which is what was done to Jon (Job 17:6; 30:9-14). So much of Job's description of the fate of the wicked accords with how he has earlier spoken of his own afflictions. Perhaps his idea is that although the wicked often don't suffer for their sins, God is treating him, the righteous, as the wicked, i.e. the wicked whom He does judge and condemn. For Job's idea is that God is totally unjust and inconsistent, absolutely lacking integrity, and he would love to get God in court over these things and condemn Him.

Job 27:22 For it hurls at him, and does not spare, as he flees away from his hand- AV "For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand". Zophar claims that Job was going to flee from the arrow of Divine judgment, but would all the same be struck through by it (Job 20:24,25). God's response was that His creatures didn't flee from His arrows (s.w. Job 41:28). Neither did Job flee from God, although he wanted to (see AV); he was in harmony with the natural creation.

Zophar was wrong. Job didn't flee from God but quite the opposite- he keeps begging God to reveal Himself, and He does so at the end of the book.

Job 27:23 Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place- It was the friends who did this to Job, just as Zion's abusers did to her (Lam. 2:15 s.w.), hissing her into captivity (Jer. 19:8). Again, Job is presented as bearing the judgments of God's apostate people, who were also moved out of their place into exile.

JOB CHAPTER 28

Job 28:1 Surely there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine- Job in chapter 28 prides himself on his appreciation, as he thought, of God's hand in creation, and how creation reveals the greatness of God. But at the end he was taught that what he thought he so appreciated, he really didn't; and he learnt the true knowledge of God. Unclean animals are brought to his attention in Job 39; he then repents in Job 40:2-4, as if he finally saw in them symbols of himself. And then chapters 40 and 41 go on to speak of the joy of clean animals in their relationship with God, and the inability of man to come between them and their maker.

The theme of his speech in Job 28 is that Yahweh alone is to be feared throughout the entire cosmos. Nobody else – such as the 'Satan' figures alluded to by the friends – needed to be feared. Job understood God to be in control in Heaven; he rejects the idea of a cosmic conflict going on 'up there' which the friends seem to allude to. More specifically, Job speaks of how God's hand forms and can pierce the "crooked serpent" and smite any monster (Job 26:11–14). It's as if Job is mocking the idea that God has let him go into the hands of the cosmic monsters which the friends believed in. For Job so often stresses that it is the "hand of God" which has brought His affliction (Job 19:21; 23:2). That Divine hand was far greater than any mythical 'Satan' figure.

Job 28:2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and copper is smelted out of the ore- This is leading up to Job's contrast with the way that wisdom cannot be found by as it were mining the earth, and then processing what has been taken out. These reflections lead him to be ready for God's final appearance, announcing that grace is indeed a gift, and it is not so much knowing God as God knowing us which is so critical (Gal. 4:9). And theoretical knowledge and human wisdom play little part in that. All the extraction and processing of such knowledge will not lead us to personal relationship with Him.

Job 28:3 Man sets an end to darkness, and searches out, to the furthest bound of thick darkness, in order to find the stones of obscurity- "Darkness" is a term often used in the dialogues about what Job was enduring. Man, and the reference is to the friends, thinks he can understand it right to the ends of that darkness. But he can't. Only God can (:27). The darkness of Job's trials and their limit was to be defined by God alone, as made clear in the prologue. The finding of some obscure nugget of truth is therefore irrelevant compared to realizing that God has set far wider horizons that man has set himself.

But in the context of mining, the idea may be that man digs deep and very cleverly and makes shafts into the darkness, in his search for precious stones. But

finding wisdom isn't like that. The mining analogy is to make the point that man makes great efforts to go to lonely places, where man has never been before, in order to extract valuable things out of deep darkness. Job too felt he had gone to where other men hadn't gone, to try to extract something valuable from his depth of darkness. And he hadn't found anything; for the poem concludes with the lament that wisdom cannot be found. All man's efforts to find truth and wisdom, to mine something valuable from his own darkness, his going where no other man has gone... is all in vain. Job had earlier spoken of how God has the power to "uncover deep things out of darkness" (Job 12:22). But his point here in Job 28 is that man cannot do this, no matter how he slogs through the gloom and darkness of his mine shafts and bashes against the rock face... and whatever deep things God extracts from darkness, He doesn't share with man- because wisdom cannot be found by man. In fact, God has hemmed Job in with the darkness (Job 23:17). Truth is not to be found by such searching, nor will meaning be extracted from life's darkness; rather, truth and wisdom are to fear Yahweh and repent from evil (:28). And God confirms this, in that Job's brief word of repentance was seen as speaking about Him what was right.

We ask why there is such a detailed description of the mining processes of those times. One possibility is that Job's amazing wealth came from mining; God led him to the precious stones. For his wealth is presented as somehow hugely greater than that of any other man. We know from Job 31:24 that he did indeed have much gold: "If I have made gold my hope, and have said to the fine gold, ‘You are my confidence’". The story concludes with him becoming even twice as wealthy as he was at the start- possibly we are to conclude he again was led by God to finding precious stones. That's why Job knew so much about mining technology, as reflected in this poem. But he comes to realize that just as he had sought so zealously for precious stones, so he was desperately zealous to find 'wisdom', the answers as to 'why' his sufferings had happened. And he concludes that there are no precious stones of wisdom accessible to man; it is for us to simply trust and obey. This is all in the immediate context of Job being accused by the friends of being guilty of sin because he is suffering- and they justified that accusation by appealing to well established "wisdom" traditions. Job's poem about wisdom is basically claiming that "wisdom" doesn't exist in that it is there, but isn't accessible to man. This is his way of shutting down their repeated appeals to human wisdom traditions. His point is that he considers an appeal to "wisdom" in any legal case against him to be irrelevant and inadmissible. Whether that is the case or not... is a wider question. Because the rest of the Bible does teach that God is eager to communicate His wisdom to man. Elihu appears to take issue with Job on this point in Job 32:8 GNB "But it is the spirit of Almighty God that comes to us and gives us wisdom". This could be a seen as a rejoinder to Job's claim in Job 28 that wisdom is not accessible to man, with the implication that man is left adrift in the cosmos with no moral compass apart from to try to obey God.

The wisdom poem also ends with Job justifying himself, for he concludes that wisdom can't be found but man must just avoid evil- that is wisdom. And we know from the prologue, and Job's self portrait of his own integrity in Job 31, that he has done specifically that. So he concludes with himself in view. He will then go to make his final speech of Job 29-31, pointing out how blessed he was [as he was so righteous] in Job 29, how far he had fallen, because he had been so unfairly judged (Job 30), and then his legal challenge to God justifying himself (Job 31). He clears the way for all that through this poem which denies the wisdom tradition, and ends by declaring himself as "wise".

Job 28:4 He breaks open a shaft away from where people live. They are forgotten by the foot walking above. They hang far from men, they swing back and forth- This is a picture of ancient mining, with men descending shafts on ropes in desperate search for precious nuggets (:3). Again, Job's point is that wisdom cannot be found by as it were mining the earth, and then processing what has been taken out. All the extraction and processing of such knowledge will not lead us to personal relationship with God.

Job 28:5 As for the earth, out of it comes bread; underneath it is turned up as it were by fire- GNB "But underneath the same earth all is torn up and crushed" i.e. by man's mining operations. He may tear up and crush the rock in search of gold nuggets, but he will never find wisdom even if he makes such efforts. This could be saying (in line with :2-4) that mining can be dangerous; under the earth is fire, and man is best to use the surface of the earth to grow bread. The whole enterprise of mining is being contrasted to man's search for meaning and knowledge. Job is not as it were anti intellectual, but is coming to appreciate that relationship with God is beyond mere nuggets of knowledge, "stones of obscurity" (:3) strung together. And this is confirmed when God finally appears and condemns the wisdom of the friends. See on :11.

Job 28:6 Sapphires come from its rocks. It has dust of gold- Job doesn't doubt that great beauty and value can indeed be mined. See on :2-5. But his point is that there is another set of values, invisible to the naked eye (:7), which is experience with God when we have a clear conscience (:28). Or the idea may be that there is gold that can be found on the surface without mining, and sapphires are found in alluvial soil embedded in gneiss on the surface, and not by mining. Perhaps the idea is that mining isn't needed to find nuggets of 'truth' but rather gathering what is on the surface of life.

Job 28:7 That path no bird of prey knows, neither has the falcon's eye seen it- The pagan peoples thought that birds had the gift of divination and wisdom. Again, as so often in Job, there is a deconstruction of popular beliefs in order to demonstrate the utter supremacy of God.

Job 28:8 The proud animals have not trodden it, nor has the fierce lion passed by there- "The proud animals" are literally a pride of lions. Physical strength and reputation will not bring one to the wisdom of relationship with God which the argument climaxes with in :28.

Job 28:9 He puts forth his hand on the flinty rock, and he overturns the mountains by the roots- The "he" could be the miner, or wisdom personified, or the reference could be to God. For He alone can overturn mountain roots. This section of the argument concludes in :12 "But where shall wisdom be found?". God can upturn mountains for us to look underneath, but still we will not find wisdom. Because wisdom is not knowledge which can be dug out and processed as if by the mining enterprise; rather is it live relationship with God which is of the essence (:28).

Job 28:10 He cuts out channels among the rocks. His eye sees every precious thing- Perhaps a reference to the canals excavated by men to draw off the water that accumulates in a mine. Or perhaps to men panning for gold, their eye sharply discerning any gold in the water channel. But no sharp eyed man can find wisdom. As

noted on :9, God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes.

Job 28:11 He binds the streams that they don't trickle. The thing that is hidden he brings forth to light-

This is the same argument as explained on :10. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (:28). This is what was happening on Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouring the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

Or, "He binds up the streams that they drip / weep not", alluding to the use of lime or clay to stop water percolating into the mine. Wisdom isn't found on the surface nor beneath the surface of this world (:22), not by man nor animal (:21). Job seems to be saying, as many do, that wisdom / truth is out there, but impossible to attain. And yet "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom". The appearance of Yahweh will lead Job to repentance and self abhorrence. And that is the only wisdom man can come to. All intellectual searching for answers to questions, done as cleverly and zealously as man mines diamonds, will never come to it.

Job 28:12 But where shall wisdom be found?- "Found" is the word used of how Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9). See on :9-12.

Where is the place of understanding?- The origin of "wisdom" is simply from God; it has no location on planet earth, no holy place somewhere which can be visited and wisdom obtained there; it is from Him rather than being mined and processed by man. This would have been relevant to the "sons of God" of Job 1:6, Job and his friends, who apparently regularly came to a defined place for worship and instruction.

Job 28:13 Man doesn't know its price; neither is it found in the land of the living- The wisdom of true relationship with God (:28) cannot be bought with money (see on :15). It can only be found beyond "the land of the living", which implies 'in death'. Job believed that his final justification and restored relationship with God could only

come through his death and subsequent resurrection. And he, along with Hezekiah and later the captives in Babylon, had to pass through a living death to get to that point. See on :22.

Job 28:14 The deep says, 'It isn't in me'. The sea says, 'It isn't with me'- Hum ["the deep / abyss"] and *yam* ["the sea"] are references to the monsters supposed to live there, much feared by the folk of Job's day. Believing in them and trying to appease them by sacrifice (think of the casting of Jonah into the sea) wouldn't reveal wisdom. That was in repentance and relationship with God (:28), as the story of Jonah also demonstrates.

Job 28:15 It can't be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for its price- The same phrase translated as "without money and without price" is found in Is. 55:1 as to how the greatest wisdom was to leave Babylon / Persia and return to Judah, with all the inversion of values this required. The book of Job is full of connections to Isaiah, as it was rewritten to encourage the exiles in captivity.

Job 28:16 It can't be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire- Earlier in this chapter, Job has contrasted man's mining for precious stones on his initiative with God's working upon man to give him, by grace, something more precious- relationship with Him. Gold, onyx and sapphire were all stones in the Mosaic breastplate, and this is perhaps also be understood as an oblique reference to how the Mosaic system couldn't of itself bring about that relationship with God which is the true wisdom.

Job 28:17 Gold and glass can't equal it, neither shall it be exchanged for jewels of fine gold- Once a man comes to the true wisdom of relationship with God with a pure conscience by His grace (:28), he will never want to exchange it. This is the sense likewise of Prov. 23:23 "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding". "The truth", true understanding, is not a series of isolated academic truths mined and processed by man (see on :3-6). It refers to relationship with God. Many Christians obsessed with 'finding the truth' have yet to realize this.

Job 28:18 No mention shall be made of coral or of crystal. Yes, the price of wisdom is above rubies- The words of Job 28:18 are repeatedly quoted in Proverbs (Prov. 3:15; 8:11; 20:15). "Wisdom" in Proverbs refers not so much to nuggets of truth, but to a way of life in relationship with God; for that is the context in the source passage in Job 28:18 cp. 28.

*Job 28:19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold- "*Equal" is the word used to the exiles in Is. 40:18, where they are told that "God" has no equal. But I suggest in that context we must read in an ellipsis; 'relationship with God' cannot be equaled. It is totally inappropriate to compare it to human strength of any category.

Job 28:20 Where then does wisdom come from? Where is the place of understanding?- Possibly the contrast is between wisdom coming to man, from God; and on the other hand, man's vain search for wisdom within the earth, just as he searches for precious metals. Wisdom comes, rather than is found by cunning physical and intellectual effort. But the conclusion, in :23-28, is not that 'Wisdom can't be

found by effort and hard searching, instead, it is given by God'. Rather the conclusion is that God hid wisdom and no man can find it; instead of the search for answers, man must just trust and obey and get on with life'. The origin of "wisdom" is simply from God; it has no location on planet earth, no holy place somewhere which can be visited and wisdom obtained there; it is from Him rather than being mined and processed by man. This would have been relevant to the "sons of God" of Job 1:6, Job and his friends, who apparently regularly came to a defined place for worship and instruction.

Job 28:21 Seeing it is hidden from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the birds of the sky- The wisdom of true relationship with God and restoration by grace (:28) cannot be discerned by the human senses. The naked eye cannot perceive it. Thus Job is coming closer to the New Testament teaching about the Spirit, which the exiles were also taught in Is. 64:4: "... neither has the eye seen... what He has prepared for him who waits for Him", to the end of the 70 year period of exile. These words are applied to all in our age who receive the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9).

Job 28:22 Destruction and Death say, 'We have heard a rumour of it with our ears'- As noted on :13, Job believed that through death he would thence ultimately pass to a bodily resurrection and restored relationship with God. In this sense, therefore, death has a rumour of this wisdom which nothing in the world of the living can have. A true sense of our mortality will lead to our prayerful, urgent contact with the Father all our days. Thus destruction and death give insight into the true wisdom.

Job 28:23 God understands its way, and He knows its place- Just as there is a sense in the natural creation that things such as the dawn have a specific "place" known by God alone (Job 38:12 s.w.), so the way of true relationship with Him, "wisdom", is known by Him alone. We do not find that "place" by intellectual effort, searching hither and thither, but by being open to God's leading of us as Job was.

Job 28:24 For He looks to the ends of the earth, and sees under the whole sky- The implication may be that man sees only what is before his face, whereas God has an infinitely wider perspective. Job in his intense suffering is to be commended for realizing this; for physical pain tends to make the sufferer focus only upon the immediate.

Job 28:25 He establishes the force of the wind. Yes, He measures out the waters by measure- This is quoted in Is. 40:12 as encouragement to the exiles; the power of wind and waters, both representative of God's judgments for sin, are totally under His control. They are measured, the exile period would come to a defined end, just as Job's sufferings did.

Job 28:26 When He made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder- This "decree" for the rain is the word used of how the waters are "bounded" (Job 26:10), just as Job's sufferings were "appointed" or 'bounded' (Job 23:14), as the sufferings of the exiles were also time limited. The idea may be that when that 'bound' of the rain and darkness is reached, the end of the appointed suffering, then we find the wisdom of true relationship with God. He has set it there (:27), at that point. And that is the true wisdom, which we are led to and arrive at, rather than seeking to mine it out in human strength and enterprise.

Job 28:27 then He saw it, and declared it. He established it, yes, and searched it out- See on :3. In Job 13:9 Job asks the friends: "Is it good that He should search you out? Or as one deceives a man, will you deceive Him?". The idea seems to be that if God searched out the friends, they would have to try to deceive Him, lest He find the truth about them. But Job later realizes that God does indeed search out all things (s.w. Job 28:27). He begins here by saying that *if* He were to search things out, He would not find a nice scene in the hearts of the friends. But Job moves on to realize that indeed this is what God is doing, on a cosmic scale- searching out all things.

Job 28:28 To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding'- Wisdom is thereby presented as essentially being experience of God and relationship with Him. Wisdom is not found by going to a certain location, to a guru here or a holy book there, digging like miners dig, in search of it. It is experience with God, and all the things summarized in "the fear of the Lord". Job was aware it seems of God's estimation that he had indeed "turned away from evil" and feared God (Job 1:1 s.w.); it was those things, rather than the traditional wisdom of the friends, which he came to see was the true "understanding".

I discussed on Job 2:6 and elsewhere how one message of Job is that the search for logical justice is futile when it comes to God's ways with man. The cosmos is not human centric, and we have no right to even enquire let alone complain. This is the point of the wisdom poem in Job 28- man cannot find it, cannot somehow locate the answers he wants, despite sensing they are out there somewhere; and hence the conclusion: "To man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. To depart from evil is understanding" (Job 28:28). But in Job we see the end of the Lord, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy, and saves His people. The answers to all man's questions is indeed 'out there', but God has placed it in such a way that those answers aren't accessible in this life. Whether we read Job 28 as speaking about mining expeditions or some theoretical journey to the end of the earth, the answer is clear- man cannot find "wisdom" in this sense. And so we have to just get on with doing what Job had done so well, according to the prologue- depart from evil, and get on in practice serving the Lord. That is wisdom. Wisdom is life lived in practice in submission to God; and not some intellectual nuggets that were found after great searching. Perhaps God responds to all this by commenting that He has a relationship with the ostrich, who in His opinion lacks wisdom: "God made her forgetful of wisdom" (Job 39:14-17).

JOB CHAPTER 29

Job 29:1 Job again took up his parable and said- In what sense is Job's pouring out of his very personal reflections about his situation "a parable"? I suggest the answer is that we are intended to understand his situation as parabolic or representative of other situations; particularly that with the exiles in Babylon, who would also be led to restoration if they followed Job's path.

Job's final presentation in Job 29-31 is one piece. In Job 29 he recalls what a blessed life he once had- and that, he implies, was evidence that he was righteous. He then laments in Job 30 his loss of everything despite being righteous; and then with great passion in Job 31 he presents himself as utterly blameless and spotless, eager for any meeting with God in judgment to demonstrate that God has been totally unjust.

Job 29:2 Oh that I were as in the months of old, as in the days when God watched over me- That Job was indeed depressed can be seen by the vast number of times Job speaks of "I" or "myself". There are some 40 occurrences of these words in Chapter 29 alone. "Watched over" is the same word used for how God had set the parameters for Job's trials in the prologue; his life was to be preserved (s.w., Job 2:6). But Job like the friends became obsessed with immediate suffering and issues to the point that he overlooked these basic parameters set by God. We can do the same. He complains that God watches over him too closely (Job 13:6; 33:11 s.w.), and yet complains that God isn't watching over him (Job 29:2). God's response is to direct him again to the natural creation, where God's constant 'watching over' His creation is evident. He even watches over the exact gestation time of mountain goats, who were invisible to human eyes (Job 39:1 s.w.). And likewise Job was to understand that the time of his sufferings, like the period of exile for the captives, was likewise intensely noted by God and had not been forgotten.

Job 29:3 when His lamp shone on my head, and by His light I walked through darkness- Job had experienced the darkness of trial before (see on Job 3:26), but felt he had been led by God's light through the darkness. This walking in darkness was exactly the experience of an apostate Israel (s.w. Is. 9:2; 59:9; Lam. 3:2). Job understandably struggles with being treated as wicked, and under judgment for serious sin; when he knew he was "perfect" in God's eyes, according to the prologue. And at this point he appears to be on the pole of focusing upon his being judged for sin which he hadn't committed. But this was all because he was suffering as representative of sinners, as the Lord Jesus did to a far greater extent, seeing He unlike Job was actually sinless.

Job 29:4 as I was in the ripeness of my days, when the friendship of God was in my tent- "Friendship" is 'secret'. Job was a prophet (Job 29:4 cp. 15:8; 23:12; Prov. 3:32; Amos 3:7; the secret of God being with him made Job a prophet) and it is in his role as such that he is commended in James 5:10,11- i.e. for the words concerning God which he spoke. The words for which God and Elihu rebuked him were perhaps therefore about other things. We can conclude from this that the gift of prophecy had been withdrawn from Job whilst he was passing through his affliction, and something similar happened with the exiles; the sun went down on their prophets (Mic. 3:6), but that didn't mean that the previous prophetic words of restoration would not come true for them.

Job 29:5 when the Almighty was yet with me, and my children were around me- The same phrase is found in Job 6:4, "the arrows of the Almighty are with me". Job is struggling to accept that the presence of God "with" him was manifest through his afflictions, just as much as it had been in God's more visible, tangible presence with him he had experienced in the past.

Job 29:6 when my steps were washed with butter, and the rock poured out streams of oil for me- Loss of the blessings of oil and butter makes Job representative of an Israel who lost those blessings through their rebellion (Dt. 28:40,51; Dt. 32:13,14). Again and again we see Job set up as representative of God's people, and achieving the salvation of his friends through suffering for their sins whilst innocent (see on Job 42:6). The whole story of Job is designed to encourage Israel's faith in a

representative saviour, the Lord Jesus, who bore the judgment for their sins whilst personally sinless.

Job 29:7 when I went forth to the city gate, when I prepared my seat in the street- Job recalls in great detail his former greatness, and laments his loss of power. This is all absolutely credible and appropriate to a real historical male figure who was cast down from a position of power and respect.

Job 29:8 The young men saw me and hid themselves. The aged rose up and stood- The fact those older than Job respected him is perhaps an oblique self justification against the idea of the friends that the wisdom of the aged condemned Job.

Job 29:9 The princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth- Job was later to be the one who laid his hand upon his mouth (Job 40:4). In this part of the dialogues, Job seems to come very low. He is consumed with self pity and regret concerning the power and prestige he has lost.

Job 29:10 The voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth- By implication, Job's voice was now hushed and his tongue stuck to the roof of his dried mouth, just as was to happen to the Lord Jesus, the ultimate suffering servant after the pattern of Job (Ps. 22:15), and to a condemned Israel (Lam. 4:4). Ezekiel passed through the same experience (Ez. 3:26), again as a representative sufferer for the sake of Israel's sins- likewise in an attempt to save them by bearing the judgment of their sins.

Job 29:11 For when the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it commended me- Job in his depths came to know God as his "witness in heaven" (Job 16:19); in his former life, "when the eye saw me, it gave witness [s.w.] to me" (Job 29:11). But Job was brought to learn that the only ultimate witness in life is God, and it is His testimony and not man's which is meaningful. He confesses that he had only heard of God by the ear, and only upon recognizing his humanity did he 'see' God (Job 42:5). The fact others' eyes and ears had seen and heard him with respect was to become of no value to him at all.

Job 29:12 because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless also, who had none to help him- Bildad assumes Job must have done the very opposite, to deserve his sufferings (Job 20:19). Job engages with what Bildad says and denies it (Job 29:12; 31:17). Again we note that Job engages with the actual words of the friends, whereas they tend to attack him in terms of the straw man image of him they had built up in their minds, ignoring him as a person and the actual words he says. This is typical of how dialogue goes wrong.

Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to

those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 29:13 the blessing of him who was ready to perish came on me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy- "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (29:13,14). This has clear reference to the clothing of the Mosaic High Priest with his outward show of righteousness. Job was probably the family priest, seeing that the head of the household appears to have been the priest in patriarchal times; thus Job could offer a sacrifice for the sins of his children (Job 1:5). Job's likening of himself to a moth-eaten garment due to God's changing of his circumstances (Job 13:26-28) must connect with the disciples of the Law as an old, decaying garment in Heb. 8:13. The priestly clothing " for glory and for beauty" (Ex. 28:2) is certainly alluded to by God when He challenges Job "Deck thyself *now* (i.e. like you used to) with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty... then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee" (Job 40:10,14)- as if God is saying that Job's previous life represented the Mosaic priestly system with its external pomp and implication that ones own righteousness can bring salvation ("that thine own right hand can save thee"). Job's humiliation meant that, by implication, he no longer felt able to clothe himself with the priestly garments of glory and beauty; he had learnt the spirit of the Christian dispensation, to trust on the grace of God rather than a system of salvation depending on personal righteousness. The descriptions of Job rending his "mantle" (priestly robes) recalls that of Caiaphas; his falling on his face perhaps indicates his recognition that reliance on the outward show of the Law needed to be replaced by humble faith. Job thus described his experiences as God leading "priests away stripped" of their robes (Job 12:19 N.I.V.).

Job 29:14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me. My justice was as a robe and a diadem- This would mean that his merciful acts to the poor were done in a 'charitable' spirit, thinking that such public acts declared him outwardly righteous: "I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (Job 29:13,14 AV). And yet Job's words of Job 30:1 certainly smack of arrogance: "Whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock". His charity was done to some whilst despising others and judging them. This works based, judgmental righteousness can so easily be our weakness. See on :13.

Job 29:15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame- This is quoted in Rom. 2. It is in the context of Paul's rebuke of the Jews in Rom. 2:17-23 for their reliance on a mixture of worldly wisdom and the Mosaic law. The passage has many similarities with Job: ""Thou art called a Jew... and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will, and triest the things that differ (AVmg.) ["Doth not the ear try words?" (Job 12:11)], being instructed out of the law [A fair description of Job before his trials]... and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in

darkness ["I was eyes to the blind" (Job 29:15)], an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law... Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? ["Thou hast instructed many... thy words have upholden him that was falling... but now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest" (Job 4:3-5)]. Thou that preachest a man should not steal... commit adultery... (worship) idols... dost thou? [These were the three main things of which the friends accused Job]. Thou that makest thy boast of the Law, through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God?" [Elihu, on God's behalf, says that Job's boasting of his righteousness implied God was doing wickedly in punishing Job (Job 34:10).

Their belief that they possessed such great wisdom led the Jews to be self-righteous, in that they reasoned that if they were wicked, then their wisdom would reveal this to them. Job and the Jews were in this sense similar. But as ever, Job is being set up as representative of sinful Israel, bearing their judgments (see on :3,6); and yet personally innocent.

Job 29:16 I was a father to the needy. The cause of him who I didn't know, I searched out- It is one thing to meet needs which come right before our face on life's path; but Job went beyond that, in searching out the needs of others. "The cause" could be legal language; Job expected his legal case against God and man to be upheld, because he has taken the side of others in legal matters and upheld the downtrodden. But again, we have here a legalistic attitude. He expects better from life right now, because of his previous good deeds. He has at this point forgotten his conclusions about a future recompense at a point of future resurrection and judgment.

Job 29:17 I broke the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth- This suggests Job was proactive in even orchestrating physical punishment and violence against the wicked. But now he feels as if he is the prey within the teeth of his abusers and of God Himself. Again, he expects better from life right now, because of his previous good deeds. He has at this point forgotten his conclusions about a future recompense at a point of future resurrection and judgment.

Job 29:18 Then I said, 'I shall die in my own house, I shall number my days as the sand- Job lived in patriarchal times, and so we can legitimately detect here an allusion to the promises to Abraham of a seed as numerous as the sand. Job had thought that the promises spoke of a long life in this world. He was to come to realize that they rather spoke of eternal inheritance of the earth at a future point, thanks to the work of Abraham's great seed, the Lord Jesus.

Job 29:19 My root is spread out to the waters. The dew lies all night on my branch- This connects with the thought of Job's words in Job 14:8: "Though its root grows old in the earth, and its stock dies in the ground". "Earth" is *eretz*, the land (of Israel). If merely "soil" was intended, a different word would have been used. Again, we see the drama of Job has been tweaked, under Divine inspiration, to become the narrative for the exiles. The root had indeed largely died in the land at the time of the Babylonian invasion, but it still had some life and would "bud" again (Job 14:9). Job was the man with great roots who had been cut down but hadn't completely died (Job 8:17); his roots had been dried up (Job 18:16; 29:19). He represented Judah, whose roots were throughout the land as a tree transplanted by God (s.w. Ps. 80:9). Those roots were withered by the invasions (Is. 5:24), but out of those dry roots would grow up a

"tender plant / branch" (Is. 11:1,10; 53:2), using the same word for "tender" as in Job 14:7. This Messianic suffering servant was to be based upon Job, and representative of all God's restored people. They were to again spread their roots in the land of promise in a restored Kingdom (Is. 37:31; Jer. 17:8), after the pattern of Job's restoration.

Job 29:20 My glory is fresh in me. My bow is renewed in my hand'- Perhaps as GNB "Everyone was always praising me, and my strength never failed me". Job's bow or strength was however broken, just as Israel's was (Hos. 1:5); he was their representative.

Job 29:21 Men listened to me, waited, and kept silence for my counsel- We note the parallel with how Elihu on God's behalf listened, waited, and only then spoke (Job 32:4). Job was to be taught that the fact men listened, waited and kept silence before him needed to be reversed; so that *he* would wait, listen and keep silence before God, laying his hand upon his mouth (Job 40:4).

Job 29:22 After my words they didn't speak again. My speech fell on them- This is what happened at the end of the book; God's speech through Elihu fell upon Job, and after God's words Job didn't want to speak again (Job 40:4). Job was to be taught that it was God's word and greatness and not his which was of the essence.

Job 29:23 They waited for me as for the rain. Their mouths drank as with the spring rain- Job was to realize that men should wait for God's word as the rain, and the latter rain of His blessings. Job had previously functioned as those blessings for men, and he was to realize the utter insignificance of this. For he needed Divine blessing and grace, rather than being an apparent provider of that blessing to others. All his good works were therefore given a quite different context when he was made to realize *his* need for blessing. GNB "they had nothing to add when I had finished. My words sank in like drops of rain; everyone welcomed them just as farmers welcome rain in spring" (:22,23).

Job 29:24 I smiled on them when they had no confidence. They didn't reject the light of my face- GNB "I smiled on them when they had lost confidence; my cheerful face encouraged them". But Job was to realize that it was God's face smiling upon man which was the only important thing; the smiling of man's face upon man was therefore of no account compared to that.

Job 29:25 I chose out their way, and sat as chief. I lived as a king in the army, as one who comforts the mourners- Job was to realize that it was God and not him who chooses out the way of men (Ps. 25:12); like Job, the exiles failed through choosing out their own way (s.w. Is. 66:3) rather than seeking God's way.

JOB CHAPTER 30

Job 30:1 But now those who are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs- Job has just boasted of how his charitable giving earned him his righteousness: "I caused the widow's heart to sing

for joy (by his charity). I (thereby) put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgement was as a robe and a diadem" (Job 29:13,14 AV). And yet Job's words of Job 30:1 certainly smack of arrogance. His charity was done to some whilst despising others and judging them. This works based, judgmental righteousness can so easily be our weakness.

Job 30:2 Of what use is the strength of their hands to me, men in whom ripe age has perished?- Here in :2-9 we have a rather unpleasant streak in Job revealed. He clearly despised some men deeply, and it was deeply irksome to him that the children of those he had despised should now mock him. The way he speaks of these men indicates a deep disdain which is inappropriate in any man for other men, who are all made in the image of God. GNB "They were a bunch of worn-out men, too weak to do any work for me". Here we see the importance Job placed upon "work"; for it was also by works that he felt justified before God, and deserving of a better deal in life than what he was having. His finer insights into his sufferings are now absent, as he walls in the self pity of the moment.

Job 30:3 They are gaunt from lack and famine. They gnaw the dry ground, in the gloom of waste and desolation- "Waste and desolation" is the language of condemnation (s.w. Zeph. 1:15). But God makes the point that He sends rain "to satisfy the desolate and waste ground" (Job 38:27 AV)- the very place where the condemned lived whom Job despised in his prosperity (Job 30:3 s.w.). But God doesn't despise even the most desperate of society. He sends rain to cheer them whom the righteous despise. And this was to help Job be convicted of his own desperation, of how wrong he had been to despise others and trust that he was righteous; and to further convict him that God still sought to revive him, as He did those deserted lands.

Job 30:4 They pluck salt herbs by the bushes. The roots of the broom are their food- This plant grows in the wilderness regions where the book of Job is set; the roots are famed as being bitter but nutritious for the desperately hungry and perishing Bedouin. Again we have evidence that Job was a historical person who lived where the prologue says he did.

Job 30:5 They are driven out from the midst of men. They cry after them as after a thief- These desperate people whom Job so despised had been driven from their societies so that they wandered the deserts, surviving by eating wild roots, and robbing travellers and encampments like Job's. But now they were despising Job, so desperate and rejected was he. He was surely being taught how wrong he had been to despise even the spiritually desperate.

Job 30:6 so that they dwell in frightful valleys, and in holes of the earth and of the rocks- AV "in the clifts of the valleys", where Moses cowered and saw the glory of Yahweh. And it was the faithful who lived in holes, caves and amongst the rocks (Heb. 11:38). The connections may mean that God is a God of the desperate- and Job had despised those on the bottom rung of society. But now he had been placed there, and would be saved if he repented of his former despising of the desperate.

Job 30:7 Among the bushes they bray; and under the nettles they are gathered together- The impression is given that Job considered them as animals, braying under bushes and huddling together under nettles. This treating of human beings as less than

human was deeply wrong, and was something which Job had to be convicted of when he finally realized the depth of his own desperation.

Job 30:8 They are children of fools, yes, children of base men- This was how Job had seen them, but now he was beneath even them (:9). He was being made to see that God has a saving purpose even for the desperate, those "without name" (Heb., NEV "base men"), treated by Job as if they were of no name, without personhood in his eyes. And he was now lower than them. We recall how the Lord taught that such was the Divine value of the human person, that whoever called his brother a fool was in danger of Gehenna's condemnation (Mt. 5:22).

They were flogged out of the land- AV "viler than the earth". This was how Job had so utterly despised people; and we marvel at God's grace in still calling him "perfect" and without guile. This therefore had been by imputed righteousness and grace alone.

Job 30:9 Now I have become their song. Yes, I am a byword to them- Job is presented as representative of the exiles, who were a song and byword to the Gentiles whom they had once despised. The Hebrew for "byword" is literally 'a word or speech'; and Job was the subject of the friends' speeches / words (s.w. about the speeches / words of the friends, Job 16:4; 19:2; 32:11). We must consider the possibility that Job considered these desperate Bedouin people to be somehow connected with the friends who were mocking him; see on :10. These people spat in Job's face (:10), just as it seems the friends did (see on Job 17:6).

Job 30:10 They abhor me, they stand aloof from me, and don't hesitate to spit in my face- See on Job 16:17 for more connections with the suffering servant. This abhorrence of Job by the friends is related to the way they considered mankind to be "abominable and corrupt" (Job 15:16). "Abhor" is the same word as "abominable". The simple truth is as Job put it- God has a tender desire to man, the work of His hands (Job 14:15). And whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus. He fully shared that nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Man by nature, just standing there as flesh and blood before God, is not "abominable" to Him of himself. It is sin which is the problem; and sin is not inevitable. We must bear full responsibility for our sins and cannot just pass them off as an inevitable function of our humanity. The wrong view of human nature held by the friends affected their view of Job and people in practice. The lower our view of human nature, the more likely we are to despise human beings rather than value them and speak well of them because they are made in the image of God (James 3:9). In this experience of being spat at, Job again was experiencing the abuse of the suffering servant (s.w. Is. 50:6).

We must consider the possibility that Job considered these desperate Bedouin people to be somehow connected with the friends who were mocking him; see on :9. These people spat in Job's face (:10), just as it seems the friends did (see on Job 17:6).

Job 30:11 For He has untied his cord, and afflicted me; and they have thrown off restraint before me- The desperate Bedouin were seen by Job as having been unleashed upon him by God when he brought affliction upon Job. He is therefore describing the marauding bands who came and stole his cattle in the prologue. And they have an undoubted connection with the friends. Job sees God as capable of

binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

In :11-15 we appear to have Job describing his literal, physical persecution by "the rabble" (:12). Job appears to be bitterly describing the class of Bedouin marauders who had destroyed his family and stolen his flocks. His bitterness with them is clear. He is incensed that people so much lower than him have had the better of him. This is a far cry from how he began, blessing the name of Yahweh who both gives and takes. He now feels it is so unfair for such low life vermin of people to do this to him, a man who has been so spiritual and righteous. And by implication, he accuses God of being unjust in doing this. Again, the Satan was not far wrong. When his blessings were removed, Job did cutse God. Like us so often, he began by humbly accepting it all, but over time, began bitter and resentful about it all. This deep resentment and sense of spiritual superiority will lead on to his preening of his righteousness in Job 31.

Job 30:12 On my right hand rise the rabble. They thrust aside my feet, they cast up against me their ways of destruction- This sounds like these desperate Bedouins were in physical proximity to Job and were actually involved in his persecution (also :13). I have argued throughout the book that the satan figure morphs into the friends, and they actually perform part of the physical trials upon Job, with the Bedouin attackers of Job partly under the control- leading to Job to charge them with insincerity and hypocrisy. They are in fact guilty of all he is apparently suffering for, and so he becomes their representative saviour by the end of the book.

Job 30:13 They mar my path, they set forward my calamity- These words would be so appropriate if the Bedouin Arab marauders whom Job is cursing were in fact under the control of the friends, into whom the Satan figure has morphed. Eliphaz was from the same area as the Sabeans of Job 1:15. Job's experiences were of "calamity" (s.w. Job 6:2) and affliction set in his "path" (s.w. Job 19:8). And the Bedouins he curses in Job 30:1-12 were those who had abused him in that "path" (Job 30:13). So it seems he has in view the Sabeans who had abused him in the prologue, and yet this section also has clear reference to the friends. Yet that "path" of affliction which God had given Job was the path of wisdom and relationship with Him which was indiscernible to the human eye (Job 28:7 cp. 28); the fact that the ultimate path is invisible to the secular, naked eye is a truth stamped upon the natural creation (Job 38:20), and yet after the affliction or trouble, this path shines clearly (Job 41:32). And this was to be Job's experience at his restoration, as it could have been likewise for the exiles.

Without anyone's help- The idea may be that they were unprovoked to do what they did to Job. But he has just used the term of how he helped those "without anyone's help" (s.w. Job 29:12); as if to say that in return for the grace he had shown them, they now persecuted him.

Job 30:14 As through a wide breach they come, in the midst of the ruin they roll themselves in- "The ruin" is s.w. 'the desolate place', the wilderness from where these Bedouins came (Job 30:3). This is the same picture as in Job 1:15 of the Sabeans

rolling in from the wilderness, associated with the whirlwind (:15), coming upon Job like waters (symbolic of enemy forces) gushing through a breach. The accusation of the friends / "sons of God" and the Satan was that God had made a fence around Job protecting him from misfortune (Job 1:10). God had agreed for this to be as it were 'widely breached'. And in came flooding the desert tribes to despoil Job. My point is that the desperate Bedouin whom Job here curses are associated with the friends, it is they who sent their own forces against Job, making him understandably accuse them of being hypocrites and false brethren.

Job 30:15 Terrors have turned on me. They chase my honour as the wind. My welfare has passed away as a cloud- These Bedouin are associated with the whirlwind which struck Job (Job 1:15-18). "Chase" is the word translated "persecute" and is specifically applied by Job to the friends' persecution of him (Job 19:22,28), albeit under God's control (Job 13:25); for Satan's hand is God's hand, as the prologue makes clear. Again we have a fairly solid path of identification of the friends with the Satan and with the Bedouin marauders under their control, whom they sent against Job.

Job 30:16 Now my soul is poured out within me. Days of affliction have taken hold on me- Job "held fast" to God's footprints, even though he didn't see Him (Job 23:11), and yet he later realized that the afflictions God sent had taken hold [s.w. "held fast"] to him. We see here the mutuality between God and man, achieved through the experience of suffering brought by Him.

Job 30:17 In the night season my bones are pierced in me, and the pains that gnaw me take no rest- This pain in the bones at night clearly looked ahead to that experienced by the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based on Job, during the darkness of the crucifixion. Hezekiah, another possible fulfilment of the suffering servant, suffered likewise with bone pain at night (Is. 38:13).

Job 30:18 By great force is my garment disfigured. It binds me about as the collar of my coat- LXX "With great force my disease has taken hold of my garment: it has compassed me as the collar of my coat", AV "By the great force of my disease is my garment changed". Job offered sacrifice for his children as if he were the family priest, and he likely had a priestly garment which accompanied this. But this garment had become defiled by Job's skin disease, covered with blood and secretions; and in fact Job felt it was choking him. This is another hint that legal apparatus was unable to save Job, nor those who would follow his path to restoration and revival.

Job 30:19 He has cast me into the mire. I have become like dust and ashes- Abraham, who would have been recent history for Job, had described the human condition as "dust and ashes". Job was dust and ashes anyway, but he feels he has "become" dust and ashes. Clearly, he is being made to realize his humanity, and God's final appearance will do this in ultimate terms. It is a denial of our humanity which leads people to a path in which they refuse to repent, reject any idea that they desperately need God, and leads to the pride of effectively playing God rather than accepting we are but dust and ashes.

Job 30:20 I cry to You, and You do not answer me. I stand up, and You gaze at me-

Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to his crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of sheol amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 30:21 You have turned to be cruel to me- As God (in the Angel of the presence) "was turned to be (Israel's) enemy" because of their sin (Is. 63:10).

With the might of Your hand You persecute me- Satan asks God: "Put forth Your hand". The hand of God is an Angelic phrase. God agrees- "he is in your hand" (Job 2:6). Thus Satan's hand is God's hand, which in practice was articulated through an Angel, working through the friends and their Bedouin tribesmen who are the subject of this chapter. Job seems to emphasize the place of God's hand in bringing his trials- Job 2:5,6,10; 6:9; 10:7; 13:21; 19:21; 27:11 AVmg; 28:9. Job in Job 12:9 feels that in the same way as God's hand had created the natural creation- and the Angels did this- so that same Angelic hand was upon him for evil. "By His Spirit (God makes His Angels spirits) He hath garnished the Heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). Thus Job associates God's Spirit with His hand, which is Satan's hand. It seems far more fitting that this hand and spirit should be Angelic rather than human. For no one human being could bring these sufferings upon Job. The human Satan, the fellow worshippers, the sons of God, was reflected in an Angel in the court of Heaven. Again, it was Angelic work that formed the Heavens. Job recognized that his trials came from the hand of God, but knew that His hand would not kill him- "with Thy strong hand Thou opposest Thyself against me... howbeit He will not stretch out His hand to (bring me to) the grave" (Job 30:21,24 AV). This was exactly the brief given to satan- to try Job, but "preserve his life". The hand of God creating evil (Job 2:10,11) must surely refer to God's "Angels of evil" (Ps. 78:49) rather than to man- in the restoration context, the people and Cyrus had to be taught that no one except God (including human satans!) created evil (Is. 45:5-7). See on Job 26:13.

Job 30:22 You lift me up to the wind, and drive me with it. You dissolve me in the storm- Job recalls the whirlwind which had destroyed his family and encampment, in tandem with the attacks of the Bedouins (Job 1:19). But he insists that for all he has suffered, God was behind it. Job was representative of the exiles, who were likewise 'dissolved' in judgment (s.w. Is. 64:7).

Job 30:23 For I know that You will bring me to death, to the house appointed for all living- In line with Job's emphasis that God is behind all his sufferings, perhaps the focus is upon "You". God would bring him to death, although the friends and their

Bedouin friends wanted to- but God in the prologue had not permitted them to do this. See on :24.

Job 30:24 However, doesn't one stretch out a hand to stop a fall? Or in his calamity therefore cry for help?- LXX presents Job as suicidal: "Oh then that I might lay hands upon myself, or at least ask another, and he should do this for me". AV "Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction" would connect with the same phrase being used of Satan asking God to stretch out His hand against Job (Job 1:11); but telling Satan that Job must not be brought to the grave. Although the satan sought to move God to do so (Job 2:3). Again we have the impression that the satan was manifest through the Bedouin tribesmen described here, under the control of the friends; who did every conceivable evil to Job apart from taking his life.

Again Job is back to justifying his reactions to his sufferings: "Yet does not one stretch out the hand in his fall? When he is destroyed does he not because of this utter a cry?". In Job 29 he fondly recalls his prosperity and in Job 30 he laments where he has fallen to. This is a far cry from the Job who blessed God for both giving and taking from him when the losses first happened.

Job 30:25 Didn't I weep for him who was in trouble? Wasn't my soul grieved for the needy?- "Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor? When I looked for good, then evil came unto me: and when I waited for light, there came darkness" (Job 30:25,26). Note the past tenses; even in the past, it seemed that evil came when he deserved blessing; but despite this, he hadn't become inward looking; he had wept and grieved for the misfortune of others. "Weep with them that weep" (Rom. 12:15) seems to be quoting from here; as if to say: Job is really our pattern in all this. But again we note that Job is very works-based in his thinking; he thinks that his kindness to the needy ought to mean that his sufferings are cut short (:26). And thereby he is failing to discern the Divine path which no eye can see.

Job 30:26 When I looked for good, then evil came; when I waited for light, there came darkness- Job understands that it is God who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (Job 30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that God even marks out the boundary between light and darkness (Job 26:10) – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The 'darkness', however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God's power. God confirms Job's understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil] in bands of darkness (Job 38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. See on Job 38:10.

Even if God slew him, Job would still be patient or wait (Job 13:15), he would 'patiently wait' for his "release" (AV "change") to come at some point after his death (Job 14:14), and waited for light to somehow come out of his current darkness (Job 30:26). This was the legendary "patience of Job" which we are bidden follow (James 5:11). He was impatient, but he was "patient" in the Hebrew sense of enduring in

faith; faith that even if things didn't work out at all in this life, even if God was apparently unfair in this life, he would be finally restored at the resurrection. This was his 'endurance', and it is a parade example for all who struggle with the justice of God and the incomprehensible problem of suffering.

Job 30:27 My heart is troubled, and doesn't rest. Days of affliction have come on me- AV "My bowels boiled". This is the word used for the boiling of the exiles under Divine judgment (Ez. 24:5). God is able to make things boil in the natural creation and then make them perfectly still (Job 41:31 s.w.); and the message was that the days of affliction, the intense boiling of Job and later the exiles, could be made still in a moment.

Job 30:28 I go mourning without the sun. I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help- The prologue described the sons of God in assembly. This would have included Job and the friends, the "sons of God". He appealed to them for comfort when they came to the next assembly, but instead he got the bitter condemnation and false accusation which is recorded in their speeches.

Job 30:29 I am a brother to jackals, and a companion to ostriches- The concept of clean and unclean animals was known even before the flood, so Job is accepting that he has become ritually unclean. All this was necessary for him to come to realize that his restoration was not going to be upon the basis of obedience to the law, such as it was at the time. According to that, he was unclean. Likewise the exiles had broken the old covenant, and could only be saved by the grace of the new covenant offered to them through Jeremiah and Ezekiel. See on Job 31:7.

Job 30:30 My skin grows black and peels from me. My bones are burned with heat- Again Job is presented as suffering as the exiles had (Lam. 5:10), possibly with allusion to leprosy (Lev. 13:31). The exiles could share Job's path to restoration if they too repented and were humbled.

Job 30:31 Therefore my harp has turned to mourning, and my pipe into the voice of those who weep- No longer is Job able to rejoice as he once had, in his own strength and exaltation. The pictures painted of the mourning exiles in Lamentations is so clearly based upon Job. See on :30.

JOB CHAPTER 31

Job 31:1 I made a covenant with my eyes, how then should I look lustfully at a young woman?- This chapter is Job's clearing of himself, and has similarities to Babylonian legal documents. An accused person could begin his court case by such a statement of detailed denial. The accusers could respond with silence, in which case they dropped their case; or continue. The friends are reduced to silence after this great clearing of himself. Job's righteousness in a legal sense was unassailable. We may consider that their silence after this speech means that Job has 'won'. After his great clearing speech, the audience is expecting his justification. But then we have the interlude with Elihu, and then God appears Himself- and condemns yet saves Job,

justifying him by condemning him, in the spirit of Paul's legal arguments in Rom. 1-8. See on :2.

Job has several times demanded to meet God in court, where he says he will present and order his case very well and God will be unable to answer him- and will be convicted of injustice, gross abuse of power and unlawful murder of Job if he dies. Job 31 is Job making his legal case against God, even though he admits that he can never actually get God into court, and there is no judge between the two of them to decide the case anyway. This is his answer to Bildad's question "How can a man be just before God?" (Job 25:4).Job's answer to Bildad is to present his own righteousness. And so here he presents himself as spotlessly righteous, in a quite sickening way. The friends leave off the dialogue with him in disgust at this. The more we read and re-read his case here, the more we agree with them. Elihu correctly summarizes Job's statements here in Job 31: "I am innocent, but God denies me justice" (Job 34:5 RSV). And God's response is "Would you discredit My justice? Would you condemn Me to justify yourself?" (Job 40:8 TNIV). Paul argues likewise in Romans, that justification by works is putting God in the dock and condemning Him. But He will always overcome when judged by man in this way.

Job concludes his speech by saying "The words of Job are ended", possibly a legal phrase used at the end of a deposition of legal evidence. This bringing down oaths and curses upon oneself if they were to be lying is typical of how an ancient court case opened. Job is opening the case against God by this speech of self-clearance. He fantasizes about God's response in :14: "What then would I do when God rises in court? When He examines me, how will I answer?". Yet all this was so unnecessary. We know from the prologue that God considered Job righteous. Job had no accusations to answer- from God. The friends had accused him of all manner of things, because they assumed that suffering meant sin. Job had so absorbed that reasoning that he feels that God is accusing him, and so he makes this great clearing of himself speech, calling down curses upon himself if he is anything less than perfect. The reality was that God wasn't accusing him of anything. And if only we would accept our righteousness before God in Christ, disregarding all that others say or imply about us, we would spare ourselves so much angst.

Job surely overstates his righteousness, on issue after issue. Thus we query the way he wishes his wife to be sexually abused ["grind to another", :10] if he had ever had one sexual fantasy about another woman. Job 19:17 LXX speaks of Job having sons by concubines: "I entreated the sons of my concubines". We wonder how he got them pregnant with no thought for anyone but his wife. See on :8.

Job 31:2 For what is the portion from God above, and the heritage from the Almighty on high?- Job considers it unthinkable that he would have looked lustfully on a woman, because there was such an obvious judgment for adultery. He was well ahead of his time in considering that looking lustfully is the same as adultery- especially considering he was living at a time when "sin" was not a concept dwelt upon in religious circles, and the idea that we can sin in our minds was a new idea.

Job 31:3 Is it not calamity to the unrighteous, and disaster to the workers of iniquity?- This is an example of where Job shares the view of the friends, that sin brings retribution. Elihu will condemn Job for 'walking with wicked men', and he seems to mean 'sharing the wrong view of the friends'. The wrong view motivated Job, however; and it is not altogether wrong. As demonstrated by the allusions to the flood and destruction of Babel throughout the dialogues, God does indeed judge sin visibly-

at times. And that is what Job and the friends missed- that God does also operate according to a far wider perspective that we cannot understand.

As noted on :2, Job sees thoughts as 'working' iniquity, a conception well ahead of his time, and reflective of his deep spirituality; see on Mt. 5:27-30. Here Job uses the same Hebrew phrase used regarding the punishment of Cain's iniquity in Gen. 4:13, thus saying that it was the wicked of the world, not him, who were the real counterparts of Cain; and he was only suffering as Cain, when he was as righteous Abel. See on 31:39.

Job 31:4 Doesn't He see my ways, and number all my steps?- Job knew that it was impossible that, e.g., he would lust after a woman, if he really believed (as he claimed he did) that God was omniscient. "Why then should I think upon a maid [as the friends implied he had done]?... doth not he [God] see my ways, and count all my steps?" (Job 31:4 AV). Likewise God had to remind Israel: "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth?" (Jer. 23:24). The context is appealing to the people to quit their sins. We should labour to enter the Kingdom, *because* God knows absolutely every thought and action of ours and will ultimately judge them (Heb. 4:11-13). The Sermon on the Mount is really based around translating the knowledge that God sees and knows all things into practice.

Job 31:5 If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hurried to deceit- "Falsehood" is likely a reference to idol worship.

Job 31:6 (let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know my integrity)- The same word is used in the prologue of how God already considers Job to be of "integrity" (Job 2:3,9). Job has forgotten, as we can forget, that He counts us as if we are righteous- by grace. Instead Job seeks to establish that 'righteous' status, his own integrity, by his own good deeds and avoidance of sin, seeking now to legally establish it- rather than accepting that God simply loved him and would count him of integrity by grace.

Job 31:7 if my step has turned out of the way, if my heart walked after my eyes- Again, as noted on :3, Job perceives ahead of his time that the essence of sin is in the heart.

If any defilement has stuck to my hands- Job has been made ritually defiled by his illness, and being forced to live with unclean animals (Job 30:29). All this was to try to make him realize that all his protestations of legal purity, of not being defiled because he had avoided sin and done good deeds, could not make him undefiled. And this was to come to full term in God's appearance at the end.

Job 31:8 then let me sow, and let another eat. Yes, let the produce of my field be rooted out-

Throughout this chapter, Job calls down detailed curses or imprecations upon himself if in fact he has sinned. Many of them are found in the curses for disobedience to the old covenant (:8 = Lev. 26:16; :9,10 = Hos. 4:14 etc.). Yet Job has spoken of the sins of his youth, and of current sins and imperfection. His point is "I didn't do anything really bad to warrant what God has done to me". We wonder whether any man would be as super righteous as Job claims to be here. We query the way he wishes his wife to be sexually abused ["grind to another", :10] if he had ever

had one sexual fantasy about another woman. Job 19:17 LXX speaks of Job having sons by concubines: "I entreated the sons of my concubines". We wonder how he got them pregnant with no thought for anyone but his wife. Earlier in this speech Job has claimed utter perfection: ""My heart reproaches [me for] not one of my days" (see on Job 27:6).

And so God appears, and he lays his hand upon his mouth, realizing he is condemned, and all these curses must come upon him. No wonder that in his final capitulation he says that he loathes himself, and repents in dust and ashes (Job 42:6,7). It is a sober, dramatic reminder for all time that sin is sin and we are not to divide between surface level sins, as we see them, and 'big sins'. Every man must come to that final capitulation. It is again a challenge to take the lesson from Adam and Eve's sin. "Just" one sin... led to so much. Job concludes his grand self justification by saying "Let thorns grow instead of wheat" (:40), in clear allusion to the curse of Gen. 3:18. He is saying that the curse upon man in Eden shouldn't affect him, because he is righteous. He has missed the entire point of Gen. 3. He is a sober warning to many 'good living' religious folks who minimize their sins... and thereby miss the point of God's great salvation.

Sowing and another eating was the judgment to come upon Israel for disobedience. The reality was that Job was living in deserted houses and had lost his property. So he is saying 'This should only have happened to me if I were a sinner'. He had lost his realization that his sufferings were not related to himself; they were his bearing of the judgments of others, the just for the unjust.

The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

Job 31:9 If my heart has been enticed by a woman, and I have laid wait at my neighbour's door- Again Job reflects some spiritual insight in recognizing the process of temptation as beginning in the human heart (James 1:13-15). We noted this on :3 also.

Job 31:10 then let my wife grind for another, and let others sleep with her- This could imply that despite Job's wife not spiritually supporting him in the prologue, they remained married.

Job 31:11 For that would be a heinous crime. Yes, it would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges- "Heinous crime" is "lewdness", the word used of the moral apostasy of God's people and their unfaithfulness to Him (s.w. Jer. 13:27; Ez. 16:27,43,58; 23:27 etc.). Job was refusing to hold to his sense that his sufferings were a bearing of the condemnation of others; he is now crying out against this, and requires the rebukes he is soon to be given by God. This too is where we go wrong; in focusing upon the injustice of situations to the point that we forget that we are called to use our experiences to minister to others.

Job 31:12 for it is a fire that consumes to destruction, and would root out all my increase- All Job's increase had been rooted out; his argument is that this ought to only have happened if he had committed adultery, which he says he had not done so, not even in his heart. He had lost his realization that his sufferings were not related to himself; they were his bearing of the judgments of others, the just for the unjust.

Job 31:13 If I have despised the cause of my male servant or of my female servant, when they contended with me- Job is coming out with the reasoning of Bildad, that God will not despise a perfect man (Job 8:20 s.w.). And now he is getting angry that he is being despised when he has not despised others. He is logically building up a strong case for his self-justification. But he is omitting to factor in God's wider plan of wisdom. In spiritual terms, this final speech of Job appears to be Job at his lowest. And he lacks the humility to accept that although he had apparently not despised his servants, he had despised others (Job 30:1).

Job here seems to say that his slaves had taken out some legal case with him ["contended" has a legal sense, and is used in that way 22 times in Job], and he had considered their case and acted with integrity; and this gave him every confidence that in court with God, he would also prevail (:14). Hence GNB paraphrases: "When any of my servants complained against me, I would listen and treat them fairly. If I did not, how could I then face God? What could I say when God came to judge me?". LXX reads the tenses as conditional future: "And if too I despised the judgment of my servant or my handmaid, when they pleaded with me; what then shall I do if the Lord should try me? and if also he should at all visit me, can I make an answer?". The fact is, Job will face God in judgment- and be condemned. But he thinks that because he judged his slaves generously and with integrity, therefore he will be judged likewise by God. Instead, God and Elihu condemn Job when he does enter into judgment with God. His idea of justification by works fell flat to the ground. It is no good to reason 'Because I did good to this man, God must therefore do good to me'. Again, Job is not seeing any wider picture of God.

Job 31:14 what then shall I do when God rises up? When He visits, what shall I answer Him?- Job's point was that as he had not despised the cause of his servants (:13), therefore he did not have anything to fear before God's judgment. God's final appearance was proof enough that he of himself had no right to answer back to God. "What shall I answer You?" (Job 40:4) was his final word. But here, Job insists he could only be speechless before God if he had committed sins like adultery- which he was insistent he hadn't. Job is led to realize that he has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, although he had avoided the sins like adultery which counted as major sins in the view of his society.

Job 31:15 Didn't He who made me in the womb make him? Didn't One fashion us in the womb?- Job had just argued that some men he despised as almost less than human (Job 30:1); now he argues that all human beings are formed by God in the womb and therefore no human should ever be despised. This could be just put down to the oscillations of a depressed person; or it appears Job is not being completely honest, using spiritual truths to justify himself as needed rather than accepting their true implication.

Job 31:16 If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the

widow to fail- This is Job's direct answer to the false accusation of Job 22:7 (s.w.). Again we note how Job actually engages with the words of the friends, whereas they respond to him in terms of vague generalities and knocking down a straw man image of him they had created in their own minds. The whole drama is an example of how dialogue breaks down.

Job 31:17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it- Bildad assumes Job must have done the very opposite, to deserve his sufferings (Job 20:19). Job engages with what Bildad says and denies it (Job 29:12; 31:17). Again we note that Job engages with the actual words of the friends, whereas they tend to attack him in terms of the straw man image of him they had built up in their minds, ignoring him as a person and the actual words he says. This is typical of how dialogue goes wrong.

Job 31:18 (no, from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, her have I guided from my mother's womb)- In summary, as GNB "All my life I have taken care of them". Job is at pains to now claim that he had not sinned even in his youth, even from a baby he claims to have cared for the poor. This is a protestation of innocence too far. He has moved away from his earlier acceptance of sin to now claim he had not sinned even from the womb. No wonder he needed the rebuke which is soon to come from him. The audience is intended to wince at this point, and to expect a rebuke and conviction of sin- which indeed comes.

Job 31:19 if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or that the needy had no covering- Job has a strong awareness of his past good works; the blessing of people ready to perish came upon him, for he recalled how he had saved them (s.w. Job 29:13). Job now was ready to perish (s.w. Job 4:7; 14:19; 18:17; 20:7). He feels that he ought to be saved from perishing because he had saved others from perishing. In this final speech, Job becomes very works based. He becomes the epitome of justification by works; and God's display of *His* works in creation and salvation was going to convict him that his works were irrelevant, and salvation was by grace alone.

Job 31:20 if his heart hasn't blessed me, if he hasn't been warmed with my sheep's fleece- Job in a legalistic way (see on :19) seems to consider that the blessings given him by those whom he had helped (Job 29:13) ought to have actual meaning; instead of his perishing in shame and lack of clothing. Again, he is arguing for justification by works and human blessing. He was to be taught that Divine blessing is the only blessing which can save.

Job 31:21 if I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate- The idea is as LXX "if I lifted my hand against an orphan, trusting that my strength was far superior to his" and GNB "If I have ever cheated an orphan, knowing I could win in court". Job was confident that he had not misused legal process, and so he longs for some kind of court case with God whereby he can be justified. He was to learn that his apparent justice was as nothing compared to Divine justice.

Job 31:22 then let my shoulder fall from the shoulder blade, and my arm be broken from the bone- The arm may represent his power. But his power, his arm, had been broken. So he is arguing that what has happened to him should only have happened if he had done the things he was accused of. And seeing he hadn't, this breaking of his

life shouldn't have happened. He totally forgot the parameters set in the prologue; that his suffering was not punishment for sin. And he has moved away from his earlier perception that he was in some sense suffering for the sake of others' salvation, even if he only dimly perceived that.

Job 31:23 For calamity from God is a terror to me. Because of His majesty, I can do nothing- The idea is as GNB "Because I fear God's punishment, I could never do such a thing". And here we have a window into Job's motivation; he feared condemnation and therefore he was careful to be strictly legally obedient. It was this mindset which was to be dismantled by God's final appearance. See on :28. He says he served God in order not to experience "God-sent calamity", as we could translate. But we know from the prologue that in fact he served God for nothing, and God saw that and was pleased with Job in his earlier life. So again, Job has taken false guilt from the friends. He has actually absorbed their false accusations and feels they are true for him. When God knows they were not.

Job 31:24 If I have made gold my hope, and have said to the fine gold, 'You are my confidence'- Job 31:24,25,28 speak in dire and chilling terms of trusting in wealth- and note that these words come from a rich believer who lost it all: "had I put my trust in gold, or called fine gold my security [cp. assurance and insurance policies, bank balances, portfolios of investments… banknotes stored under the carpet, jewelry hidden in a corner of some peasant home]… this would be a crime for condemnation; for I should have denied God above". It's noteworthy that Job claims that despite having been one of the wealthiest men in the Middle East, he never put his trust in it. But that shouldn't lead us to think that we can so easily handle the possession of wealth. For to possess wealth leads most people to trust in it. And if we do this… this is a crime calling for our condemnation, it's a denial of God, an effective atheism. Attitudes to wealth are that important.

Job 31:25 if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gotten much- Again we see Job moving outside of the parameters provided in the prologue. There it was made clear that his wealth was given by God's hand; but now he claims it was from his own hand. This is the problem with suffering and false accusation; it can make us terribly self congratulatory, listing our own good deeds, rather than serving to humble us and recognize our humanity. Job previously has had points where he does indeed appear to be responding rightly; but finally now he reveals his essential self justification. No longer does he groan about his physical sufferings; instead he is pouring out self justification.

Job 31:26 if I have seen the sun when it shined, or the moon moving in splendour- The reference is to worshipping the sun and moon. This was common enough at the time, and was called Sabaism (from *tsaba,* "the heavenly hosts"). It could be argued that the term "Lord of Sabaoth" ["Yahweh of hosts"] was a deconstruction of this common view, presenting Yahweh as the God of the heavenly hosts.

Job 31:27 and my heart has been secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth- Again as noted on :1,7, Job perceives that the essence of idolatry is in the human heart. He realized what James was to later make explicit (James 1:13-15)- that the process of temptation begins within the heart. Idolatry is essentially an affair of the heart.

Job 31:28 this also would be an iniquity to be punished by the judges; for I should have denied the God who is above- And here we have a window into Job's motivation; he feared condemnation and therefore he was careful to be strictly legally obedient. He was careful not to follow his wife's advice to deny or curse God and die; and he as it were parades his faithfulness to God by recalling how he had refused to yield to her. It was this mindset which was to be dismantled by God's final appearance. See on :23.

Job 31:29 If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted up myself when evil found him- Job had not had an altogether easy life even before the sufferings came. He had experience of being hated, and had seen the destruction of those people. But he insists he had not rejoiced; instead he had been sad. And this sorrow for the lost is revealed several times in his genuine concern for the friends' salvation. This basic desire is to be used by God when Job is made the one whose prayer and representational suffering saves the friends.

Job 31:30 (yes, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking his life with a curse)- Again we get the impression of Job parading his steel willed self control, not allowing his mouth to sin. Acceptability with God is not a function of how strong is our will. For some have more steel in their will than others. It's about believing in grace and accepting it. Perhaps the Lord alludes to Job favourably at this point (despite his surrounding words being so full of self justification); for He taught that instead of doing evil to our enemies, "I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you" (Mt. 5:44). And this is what Job did- his prayer for the friends, who apparently were his actual persecutors, bringing many of the trials upon him, was finally answered.

Job 31:31 if the men of my tent have not said, 'Who can find one who has not been filled with his meat?'- Job's own family were bound to recognize that Job had been generous to the hungry and stranger (:32). But his wife turned away from him, and his wider family only appear on the scene at the end. They knew he was of integrity, but Job's wife had urged him to curse God and resign his integrity.

Job 31:32 (the foreigner has not lodged in the street, but I have opened my doors to the traveller)- Job may be alluding to the well known hospitality of Abraham and Lot in fairly recent history. Again he is presenting himself as a seed of Abraham by works rather than by faith.

Job 31:33 if like Adam I have covered my transgressions, by hiding my iniquity in my heart- Here Job denies that he is like Adam in that unlike him, he has no sin to hide. The same word for "hiding" is used in Gen. 3:8,10, of Adam *hiding* himself from God. But Job was like Adam, and part of the lesson is that he was denying his humanity. And so like Adam he was humiliated by God's questioning at the end of the book. Job is associated with Adam several times in the book- see on Job 9:17; 10:9; 13:20-22. But he was denial of his humanity, unable to accept that he was a son of Adam who was also a sinner, even if seen as righteous. Job denies he had sinned like Adam, but on the other hand he admits he has sinned- just he didn't hide it from God as Adam did. What he means is 'Sure I did some sins, but nothing major, to warrant what's happened to me'. And that was exactly his problem. As it is the besetting sin of

so many relatively good living religious people. The reality is that in Adam all have sinned (Rom. 5:12). This devaluing of his own sin was his great undoing. Quite possibly all he says about his good deeds was more or less true, hence God's very high opinion of him. But he failed to fully recognize the fact he was all the same a sinner and only human.

LXX "or if too having sinned unintentionally, I hid my sin;
(for I did not stand in awe of a great multitude, so as not to declare boldly before them:)". Job recognizes that sins of ignorance are still sins and apparently confessed such sins before others, perhaps at the regular meetings of the "sons of God" (Job 1:6). But even this he cites as a reason for his justification; rather than recognizing that therefore he is not in fact perfect and sinless.

Job 31:34 because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, so that I kept silence, and didn't go out of the door- I noted on :32 that Job compares his hospitality to that of Abraham and Lot. He alludes to how Lot went out of the door to the great crowd in order to defend his guests' honour. Again he presents himself as a seed of the faithful family by works rather than by faith. He has little to say about the great promises to Abraham and the patriarchs; he felt his own works eclipsed their importance.

"Terrify" is the word elsewhere translated 'dismay', and is used of how the exiles were urged not to be dismayed but to believe that God would indeed bring them from exile to restoration in His restored Kingdom (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27). Job begins by being dismayed / scared (Job 7:14), but develops to not be dismayed (Job 31:34 s.w.), following the example of the Lord's battle horse (Job 39:22).

Job 31:35 oh that I had one to hear me!- Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Behold, here is my signature, let the Almighty answer me; let the accuser write my indictment!- Or, "Behold my *sign*". The legal mark made on statements of defence in those days was originally a *cross;* and hence the letter Tau or T. We are invited to see him swearing as it were by the cross. His challenge to God to write an indictment was arrogant, and is answered by God's personal appearance, convicting him of sin. Again we note that Job perceives his "adversary" (AV) or accuser as effectively God.

Although it was the satan, who morphs into the friends, who in practice accused him- of only believing in God because he had received Divine blessing.

GNB "If the charges my opponent brings against me were written down so that I could see them" invites us to reflect that the ones making the charges were the friends; they are the opponent, the satan. And yet it seems that Job is again on about his fantasy of meeting God in court. He has declared his absolute innocence, has put his signature to it, and dearly wishes to have a "book" from God listing His accusations against Job. Job has earlier said that if God were to try him, he would come forth as gold, i.e. be totally justified. This is all legal language, and he is challenging God to come to court.

Job 31:36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder; and I would bind it to me as a crown- His desire that the accusations be written down was ultimately answered by the production of the book of Job. But the whole story is hardly a crown of glory to Job, because at the end he is humiliated and condemned.

Job 31:37 I would declare to Him the number of my steps. As a prince would I go near to Him- Job is saying that every one of his steps in life was perfect. This is similar to his earlier statement that there was not one day of his life he felt bad about. He feels he can come before God in judgment confidently, as a prince. His earlier mentions of his sins and "sins of youth" he clearly discounts as irrelevant; again, like many religious people, he is not convicted of his sin and considers that whilst he had done 'little sins', he had not done anything significantly wrong. It is exactly this position that has to be challenged and broken down. Job definitely had to be humbled from this arrogant position. He was no prince before God. And in this we see him as representative of Israel, 'prince with God'. Through repentance and recognizing his humanity, he would eventually become 'prince with God', as Israel could have done, and as the exiles were bidden do by following Job's path.

Job 31:38 If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together- The land is put by metonymy for the workers of it, who would have cried out against him for being deceived of their wages (:39). But they didn't. Job had acted with integrity. Just as he had not caused people to lose their lives in tending his land (:39), so perhaps he farmed his land sensitive to the land itself, not greedily seeking the maximum gain from it, so that its furrows didn't as it were weep.

Job 31:39 if I have eaten its fruits without money, or have caused its owners to lose their life- See on :38. James 5:4 alludes here, condemning the early Christians for abusing their workers, and thereby holding up Job and his repentance as their pattern. Perhaps here we have another example of Job saying that he was being unfairly treated like Cain: "If I have eaten the strength (of my land) without money... let thistles grow instead of wheat" (31:39,40 AVmg.). This is referring back to the curse on Cain, that "when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength" (Gen.4:12). Job is saying that his land has yielded its strength to him, and that only if he sinned should the Adamic curse of thistles come upon him. We too can resent the limitations of our own nature, not least in the proneness to sin which it gives us, and become bitter against God because of it as Job did. See on 11:15; 13:27; 16:17,18; 31:3.

Job 31:40 let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley. The

words of Job are ended- This is the final one of the 16 curses Job calls upon himself if he has been anything less than perfect. He goes through every aspect of personal integrity- before God, to your wife, to your family, to society, in your business life, to animals, to the land you farm. It is in the spirit of the law of Moses and general Old Testament example, when a man called down curses on himself to show that he disowned an accusation (Ex. 22; Num. 5:11-31; 1 Sam. 12:3; 1 Kings 8:31,32; Ps. 7:3-5; Peter's oaths in the NT). These were oaths of innocence, typically taken before God or His representative or at His sanctuary. This is why God is going to appear, to show that these oaths were taken before Him- and were somehow false. Yet all Job says is true: he was a very good living man, and that is confirmed by God's comments about Job in the prologue. God said that Job was unique amongst men, blameless, upright, one who feared God and shunned sin. But now Job himself states it like this, drawing such a portrait of his own integrity, Elihu and God will sharply reprimand Job. Because he is not factoring in his humanity and God's Divinity, and he is not considering the fact that he is all the same a sinner. All his protestations of perfection are only relatively so; he is as Paul would say, comparing ourselves amongst ourselves. Job's self-investigation isn't what justifies him (cp. 1 Cor. 4:4). Even if his sins were relatively 'small' compared to those of other men. And this is the huge lesson for self congratulatory, relatively good living Christian men and women. They too have to go through Job's terrible experience of conviction of sin and of their own smallness compared to God, morally, physically and in every way.

Thistles were part of the curse. Again we see Job failing to recognize his humanity, acting as if he were not under the curse of Eden, and arguing that it was unfair that it applied to him, concluding that it should only apply to him if he had sinned. He was counted righteous by God at the beginning and at the end of the book, but he was a sinner. He was not the Lord Jesus. Had he been in Adam's place, he would have done the same thing; and in that sense, we all sinned "in Adam" (Rom. 5:12). Job has now to be convicted of his humanity.

"Ended" can read strangely since Job will speak again in the book. It is the same Hebrew word which Job has used about himself in protesting his complete innocence and total spirituality, translated "blameless": "Though I am blameless, He will twist me. I am blameless..." (Job 9:20-22). Quite possibly he has presented himself as spotless, and concludes by stating that his words of self justification are "blameless". In which case his self righteousness is intense, leading to the friends turning away from further dialogue with him and Elihu's anger with him in the next chapter.

JOB CHAPTER 32

Job 32:1 So these three men ceased to answer Job- The preceding chapter has been Job's clearing of himself, and has similarities to Babylonian legal documents. An accused person could begin their court case by such a statement of detailed denial. The accusers could respond with silence, in which case they dropped their case; or continue. The friends are reduced to silence after this great clearing of himself. Job's righteousness in a legal sense was unassailable. We may consider that their silence after this speech means that Job has 'won'. After his great clearing speech, the audience is expecting his justification. But then we have the interlude with Elihu, and then God appears Himself- and condemns yet saves Job, justifying him by condemning him, in the spirit of Paul's legal arguments in Rom. 1-8.

Because he was righteous in his own eyes- The contrast is with the fact that God doesn't remove His eyes from the righteous (s.w. Job 36:7).

Job 32:2 Then the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel, the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was kindled against Job. His wrath was kindled because he justified himself rather than God- The role of Elihu is difficult to perceive. He repeats the arguments of the friends in some detail, summing them up, as it were, in his own words. We must remember that Job is poetry, it is a drama, although that doesn't take away from the existence of a historical Job (see on Job 1:1). In terms of the drama, we have here a series of speeches, full of accusations, followed by Job's rebuttals. For an illiterate audience, or any audience hearing / watching rather than reading the drama, by this point we have all rather forgotten the arguments. So simply in terms of the drama, Elihu could function as an appropriate way of summarizing what has been said so far. And many of his arguments against Job are repeated afterwards by God- so his function is also to introduce us to the revelation of God's own perspective which is coming. Job did indeed justify himself, but he did not completely *not* justify God; although perhaps the sense is that he focused more upon his own rightness ['justification'] rather than God's. The suffering servant of Isaiah is indeed based upon Job, but at times by way of contrast. By His sufferings, He justified "many" (s.w. Is. 53:11), whereas Job at best only justified himself.

Elihu is the mediator Job wanted, "according to your wish in God's place" (Job 33:6), but he doesn't take Job's side against God in the way Job hoped. Job's hopes for Elihu were that he would somehow get him out of his issues with God, just as people in a blanket way like to imagine "Jesus is the[ir] answer" without any real introspection. Much of what Elihu says about Job and God is repeated by God in His speeches. Elihu's claim to speak on God's behalf is never challenged by God; when the friends are criticized by God, He has nothing to say against Elihu. We note how often Job interrupts the friends but not Elihu; even when Elihu asks Job to respond (Job 33:5,32,33). At the end of Elihu's speech, there seems a natural, smooth transition into God’s own speech (Job 36:22-41), as if God continues where Elihu stopped. Much of what Elihu says is repeated by God in His speeches, both by explicit quotation and also by using the same broad arguments, e.g. from the natural creation. So taking Elihu seriously means that we are led to a very negative view of Job's behaviour during the sufferings. For that is what Elihu takes issue with. He says that Job has served God for his own profit (Job 34:9). The view of the satan was not far wrong. And Elihu accuses Job of being a blasphemer (Job 34:7), speaking like wicked men (Job 34:36), and a rebel against God (Job 34:37). Comparing this with the prologue, Elihu clearly has in view Job's behaviour during the trials and not before.

The friends claim Job's sufferings are because he had sinned before the trials start. Elihu however takes issue with what Job says during the time of his sufferings. In this context, Elihu speaks about suffering at times being intended to correct man (Job 33:13-30). In Job's case, the correction was not of any moral issue, but of his pride and his wrong view of God. That was why the sufferings continued for so long. Initially there was no "cause" for them; but they continued because Job needed to be brought to repentance for what he had so wrongly said about God after they first happened. The friends had wrongly assumed that his sufferings were retribution for sins he had kept hidden in his previous life. Elihu says that Job's sufferings were to

teach him and lead him to repentance for his wrong attitudes that were displayed during the sufferings.

We note that Elihu is related to Buz, the nephew of Abraham: "Abraham learned that Milcah had borne eight children to his brother Nahor: Uz the first-born, Buz his brother" (Gen. 22:20,21). "Elihu" is the only character in the book with a Hebrew name ['He is my God']. His father's name is also Hebrew, Barachel, meaning 'God has blessed'. His ancestor Ram could be the same "Ram" listed as one of David's ancestors (Ruth 4:19,22; 1 Chron. 2:9-15; Mt. 1:3-6). He is presented, surely, as having solid credentials to speak for the God of Israel. A case can be made that Elihu's section divides into three or four speeches, possibly aimed at Job and the three friends.

Job 32:3 Also his wrath was kindled against his three friends, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job-

Elihu is angry with Job because he has spoken so blasphemously about God, and he is angry with the friends because they have not answered Job's blasphemy. They have just fantasized about Job's possible earlier sinfulness. God takes the same perspective; He is angry because the friends didn't speak what was right about *Him*.

Job feels God's wrath kindled against him (Job 19:11). The innocent Job experienced the judgments of God's people, against whom God's wrath was kindled (Dt. 11:17; 2 Kings 23:26). Significantly, we find Elihu's wrath kindled against both Job and the friends (Job 32:2,3), but the wrath of God was kindled only against the friends (Job 42:7). I have repeatedly demonstrated that the innocent Job was suffering the judgment for the sins of God's people. In the end, this came to full term in the salvation of the friends on account of Job's intercession. God's wrath was not personally against Job, it was against the friends. But Job suffered God's wrath against him, because he was to be the saviour of the friends by offering sacrifice for them and praying for them. This looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job; experiencing the judgment for our sins, and through the representative nature of His sacrifice, being able to save us.

Job 32:4 Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job, because they were elder than he-

I suggested above that Elihu is indeed speaking on God's behalf. Wisdom and truth were thought to reside in older people and in the views of those who had gone before. But that wisdom hasn't answered Job's situation. A totally fresh perspective is needed, and Elihu being so much younger than the others provides that. If indeed "Job" was originally a play, a drama, then we imagine Elihu sitting to one side of the friends and Job all through the dialogues.

Job 32:5 When Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of these three men, his wrath was kindled- This phrase "his wrath was kindled" is that used of how God's wrath was kindled against the friends (Job 42:7); but significantly not against Job. Elihu is therefore presented as not completely in step with God and is not totally His representative when he talks about Job. This all adds to the intentional enigma of Elihu; he functions also to elicit *our* response as the audience to the speeches. We are all beginning to form our opinions of the characters, and then Elihu appears and gives his take, and we raise our eyebrows and wonder whether... he is right or wrong, just as we too struggle to come to a correct and just opinion about what we've just heard. But the book of Job is designed to reveal truth only by repeated reading / hearing, and prayerful reflection. Elihu, I suggest, appears at first blush enigmatic. But on

reflection we come to see that he was in fact speaking for God, and therefore the negative things he says about Job have to be taken very seriously. As Job finally took them seriously, and repented.

Job 32:6 Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered, I am young, and you are very old; therefore I held back, and didn't dare show you my opinion- "Very old" may be sarcasm, seeing Job lived 140 years after this (Job 42:16) and his father was still alive (Job 15:10), and the friends appeal to the wisdom of men older than them, in which case we immediately begin to doubt whether Elihu is indeed totally God's representative; this enigma of Elihu is intentional, as explained on Job 32:5. As a Buzite, Elihu was from the same geographical area and the same broad ethnic background as the friends (Gen. 22:1; Jer. 25:23).

Job 32:7 I said, 'Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom'- On this point Elihu agrees with Job, that traditional wisdom and religion has failed and was not being taught by the friends (Job 26:3). The old men were not teaching wisdom.

Job 32:8 But there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty gives them understanding- I suggest the idea is not that every man is inspired, but that just as God breathes the physical breath of life into man, so He can choose to inspire some men; and this is the source of teaching, as we have it today in the inspired writings known as the Bible; rather than through appealing to sages and tradition, as the friends were doing. But see on Job 33:4. GNB "But it is the spirit of Almighty God that comes to us and gives us wisdom". This could be a seen as a rejoinder to Job's claim in Job 28 that wisdom is not accessible to man, with the implication that man is left adrift in the cosmos with no moral compass apart from to try to obey God.

Job 32:9 It is not the great who are wise, nor the aged who understand justice- This idea that age and position were effectively the basis for inspired wisdom was well entrenched. Even the disciples marvelled that the great men of Jewish society would not be saved (Mt. 19:23-25). The dialogues have been based around the assumption that traditional wisdom must be right, and the older a person is and the older the tradition, the more likely they are to be correct. Elihu turns this on its head by saying that he is younger than all of them. His words can read arrogantly, but if indeed he was inspired of God in order to overthrow the traditional idea of received wisdom, then his words make perfect sense and need not be read as arrogance.

Job 32:10 Therefore I said, 'Listen to me; I also will show my opinion'- By implication, Elihu considers himself to be inspired by God (see on :8). "Opinion" really means "knowledge", and the Hebrew word is used only by Elihu (Job 32:6,10,17). He claims his knowledge comes from "afar", from God (Job 36:3), but he also recognizes that God alone has totality of "knowledge" (Job 37:16). So we are again left with Elihu as an enigma, not totally reflecting God's knowledge, although considering that his view is in line with God's. This enigma of Elihu is purposeful; as explained on Job 32:5, his function is to elicit *our* opinions; we too who like to think our view is in line with God's, and yet admitting we lack His total knowledge.

Job 32:11 Behold, I waited for your words, and I listened for your reasoning, while you searched out what to say- The friends claimed they had "searched out" their

response (s.w. Job 5:27). One theme of the book is that God alone searches man and searches out final truth in judgment (Job 28:3,27). The exiles were comforted that no matter how they were judged by human judgment, God alone searches out man (Ps. 139:1,23; Jer. 17:10). The exiles were to search themselves not others (Lam. 3:40 s.w.). God's final appearance is evidence enough that He alone can search out His own creation, including humans.

Job 32:12 Yes, I gave you my full attention, but there was no one who convinced Job, or who answered his words, among you- As often noted on expounding the speeches, the friends tend not to engage with Job's actual words but rather attack their straw man image of him which they have created. They tend to respond to Job in terms of vague generalities, whereas Job more specifically engages with their actual words. The whole dialogue, on one level, is an example of human dialogue and personal relationship gone wrong. We are left with the impression that Job needs to be convicted, but he hasn't been convicted by the friends. Their legal case has failed. And this sets the scene for God's final conviction of Job.

"Convinced" is the same word translated "umpire" when Job fantasizes about having an "umpire between us, that might lay his hand on us both" (Job 9:33). Elihu is clearly aware of this, and understands himself as the mediator figure that Job had fantasized about having. So we can render "There is no arbiter for Job, none among you to answer his charges". And therefore, Elihu was stepping up as that umpire figure.

Job 32:13 Beware lest you say, 'We have found wisdom, God may refute him, not man'- GNB "How can you claim you have discovered wisdom? God must answer Job, for you have failed". Their failure was in that they had not convicted Job is sin. Only God can do that, and indeed that is what happens at the end. This is one of those points at which the audience has to nod in agreement with Elihu. Or we can read with LXX "lest ye should say, We have found that we have added wisdom to the Lord". They were acting as greater than God, assuming their wisdom was above His.

Job 32:14 for he has not directed his words against me; neither will I answer him with your speeches- The idea may be that even if Job had been answering Elihu, he wouldn't have spoken as they had.

Job 32:15 They were amazed. They answered no more. They didn't have a word to say- It could be that this is the narrator's description of how the friends were unable to answer Elihu. Or it could be that this is Elihu commenting upon how they had been closed down by Job's reasoning, looking forward to how at the end, men feared to ask the Lord any more questions or seek to answer Him back. Mt. 22:46 appears to allude here, confirming Job as a type of the Lord Jesus: "No man was able to answer Him a word, neither dared any man from that day onwards ask Him any more questions". Some see in :15,16 the implication that Elihu actually wrote the book of Job. *He* was therefore the fulfilment of Job's desire that someone would sympathetically write his grief and record his mental agonies (Job 19:23).

Job 32:16 Shall I wait, because they don't speak, because they stand still, and answer no more?- The drama in performance likely included a significant silence after Job finishes his last speech, and the silence of the friends leads us to wonder whether for

all Job's self righteousness in his final speech, they have been trounced. But then Elihu speaks.

Job 32:17 I also will answer my part, and I also will show my opinion- Whether Elihu is directly from God or not is an open question. It is purposefully ambiguous- initially. But I suggest that repeated reflection leaves us with no option to accept that he is speaking for God. The audience 'hear' the lengthy silence after Job finishes, and the friends are unable to continue arguing with him. His righteousness appears genuine, if arrogantly presented and recounted. And we are left to ponder how much of what he says is just the views of an angry young man, and how much is really of God. The enigma of Elihu is therefore to give us the audience a chance to ponder whether we accept or reject Job's argument and legal case. We wonder whether Elihu speaks for us, in places, or completely, or not at all.

Job 32:18 For I am full of words. The spirit within me constrains me- Elihu sounds exactly like Zophar, who says the same (Job 20:2,3) as well as Job, who likewise feels he just has to speak (Job 13:13,19). The book ends with Job, Elihu and the friends all in humbled silence. We feel that our earlier impression has been confirmed- that it would've been better had they remained in silence as they were at the start of the drama. The book opens and closes with Job and the friends sitting in silence. The implication is that all the words were inappropriate. And this impression initially applies to Elihu too. Again we are purposefully presented with Elihu as an enigmatic figure.

Job 32:19 Behold, my breast is as wine which has no vent; like new wineskins it is ready to burst- Elihu's description of being filled with the Spirit and Word of God is similar to that of Jeremiah, who spoke of "a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with forbearing, and I can't" (Jer. 20:9). This connection leads us away from any sense that Elihu is just a pompous windbag. He acts and speaks as a young man would who has just been inspired by God. But we could argue that the implication is that he has old wine in new wineskins, and this is an image used negatively by the Lord (Mt. 9:17). He could also be read as a literary device to summarize the friends' arguments, reminding us of Job's weaker moments in his self-righteousness, and giving a foretaste of God's argument which is yet to come.

Job 32:20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed. I will open my lips and answer- Job opened his mouth at the beginning (Job 3:1), just as Elihu now does, and we have the impression that he would have been better to be as the Lord Jesus, and remain silent through His trials.

Job 32:21 Please don't let me respect any man's person, neither will I give flattering titles to any man- As noted on :9, Elihu is correct in realizing that titles and human respect are no basis for truth. 'To give flattering titles' is s.w. "surname himself" in Is. 44:5, where the exiles are to surname themselves by Yahweh and not by man.

Job 32:22 For I don't know how to give flattering titles; or else my Maker would soon take me away- This is confirming Job's similar condemnation of flattery in Job 17:5. If we accept God is our maker, then other human beings are likewise made by Him.

This means we should respect them, but not make them more than human by giving them flattering titles.

JOB CHAPTER 33

Job 33:1 However, Job, please hear my speech, and listen to all my words- This recalls the plea of Job (Job 13:17; 21:2). Just as Job was desperate to be heard, so God was in fact desperate for him to hear His voice through Elihu.

Job 33:2 See now, I have opened my mouth. My tongue has spoken in my mouth- Again we see a similarity with Job, who is silent for a period and then opens his mouth and speaks (Job 3:1). But our natural reflection is that Job would've been better to remain silent. Whereas Elihu actually does speak for God and is the only one so far worth listening to.

Job 33:3 My words shall utter the uprightness of my heart. That which my lips know they shall speak sincerely- The very phrase "words of uprightness" is only found when Job complains about the words of the friends in Job 6:25: "How forcible are words of uprightness! But your reproof, what does it reprove?". This experience led Job to long for "words of uprightness", and thereby he came to be ready for the final revelation of God's words at the end of the book. Likewise our disillusion with human words and relationships leads us to be the more eager and ready for God's revelation. Again we see Elihu as the mediator and friend that Job had longed for. Although he is not at all totally on Job's side, as Job had wrongly assumed.

Job 33:4 The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life- LXX "The Divine Spirit is that which formed me, and the breath of the Almighty that which teaches me". Elihu has used the same argument in Job 32:8. He stresses his humanity (:6), but also how he is filled with the Spirit which gave him life. He does indeed look forward to the Lord Jesus, the ideal mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).

Job 33:5 If you can, answer me. Set your words in order before me, and stand forth- Elihu seems to be responding to Job's words in Job 23:6 "Would He contend with me in the greatness of His power? No, but He would listen to me"- AV "Would he plead against me...?". God, and Elihu on His behalf, *did* plead against Job by recounting God's power. When Elihu was established in Job's mind as God's true representative, he found that he had nothing to say, as he thought he would have. Elihu seems to refer back to this speech when he challenges the dumfounded Job: "If thou hast anything to say, answer me... if thou canst answer me, set thy words in *order* before me" (Job 33:32,5 AV). Elihu has in mind Job 23:4 "I would set my cause in order before Him". Job several times spoke of how he would fully explain himself to God, if he found Him. Yet in the presence of God and Elihu, he finds that all the words dry up. Words became irrelevant. All he can do is behold the majesty of God's righteousness, and declare his own unrighteousness. That spiritual pinnacle of Job still lies ahead for the majority of us. The desire to speak is a desire to express our *own* thoughts. Words are a construct which can trap us. Only *God's* words can liberate. There is a word*less* element in being truly humbled before the Almighty.

Job 33:6 Behold, I am toward God even as you are. I am also formed out of the clay-

The degree to which Elihu was Job's exact representative helps us appreciate the precision of our Lord's representation of us. Indeed this appears to be one of the roles of Elihu in Job. The LXX brings this out well: "Stand against me, and I will stand against thee. Thou art formed out of the clay as also I: we have been formed out of the same substance". It seems that Elihu had been through Job's very experiences, of 'death' and rising again: "He has delivered *my* soul from death, that my life may praise him in the light. Hearken, Job, and hear *me*" (33:30,31 LXX). And this is exactly what Job did. But again we are left wondering whether Elihu really is the answer to Job's desire for a sympathetic mediator with God. Here at the beginning of his speech, we have hopes he might be. But as we see how tough he is on Job, we wonder. We look for someone else. And that person doesn't arise, at the time. God Himself then appears, without any mediator. But our sympathy with Job's desire for a mediator leads us in essence to an understanding of the Lord Jesus.

Understanding the real import of the speeches rests largely on a correct understanding of Elihu. Job longed for one like Elihu, who could reconcile God with Job's righteous life, his sufferings, and all his intellectual doubts. Elihu points out that he is the fulfilment of Job's need (Job 33:6 cp. 9:33). With this, Job has no disagreement. Elihu can be seen as a type of Christ. The speeches of Job therefore make us see the desperation of man's need for Elihu / Jesus; especially the need of those who lived under the Old Covenant. Job's weakness, morally, physically and intellectually, becomes representative of the weakness of each of us. We breathe a sigh of relief when Elihu appears on the scene. But we are not completely relieved as Elihu's speeches continue. Because he condemns Job. It's like Malachi warning Judah that just 'desiring the day of the Lord' is not enough- that day will be a day of judgment for them.

Job 33:7 Behold, my terror shall not make you afraid, neither shall my pressure be heavy on you- Clearly God's "hand" (s.w. "pressure") had been upon Job, and God had made Job feel His "terrors" (s.w. Job 7:14; 9:34). Elihu is saying that he is not going to be like this; he had no power to hurt Job, he is just making observations.

Job had stated this fear of God's terror making him afraid in Job 9:34; 13:21, and Elihu alludes to it when he uses the same phrase in assuring Job that *his* terror will not make Job afraid (Job 33:7). The terror is perhaps "the terror of the Lord", the fear of condemnation at the last day (so Paul uses the phrase, 2 Cor. 5:11). That terror should "persuade men" to accept grace, Paul argues. To have that terror unexperienced by men would mean they had no persuasion toward grace. Elihu however argues that he is not going to as it were pressurize Job with such fears.

It might be possible to speculate as to the tone of voice in which Elihu spoke. By contrast to the friends' "hard speeches" , Elihu assures Job at the start of their dialogue: "My fear shall not terrify thee, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee" (33:7 LXX). A similar contrast is pointed by Elihu's claim to be speaking as a result of God's spirit within him (Job 32:8), whereas Zophar and the friends spoke from their *own* spirit (20:3). Apart from God's specific confirmation of Elihu's words, Job evidently perceived Elihu to be the answer to his pleas to find God. Job's desire for "a daysman" was answered by Elihu: "I am according to your wish". Job did not dispute this. If one of the friends had claimed to be such a "daysman" , we can imagine Job's indignant denial of it!

Job 33:8 Surely you have spoken in my hearing, I have heard the voice of your words,

saying- Elihu has been present all along. Although the reader hasn't seen him, the audience watching the drama would have seen him there.

Job 33:9 'I am clean, without disobedience. I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me- Indeed Job had said these things: "How many are my iniquities and sins? Show me my transgressions and my sins" (Job 13:23). "I am blameless... I will never deny my righteousness" (Job 9:20,21; 27:5,6). Quite rightly, Elihu wants Job to see all this another way; for although this was how God saw Job in the prologue, Job was wrong to justify himself with his own righteousness and conveniently ignore his own current sins and "sins of youth" that he several times mentions in his earlier speeches (Job 13:26). Discerning and feeling ones own sinfulness is an undoubted part of conversion. Elihu on God's behalf rebukes Job for thinking that "I am clean without transgression" (33:9,12); and Elihu's exhortation to Job to say "I have sinned" (33:27) is finally obeyed by Job, as if he at the end accepted the truth of what Elihu was saying. How we see the role of Elihu determines how we understand Job's claims of innocence. I have earlier suggested that he may have been inserted as a literary device to summarize the arguments so far and to give us a foretaste of God's argument which is yet to come. But there is no reason to think this; we can just accept all that he says as indeed from God.

Job 33:10 Behold, He finds occasions against me. He counts me for His enemy- These indeed were Job's words in Job 13:24, "You consider me Your enemy". Yet it could be argued that this is a rather uncharitable twist of Job's words in Job 7:17-19; 10:3-6. And even when Job feels God is his enemy (Job 16:9), this surely must be balanced against what Job elsewhere says about maintaining his faith in God, even if God slays him. We are expecting Elihu to be sympathetic, and instead we find him showing the real implications of Job's words even thought they were the words of a man clearly in great pain and anguish. It could be argued that God's statement that Job has spoken what is right about Him (Job 42:7) refers only to Job's words of repentance, not his words in the dialogues.

I would say that all Elihu says can be understood as God's true word to Job and a fair summary of his statements and positions. God was not Job's enemy; He is portrayed in the prologue as completely on Job's side. He had fantasized about having an "umpire" to judge between God and himself, and to actually require God's blood for having murdered him. Elihu appears as that figure (see on Job 32:12)- but condemns Job for failing to believe in God's love for him. What Job self-admittedly, momentarily fantasized about... was taken so seriously by God and Elihu. And Job is condemned for this. Although he is also forgiven, we are left with the sober lesson that our own momentary thoughts and fantasies are likewise going to be judged, even if, as in Job's case, we might argue that they were generally out of character with us.

Job 33:11 He puts my feet in the stocks. He marks all my paths'- This is indeed a quote of Job's words in Job 13:27, but it could be argued that Elihu rather overlooks the context in which Job spoke of God marking all his paths (Job 7:17-19). But all the same it is true that Job considered God to be treating him like Cain who had a mark on him because he was condemned. We rather expect Elihu to encourage Job from the prologue, that God actually had a great love and respect for Job. Instead he rebukes Job in his next words. One take away from the Job story is that words matter, no matter if they are spoken under duress or in acute suffering. And by our words we will

be justified or condemned, the Lord taught. Our words will be cited back to us at the judgment, as happened to Job.

Job 33:12 Behold, I will answer you. In this you are not just, for God is greater than man- Job has often said that God is greater than man. And yet indeed Job is "not just" for no man can be just with God of himself, as Job has recognized (Job 9:2). What Job theoretically recognizes, that God is greater than man and that man is "not just", he didn't really feel. Thanks to Elihu, Job finally admits that he had heard of God by the ear, but now his eye 'sees' God. The theory was turned to reality and felt experience.

Job 33:13 Why do you strive against Him, because He doesn't give account of any of His matters?-

Job has frequently complained that God refuses to come to court with him (Job 9:2,14-19, 32-35; 13:22; 19:7; 23:2-7; 30:20); Job wishes to "strive", a legal term for having a legal case. Elihu is right, that God doesn't have to explain Himself to man. LXX "But thou sayest, Why has he not heard every word of my cause?". Job wanted his cause to be listened to. We know what he didn't know- that he was being afflicted "without cause". Or, better, we can translate without the question mark. Elihu is criticizing Job for his continual fantasies about getting God into court, and legally contending against Him to prove Him guilty. This is most inappropriate- and Elihu is right to sharply condemn Job for doing so. Elihu goes on to argue that suffering, in Job's case, should have taught him- and it is listening to God which is required rather than railing against Him and fantasizing about taking Him to court.

Job 33:14 For God speaks once, yes twice, though man pays no attention- Job has wanted God to speak to him (Job 13:22; 23:5), and Elihu is saying that God has spoken to Job through his sufferings, which Elihu now proceeds to allude to in the next verses. But God will finally speak, plainly and directly.

Or we can argue that Elihu is saying that although He doesn't give account of His ways with man, God does actually respond to man's desire for a day in court with Him; although Job isn't perceiving it. We can render: "But God does testify, time and again, though no one may see it". Elihu says that communicates in two ways; through a dream, and then through a mediator who can help man whilst he is in affliction. Elihu may have himself in view; he had received his revelation from God in a dream, and now he was that mediator figure who could restore Job to his previous state (:19-30). That revelation included a challenge for Job to repent, and Elihu gives him a pro forma statement he can make in :27: "I sinned and perverted what is right but I did not receive what I deserved". Job was offered another such pro forma in Job 34:32 "Teach me that which I don't see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more". This was tough for Job, who on one hand was suffering "without cause" as God had said. The call is for Job to recognize that he has sinned, even if he was not a big time sinner by secular standards. And so to accept that the wages of sin is death and all his suffering is therefore quite legitimate. This is so hard for religious man to accept. Many religious men may have the same crushing experience at the final day of judgment. This is why Elihu can rightly argue that God does render to a man according to his sins (Job 34:11)- even if those sins were not gross sins by secular, worldly judgment. Elihu urges Job to accept his advice and make this confession (:31-33); Job is silent. Given his feisty responses to the friends, we rather expect an indignant response from him. One reason he doesn't do so is perhaps because he recognizes Elihu is speaking from God. Elihu argues at times that suffering leads man to repentance. Yet we recall

that Job was seen by God as perfect before the sufferings started. So maybe Elihu's idea is that now Job has sinned by what he has said, the purpose of the sufferings is now to lead him to repentance. That to me is the only way I currently see to understand Elihu's argument that Job's sufferings are to lead him to repentance, bearing in mind that at the end, Job indeed does repent. He repents of what he had said wrong *during* the sufferings, not before. Therefore it was the later period of the sufferings which were intended to bring Job to the repentance he finally makes. It is in this sense that Elihu at times sees a connection between Job's sin and his sufferings; but the sin in view is not anything before the sufferings [as the friends wrongly supposed], but his sins now committed during the sufferings.

Job 33:15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, in slumbering on the bed- This and the following verses allude to Job's situation. God had given him nightmare visions and bad dreams (Job 7:14). Whether these were the Divine revelations which Elihu imagines or merely part of the overall illness of Job... again remains unclear to us. Exactly because Elihu is purposefully enigmatic as to whether he is really in line with God; see on Job 32:5.

Job 33:16 then He opens the ears of men, and seals their instruction- This rather sounds like the claim of Eliphaz to have had revelation from God in a night vision, which claim I suggested was false (see on Job 4:15). See on :15.

Job 33:17 that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man- This suggests Job had an evil purpose which God had sought to deflect him from by giving him night visions.

Job 33:18 He keeps back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword- The impression is that Job was headed for death "by the sword" of his attackers, but God was trying to save him from this by giving him visions at night. But that is at variance with the parameters set in the prologue. God was not going to allow Job's abusers to slay him. His life was to be preserved.

Or we can read :18-20 as Elihu saying that in Job's case, his life indeed was protected by God but his sufferings were prolonged in order to teach him something. Initially, they were "without cause". But he started cursing God, and so the sufferings became intended to teach him humility. Job's only hope was through the mediator (:23), whom Elihu may well have seen as himself. His call for Job to repent of his words was crucial for Job to be saved from his sufferings, and ultimately saved. Job doesn't respond to Elihu's pleas- and so God Himself appears, as it were giving Job another chance. Initially Job fails to respond adequately to that too, and it takes God's final speech to bring Job to true repentance.

Job 33:19 He is chastened also with pain on his bed, with continual strife in his bones- This clearly alludes to Job's writhing with pain on his couch with continual pain on his bones. But was this for his 'chastening'? As discussed on :18, the parameters defined in the prologue suggest that the sufferings were for the education of others, and not for Job's personal chastening. Elihu therefore refers to the sufferings acquiring meaning as time went on after they began, in order to bring Job to repentance for his blasphemies against God.

Job 33:20 so that his life hates bread, and his soul dainty food- Clearly Elihu has Job in view.

Job 33:21 His flesh is so consumed away, that it can't be seen. His bones that were not seen stick out- The reference to consumed flesh seems somewhat exaggerated. The same phrase is used in Prov. 5:11 for judgment for sin. But the prologue has made it clear that Job's sufferings were *not* a punishment for his sin. The righteous was to suffer in order to demonstrate something to others. So again we see that Elihu is talking about the sufferings becoming judgments for the sins of blasphemy which Job was committing after the sufferings began.

Job 33:22 Yes, his soul draws near to the pit, and his life to the destroyers- Elihu appears to hold some pagan ideas that there were "those who bring death" (ESV) who meet and greet those who die. Or at least he is speaking to Job and the friends in terms they could relate to.

Job 33:23 If there is beside him an angel, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to show to man what is right for him- Elihu seems to be suggesting that unless Job makes use of Elihu's offer of being a mediator / "interpreter" (Job 33:6), then he is going to die the death of the condemned (:24). But this again misses the point of the parameters set in the prologue. Job is not going to die as a result of his sufferings. Elihu is not going to prove Job's saviour.

LXX "Though there should be a thousand messengers of death". We can read this as a reference to Angels of death. But it makes more sense to read Elihu as suggesting that he is the one among a thousand who can show Job what is right. And in the end Job does accept what Elihu says and repents, and God says that Job has thereby spoken what was "right". Elihu suggests that he can pay the 'redemption', in that he can be the 'redeemer' that Job fantasized about having in Job 19.

Job 33:24 then God is gracious to him, and says, 'Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom'-

We can follow the argument through from :18 as meaning that God brings man to the brink of death, as He had done Job, telling the Satan to "preserve his life", all *in order that* God might show His grace to man, and enable man to see His face with the joy of salvation and gratitude (:26). Job's illness was "without cause" in the sense that it was not punishment, but the intention of it was that it would lead Job to 'pray to God' (:26) and then be restored. At this point, Job doesn't respond to Elihu. But he does when God repeats Elihu's message. Elihu was the kinsman-redeemer whom Job had fantasized of having in Job 19.

Job 33:25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's. He returns to the days of his youth-

Job indeed longed to return "to the days of my youth" (Job 29:4); and Elihu is offering Job the power to return, thanks to his mediation (see on :23).

Job 33:26 He prays to God, and He is gracious to him, so that he sees His face with joy. He restores to man his righteousness- LXX "And he shall pray to the Lord, and his prayer shall be accepted of him". This is just what happened to Job after his

repentance. Job earlier had wanted to "see" God in court (Job 13:24). But through repentance, he will later say that "Now my eye sees You". Elihu's offer to Job does come gloriously true when Job repents. All this is indeed what happened to Job. He was 'restored', he prayed to God for the friends (Job 42:10), and felt as if he had seen God's face (Job 42:5). The point is that this revival of Job happened exactly as Elihu said. It was predicated purely upon God's direct grace.

Job 33:27 He sings before men, and says, 'I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it didn't profit me- The return of the prodigal son foreshadowed the final repentance of the Jews (note how that parable is based on Gen. 43:16;45:14,15). But Job's decision to say "I have sinned... and it didn't profit me" also connects with the prodigal son (Lk. 15:21), thus again associating him with the Jews in their suffering and repentance. LXX "Even then a man shall blame himself, saying, What kind of things have I done? and he has not punished me according to the full amount of my sins". This has special reference to the exiles, who admitted that they had not been punished according to their sins (Ezra 9:13).

Job 33:28 He has redeemed my soul from going into the pit. My life shall see the light'- The 'redemption' of the exiles was to be predicated likewise upon their repentance (Jer. 31:11 s.w.). But this was to be possible without any mediator figure; Elihu failed to be that figure, just as the various possible Messiah figures didn't come to anything. But salvation was still possible through repentance eliciting God's direct restorative grace.

Job 33:29 Behold, God works all these things, twice, yes three times, with a man- Elihu offers Job two or three times the call to repentance, offering him at least three pro forma statements of repentance. And he refuses. But God Himself then appears and does bring Job to repentance. Perhaps the idea is that God has offered Job a way out two or three times, and he has rejected it. Indeed Job had sinned after his sufferings began, and God was giving him a path to repentance and restoration which he was refusing.

Job 33:30 to bring back his soul from the pit, that he may be enlightened with the light of the living- It seems that Elihu had been through Job's very experiences, of 'death' and rising again: "He has delivered *my* soul from death, that my life may praise him in the light. Hearken, Job, and hear *me*" (33:30,31 LXX). And this is exactly what Job did. As Job was to be the representative saviour of the friends, so perhaps Elihu was to be for Job.

Job 33:31 Mark well, Job, and listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will speak- See on :30. These are Job's words of Job 13:13. I noted on :1,2 that Elihu often repeats Job's words and style. He is absolutely Job's representative.

Job 33:32 If you have anything to say, answer me. Speak, for I desire to justify you- Given his responses to the friends, we can be sure that Job would soon have spoken up and answered Elihu at this point, as Elihu invites Job to speak at this point. But he doesn't. He is convicted in his conscience, but can't bring himself to state his repentance. He mutters a few words at the end of God's first speech but they aren't enough; only at the end of God's second speech does Job repent as required.

Job 33:33 If not, listen to me. Hold your peace, and I will teach you wisdom- The impression is that in the drama, there is now a period of silence. Job says nothing (see on :32). Although he could have taken issue with much of what Elihu says, he doesn't. He is learning that verbal response is of no value and will not help toward resolution of matters with God. Elihu could be accused of arrogance by continually and dogmatically claiming to have wisdom and Divine inspiration. The friends have appealed to the elders as their source of wisdom; Job once appeals to travellers, those who have picked up wisdom by their wide experience of life. Elihu claims wisdom comes from God, and he has been given it. If indeed this is so, then his apparent dogmatism and eagerness to come out with God's Truth is not surprising; it is to be expected. And if Elihu isn't telling the truth about his Divine inspiration, then he is a colossal fraud- and we would expect God to point that out rather than repeat Elihu's arguments. The fact God doesn't do this leads me to conclude that Elihu is who he says he is- Divinely inspired.

JOB CHAPTER 34

Job 34:1 Moreover Elihu answered- This part of the speech is largely addressed to "you wise men" (:2) and "men of understanding" (:10). The friends are in view, but this serves to confirm Job's claim that sages and those reputed for wisdom are often wrong. Or we can see Elihu's first speech as ending at the end of Job 33. Job 34 is Elihu's second speech, Job 35 is his third speech, and Job 36,37 Elihu's final speech. Elihu summarizes Job's words in :5-9, and then criticizes them in :10-31.

Job 34:2 Hear my words, you wise men. Give ear to me, you who have knowledge- We do well to imagine in what tone of voice Elihu spoke. I suggest he was here genuinely imploring the friends to repent.

Job 34:3 For the ear tries words, as the palate tastes food- He is quoting Job (Job 12:11). Elihu thereby is attempting to repeat what is good in Job's arguments whilst condemning him where he is wrong. But as I have argued on Job 32:5 and often, Elihu may simply be a literary device to summarize the arguments so far.

Job 34:4 Let us choose for us that which is right. Let us know among ourselves what is good- "Right" is *mishpat*, 'judgment'; he is urging the friends to come to a just judgment on the case. This slightly misses the point which God is to make- that He alone is the judge. The only judgment the friends are entitled to come to is that Job has maintained his faith despite adversity, contrary to their original suspicion. But this seems to be behind Paul's words in 1 Thess. 5:21 "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good", which is in the context of using "prophesyings" (1 Thess. 5:20)- i.e. the true word of God- to analyze and reject false Judaist teaching that was claimed to be inspired. We are left wondering whether Paul is merely using the outline principle, or is interpreting Elihu as the true prophet of God and Job as a false reasoner, doing so under the guise of speaking the Truth, seeing he was a prophet.

Job 34:5 For Job has said, 'I am righteous- The word for "righteous" is that rendered "innocent" when Job twice says "I am innocent" (Job 9:15; 10:15). Here in :5,6 Elihu carefully quotes Job's actual words.

God has taken away my right- Job has said this (Job 27:2),

Elihu is certainly not the sympathetic mediator we have been led by the story line to expect. And yet we find it hard to avoid the conclusion that Elihu is quoting Job fairly. At judgment day, bad words will be cited back to men and they will be left with the same impression we have as Elihu does this to Job: 'Was that really what came out of my mouth? Yes, indeed it was'. This will be especially telling for otherwise righteous men whose 'only' sin was thinking or speaking wrongly when under duress... And 'all this fuss' is made, quite rightly, over 'just' doing that.

Job 34:6 notwithstanding my right I am considered a liar. My wound is incurable, though I am without disobedience'-

"I am considered a liar" is a reference to how Job says "Would I lie to your face?" (Job 6:28). "Wound" is the word for "arrow", referring to Job's words in that same speech that he has been wrongly hit by "the arrows [s.w. "wound"] of the Almighty" (Job 6:4). All Job's words, possibly muttered under his breath, and justified by him as just mere words said under intense trial, were being quoted back to him. And he was being justified or condemned by his words, as the Lord says must happen. Or we can read with Rashi that Job is calling God a liar for not judging him fairly. Paul picks up the spirit of this in Romans, when he demonstrates that anyone who justifies themselves by works is calling God a liar, placing Him in the dock. But He will overcome them, and declares every such man a liar.

Job 34:7 What man is like Job, who drinks scorn like water-

Elihu here quotes the words of Eliphaz in Job 15:16. Quite often Elihu quotes the ideas of the friends with approval. His position is that Job's continued sufferings are because of his bad words about God after the sufferings started. The friends however believe that Job suffers because of having lived a sinful life before the sufferings started; the prologue shows how wrong they were. But not all their observations about Job are wrong and Elihu seems to accept this. God's condemnation of the friends is not because of anything they said about Job. He twice gives His reason: "you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right" (Job 42:7,8). Elihu quotes the friends and approves some of the things they say; that can be read as Elihu being painstakingly just in assessing the situation and words of all concerned.

Job 34:8 who goes in company with the workers of iniquity, and walks with wicked men?- As it stands, this is an untruth. But Elihu isn't rebuked by God for this. Rather is he perhaps just summarizing the arguments of the friends. LXX "saying, I have not sinned, nor committed ungodliness, nor had fellowship with workers of iniquity, to go with the ungodly". But we can see the "wicked men" as the friends, and Elihu is rebuking Job for having absorbed their positions (:7). Job himself tells them that he knows the same things that they do. They all share the same belief that God rewards righteousness and brings retribution upon sinners. Their only difference is that the friends say that this must mean that Job has sinned because he is suffering. Job disagrees, and instead opines that God is unjust, unfair and needs to be called to account somehow in some imaginary court. Job admits that he would have the same attitude to himself, if he were in the friends' place: "I, too, like you, would speak the same, were you in my place. I would also din words against you and would wag my head over you" (Job 16:3,4). Elihu rightly rebukes him here for this.

Job 34:9 For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should delight himself with

God'- This is a fair summary of what Job has said in Job 9:22–24 and 21:5–13. The prologue has shown that Job had greatly profited through serving God. Now those blessings have been temporarily suspended, he gets cranky with God and shows no appreciation for the blessings he had earlier received. He clearly considers those blessings to have been his just desert, for he never mentions any gratitude for them. He fails totally to see any grace in God. He has made his declaration of total innocence in Job 31 and has said he will hold fast to his profession of personal sinlessness until he dies.

Job 34:10 Therefore listen to me, you men of understanding- This could be sarcastically calling them men who understand, when Elihu is arguing that in fact they have no Divine wisdom at all. But we can also read it as a heartfelt appeal for them to repent; we are left to imagine in what tone of voice Elihu spoke.

Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness, from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity-

This is exactly the nub of what God has to say to Job, and it is precisely what God also calls Job to account over.

Job 34:11 For the work of a man He will render to him, and cause every man to find according to his ways- This was the argument of Eliphaz (Job 4:8); Job's sufferings were to be understood as judgment for sin, which therefore Job has committed. The idea of future and ultimate judgment at a last day of judgment has been overlooked. But if Elihu speaks for God here, what he says isn't untrue. One explanation would be that Elihu therefore has a future day of judgment in view, because Job's sufferings were "without cause". Or, we could argue, in line with the discussion on Job 33:14, that Job is suffering because of his sins- even if those sins were not gross sins by secular, worldly judgment.

Job 34:12 Yes surely, God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert justice-

This is exactly the nub of what God has to say to Job, and it is precisely what God also calls Job to account over.

Job 34:13 Who put Him in charge of the earth? Or who has appointed Him over the whole world?- The following statement of God's greatness is true as far as it goes, but Job would have agreed with it. Elihu is implying that Job disagrees with it. Job knows the theory but not the felt reality of these things, and thanks to Elihu's speeches, and God's... Job will come to "see" what his ear had only 'heard' in theory.

Elihu is saying that God has nobody above Him, nobody gave God charge of the earth. Job had asked for an umpire greater than God, who could place his hand upon both God and Job. Elihu is saying that there is nobody above God; this was a blasphemous fantasy by Job. And even if was "just" fantasy, for Job goes on to mock himself for even thinking like that, all the same it was seen as a major thing. And so we must soberly engage with the fact that "The thought of foolishness is sin". What we may daydream is still taken seriously by God and is culpable for judgment.

Job 34:14 If He set His heart on Himself, if He gathered to Himself His spirit and His breath- The whole of creation keeps on going as a result of God having a heart that bleeds for people. "If he causes his heart to return unto himself", the whole of creation

would simply cease (Job 34:14 RVmg.). His spirit is His heart and mind, as well as physical power. Creation is kept going not by clockwork, but by the conscious outpouring of His Spirit, by the fact that our creator has a constantly and passionately outgoing spirit toward us. In times of depression we need to remember this; that they very fact the world is still going, the planet still moves, atoms stay in their place and all matter still exists… is proof that the God who has a heart that bleeds for us is still there, with His heart going out to us His creation. And the spirit of the Father must be in us His children.

Job 34:15 all flesh would perish together, and man would turn again to dust-
We can reflect that man's returning to dust is indeed his lot, the result of his sin (Gen. 3:19); but until that point, God's Spirit keeps us from returning to dust (:14). His Spirit is therefore keeping us alive by grace every moment.

Job 34:16 If now you have understanding, hear this. Listen to the voice of my words-
Rashi: "And if you wish, understand". Elihu repeatedly begs Job to repent, with a fervour not seen in the friends. Basically Job refuses and by grace, God Himself appears in order to bring Job to repentance.

Job 34:17 Shall even one who hates justice govern? Will you condemn him who is righteous and mighty?-
We can read the argument as Elihu saying that Job can not be a ruler himself, because he mocks others who are in authority (:18,19). He can never be returned to his position of ruler over men whilst he condemns God and despises His rulership over himself.

Job 34:18 Who says to a king, 'Vile!' or to nobles, 'Wicked!'?- "Is it fit to say to a King (God), Thou art wicked? and to princes (Angels), ye are ungodly?". Here Elihu is rebuking Job for wrongly accusing the Angels, who had brought the trials.
LXX "He is ungodly that says to a king, Thou art a transgressor". Job is here accused of calling God a sinner. He truly did curse God, as his wife had advised and as the Satan suspected he would. Elihu is right- these are the true implications of what Job said. But still Job will be saved. Just one prayer of repentance elicited a forgiveness that covered months of such blasphemy.

Job 34:19 Who doesn't respect the persons of princes, nor respects the rich more than the poor; for they all are the work of His hands- The argument seems to be that the God who has created all men therefore doesn't show favour to the rich ones more than the poor ones. The fact we are all created beings makes us equal before our creator. He doesn't therefore respect persons; but Job, according to Elihu, mocks God as vile and wicked (:18).

Job 34:20 In a moment they die, even at midnight. The people are shaken and pass away. The mighty are taken away without a hand- The later application of Job to Hezekiah and the exiles would be in the midnight destruction of the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35) and in the promise that the kingdoms of the world which dominated the exiles would be destroyed without human hand (Dan. 2:34).

Job 34:21 For His eyes are on the ways of a man. He sees all his goings- Elihu is implying that Job considers that God's eyes don't see him. Job says that God watches

him far too closely, and yet also argues that God is so far above us that human ways are of no interest to Him. Elihu rightly corrects this.

Job 34:22 There is no darkness, nor thick gloom, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves- Job hardly appears to be hiding himself from God. He indeed complains that God appears to be hidden from him, and he earnestly seeks God's face and a meeting with Him in judgment. Elihu is criticizing Job's desire for death, assuming that the darkness of death will make him free from account to God, whom Job has described as a cruel slave owner.

Job 34:23 For He doesn't need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment- ESV "God has no need to consider a man further, that he should go before God in judgment". God gives judgment "without [legal] enquiry". Job's complaint that God is so critically watching him with His all seeing eyes is therefore inappropriate. Judgment is only a metaphor; it falls down in that unlike a human judge, God is not gathering evidence and then weighing it up and giving His verdict. Hence :34 ESV "He shatters the mighty without investigation". Job's fantasy about having his day in court with God and having his case properly considered at some future point was all inappropriate. The idea seems to be that man is automatically in God's judgment presence. This is what God is going to later imply by His appearance and demonstration of His presence in creation. I suggested on Job 32:5 that the function of Elihu in the narrative is to summarize the position of the friends, and to give a foretaste of God's position.

Job 34:24 He breaks in pieces mighty men in ways past finding out, and sets others in their place- The present tenses imply Elihu thinks that God's judgments are revealed in this life (:23), involving breaking the mighty in pieces and replacing them with others. He clearly has Job in view. Elihu is correcting Job's view that the wicked don't receive punishment in this life. They very often do, but the way God does it is "past finding out" as the retribution is not as immediate and simplistic as the friends assume.

Job 34:25 Therefore He takes knowledge of their works. He overturns them in the night, so that they are destroyed-

Elihu is saying that indeed there is evidence that God notices sin and judges it; disproving Job's claim that God "smiles upon the wicked" and anyway, is so great that sin or righteousness make no difference to Him.

Job 34:26 He strikes them as wicked men in the open sight of others- This appears to be justifying the friends; they had openly seen Job's being stricken. The difference is that Elihu is explaining that Job's continued sufferings were because of his wickedness.

Job 34:27 because they turned aside from following Him, and wouldn't pay attention to any of His ways-

If we understand Elihu as speaking from God, and all the evidence is that this is the case, then this does state that in his response to the sufferings, Job has turned aside from God and is not paying attention to God's ways. God's own speeches to Job challenge Job to pay attention to His ways.

Job 34:28 so that they caused the cry of the poor to come to Him. He heard the cry of

the afflicted- This is simply repeating the assumption of the friends; Job is suffering, therefore he sinned, and they have speculated that he abused the poor, and God had heard their cry and was punishing Job. Elihu is saying that there is now a connection between sin and suffering in Job's life- but because of the sins he has committed after the sufferings started.

Job 34:29 When He gives quietness, who then can condemn?- We can render: "When He is silent, who can condemn? " (NJPS). Job was condemning God because of God's silence, just as many struggle with the apparent silence of God. His silence is no reason to think that God doesn't love us; for we know from the prologue how much this silent God did in fact love Job.

When He hides His face, who then can see Him? Alike whether to a nation, or to a man- God hid His face from the exiles (s.w. Dt. 31:17,18; 32:20; Is. 8:17; 54:8; 59:2; 64:7; Jer. 33:5; Ez. 39:23), and again, His apparent hiding of His face from Job was not because Job had sinned but because he was suffering as representative of his people. Hence "whether to a nation, or to a man".

Job 34:30 that the Godless man may not reign, that there be no one to ensnare the people- LXX "causing a hypocrite to be king, because of the waywardness of the people". Elihu clearly expresses the friends' perspective, that although Job has been a ruler, he has been deposed by God because he is a hypocrite and is ensnaring people.

Job 34:31 For has any said to God, 'I am guilty, but I will not offend any more-
Rashi: "For to God should be said...". This is another pro forma template for Job's repentance, that he refuses. Only after God's appearance does he repent like this.

Job 34:32 Teach me that which I don't see. If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more'?- Here again, Elihu gives Job a pro forma with which to repent. His argument seems to be that Job's 'smaller' sins, which he admits, along with "sins of youth", deserve death and remove from Job the right to complain about any treatment he gets from God. Elihu urges Job to pray to God to reveal his sinfulness to him, to teach him the sins he didn't see. At this point, Job makes no response- despite his feisty responses to the friends. When God appears and repeats Elihu's arguments, finally Job does repent, but he doesn't need to ask God to reveal his sin to him. This realization of sin is elicited by the revelation of God Himself.

Job 34:33 Shall His recompense be as you desire, that you refuse it? For you must choose, and not I- The idea of the Hebrew appears to be that Job cannot decide God's judgment as he desires; and Job was refusing to accept God's judgment because it was not as he wished. But God's judgment has not yet been revealed, and his sufferings were not a part of any judgment upon him for personal sins. The prologue has made this clear.

Therefore speak what you know- Job remains silent before Elihu, as the Lord before His false accusers. He is learning the lesson that human words uttered before humans are inappropriate in these situations. He has learned that the dialogue is broken and it is not only pointless but counter productive to continue it. We can imagine a pause for silence in the drama at this point. Or we can take this as meaning that Job is refusing Elihu's appeals to repent, despite even giving Job a pro forma to

use in :32 and Job 33:27; 34:31. Job has been quick enough to answer the friends; but he is silent before Elihu, because he realizes Elihu indeed speaks from God.

Job 34:34 Men of understanding will tell me, yes, every wise man who hears me- LXX "Because the wise in heart shall say this, and a wise man listens to my word". As in :2,10, Elihu considers that any who is wise will agree with him, that he is wise and is speaking wisdom. Earlier, the friends have appealed to "the wise" as supporting their views. Elihu is saying that the truly wise will agree with him.

Job 34:35 'Job speaks without knowledge. His words are without wisdom'- Job does finally repent in similar words. This is a sign of his humility. Although falsely accused and urged to repent in a certain form of words, he uses those words to repent- even though he is innocent of the charges. He realizes he has not responded perfectly to the trials brought upon him, and recognizes that although counted perfect by God, that was by grace, and he himself had sinned. Elihu's appeal here is that of God in Job 38:2; 42:3.

Job 34:36 I wish that Job were tried to the end, because of his answering like wicked men-

Elihu condemns Job because he responded "like wicked men", i.e. the friends. For this is what Elihu calls the friends in :8. Job had adopted their wrong view of himself, and of God- that [contrary to what we know from the prologue], God was punishing Job because He was angry with him. It's so easy to absorb the views of others about ourselves and about God. And Elihu, on God's behalf, condemns Job for this.

Job 34:37 For he adds rebellion to his sin. He claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God- But God says that Job spoke what was right about Him; this therefore refers to the words of Job's repentance. "Among us" reflects Elihu's identity with the friends. LXX "for iniquity will be reckoned against us, if we speak many words before the Lord".

JOB CHAPTER 35

Job 35:1 Moreover Elihu answered- Here Elihu claims he is adding something new to the dialogue so far. For he condemns both Job and the friends.

Job 35:2 Do you think this to be your right, or do you say, 'My righteousness is more than God's'-

This was the logical implication of Job's positions; and God draws the same inference about Job's words in his speeches.

Job 35:3 that you ask, 'What advantage will it be to you? What profit shall I have, if I had not sinned?'- This was indeed Job's position (Job 7:19,20; 9:22–31; 21:7–13). Elihu is right to call Job to account for saying this. It was exactly because of his righteousness that God had blessed him. He ought to have perceived that, and seen all his blessings as God's reward. But he should have retained his initial position that

notwithstanding the connection between righteousness and Divine blessing, God is sovereign and is right to give or take as He wishes. Verses 5 and 6 argue that God is so vastly above man that in one sense, indeed, He doesn't much notice human behaviour. Possibly Elihu is continuing to summarize Job's position. Or he may be asking rhetorically... the God who is so far above us and so vast, can He really be touched by human behaviour on this planet? And the answer to that, inferring from Elihu's other arguments, is: "Yes! And that's the amazing thing. That the vastly 'other' God above does in fact very sensitively notice human thought and behaviour here on this tiny planet". Elihu goes on to give two reasons why God may at times be silent. They may pray just on a surface level and not from the heart: "They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night'" (:9,10). In fact Job is never recorded as begging for deliverance; most of his words are of bitter accusation against God. And the second reason is pride (:12,13). And that is indeed relevant to Job. Because God does not "regard arrogance- therefore Job opens his mouth with empty talk, and he multiplies words without knowledge" (:15,16). We can pray on a surface level, but not be like Elijah who prayed within his prayer. We can pray as the prophets often criticize Judah for praying, just on a surface level. And this, Elihu says, is related to human pride. Hence in Job 36:8,9 he appeals for Job to repent of his pride: "If they are bound in fetters, and are taken in the cords of afflictions, then He shows them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly". And he condemns Job for being like this. Truly, our interpretation of Elihu is our interpretation of Job, at least in the period after his sufferings began.

The phrase "to you" refers to Job himself. He had said this to himself. Elihu helps Job realize what his own self talk had been. This is what judgment and meeting God actually looks like, rather than Job approaching God "as a prince" with all his legal case arranged, justifying himself.

Further, the reference seems to be also to Eliphaz's words in Job 22:2 "Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself". These words are applied here by Elihu to *Job*.

The idols and the Gentile nations amongst whom the exiles lived would not "profit" them (s.w. Is. 30:5,6; 44:9,10); but as the book of Esther makes clear, they were profiting well, apparently, from remaining amongst them. But the only real "profit" would be if they quit all that and returned to Zion (Is. 48:17 s.w.). But they saw no "profit" in being forgiven and restored as God's people (s.w. Job 35:3). Rather they considered the temporal "profit" of life in Babylon as far greater profit.

Job 35:4 I will answer you, and your companions with you- Elihu claims he is adding something new to the dialogue so far. For he condemns both Job and the friends.

Job 35:5 Look to the heavens, and see. See the skies, which are higher than you- The huge height of God above man doesn't mean that God is insensitive to human sin and righteousness (:6,7). God's response is to display His power and demonstrate the omnipresence of His Spirit- not just in the cosmos, but in very intimate and concealed processes upon the earth. He Himself as it were 'comes down' to demonstrate that this argument and feeling is so untrue; and He was to yet more powerfully rend the heavens and come down to earth in His manifestation in His Son.

Job 35:6 If you have sinned, what effect do you have against Him? If your transgressions are multiplied, what do you do to Him?-

Elihu is quoting Job's words; for here and in :7 we pretty much have Job's words as summarized by Elihu.

Job 35:7 If you are righteous, what do you give Him? Or what does He receive from your hand?- The prologue has stressed God's positive view of Job's righteousness. Clearly enough, He is sensitive to human morality. This appears to be Elihu still summarizing Job's words.

Job 35:8 Your wickedness may hurt a man as you are, and your righteousness may profit a son of man-

We can take this as Elihu arguing against Job's argument that God isn't interested in human sin or righteousness; see on :6. Elihu is then arguing that sin is indeed significant, because sin hurts people, and then they cry out to God (:9).

Job 35:9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they cry out. They cry for help by reason of the arm of the mighty- This sounds like Israel in captivity in Egypt and Babylon crying out. Elihu's accusation is that Job has cried out because of his affliction, but not to God his maker (:10).

Job 35:10 But none says, 'Where is God my Maker, who gives songs in the night- We wonder if Paul and Silas had meditated about this as they sung songs in the night. The Passover festival was the time when songs were sung at night. The exiles were bidden believe that they too would be released from captivity. But none was found amongst them who truly sought for God.

Job 35:11 who teaches us more than the animals of the earth, and makes us wiser than the birds of the sky?'- GNB "They don't turn to God, who makes us wise, wiser than any animal or bird". Job has argued in Job 28 that wisdom is simply unattainable and God refuses to reveal it to man. Here Elihu says that this attitude is the result of refusing to repent and thus become wise.

Job 35:12 There they cry, but none gives answer, because of the pride of evil men- Elihu's argument is that Job has cried out because of his affliction, just as all sufferers do (:9). But he is not heard because his cry is "empty" (:13) and he is a proud, evil man. Yet the prologue has stressed Job is not evil. The reference of Elihu is therefore to Job's crying out and not being heard because of his pride *after* the sufferings started. Elihu is saying that Job didn't pray to God for deliverance, nor make confession of something, because he was proud. A man who suffers as Job did can still be proud, and many die proud, and thus condemned.

Job 35:13 Surely God will not hear an empty cry, neither will the Almighty regard it- "Empty" is the word for 'vanities', often used of idols.

Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to

his crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

Job 35:14 How much less when you say you don't see Him. The cause is before Him, and you wait for Him!- This seems a cruel twist of Job's great statement of faith in Job 19:25-27; he believed that although he didn't now see God, yet he would do so in a bodily form in the resurrection and judgment of the last day. But GNB makes better sense of :14,15: "Job, you say you can't see God; but wait patiently—your case is before him. You think that God does not punish, that he pays little attention to sin".

Job 35:15 But now, because He has not visited in His anger, neither does He greatly regard arrogance- As discussed on :14, GNB has it right in having Elihu presenting Job's position. Elihu has earlier argued that Job is guilty of arrogance and is calling Job to repentance for it. Rashi: "And has He not full knowledge of arrogance?". Job's apparently small sins, along with his pride, are cited by Elihu as reason enough for his condemnation and continued suffering until he repents.

Or we can read this as "now it is comparatively nothing that He has visited you in His anger", meaning that the punishment inflicted on Job is almost nothing compared with what it could or should or might have been. Only a very humble man could accept that.

Job 35:16 therefore Job opens his mouth with empty talk, and he multiplies words without knowledge- See on :15. "Words without knowledge" is exactly what God accuses Job of (Job 38:2 s.w.). Elihu functions in the story as a means of summarizing the arguments so far, and giving us a foretaste of the Divine judgment which is to come. The way God verbatim repeats so much of what Elihu says, as well as Elihu's arguments, makes it so hard to write off Elihu as irrelevant or totally wrong in what he says about Job. After all, six of Job's 42 chapters are the words of Elihu. How we interpret Elihu is really how we interpret Job, at least, Job during his trials. God rebukes Job and the friends, but not Elihu; and Elihu makes specific claim to speak for God and to be the intercessor Job had demanded. If that were all fake, we really would expect God to say so. Elihu's major issue with Job is that he accuses God of injustice, and his words were "without knowledge". God's speeches have the same focus; and God uses the same arguments as Elihu, talking of the cosmos, and speaking specifically of snow, ice, clouds, water and rain [using the same Hebrew terms]. God begins in Job 38:2 with the accusation that Job spoke words without knowledge, using Elihu's phrase he twice uses; and He ends His first speech with the same accusation in Job 40:2, "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who accuses God answer Him!". So God's first speech begins and ends with this same complaint. God begins His second speech by asking Job similar questions (Job 40:8): "Would you impugn My justice? Would you condemn Me to justify yourself?". The similarities are such that it is hard to say that God considered Elihu as totally wrong and just an upstart. God repeats the same arguments and complaints as Elihu does. And Job accepts the truth of Elihu's accusations [and God's] that he has spoken words without knowledge. For he specifically repents of how he has spoken words "without

knowledge" (Job 42:3); a far cry from the Job who said he would approach God in the court room "like a prince", certain of his innocence and God's wrongness.

JOB CHAPTER 36

Job 36:1 Elihu also continued and said- This begins Elihu's fourth and final speech. Here he doesn't summarize Job's positions, as he has done previously. He presents God's justice and righteousness at great depth, because Job has criticized God as being unjust.

Job 36:2 Bear with me a little, and I will show you; for I still have something to say on God's behalf-

Elihu so many times claims he is speaking "on God's behalf", and indeed has complete understanding (:4). This heightens the stakes. If he is not in fact speaking on God's behalf, then surely the book needs to tell us that, and God needs to be recorded as rebuking him. If in fact Elihu is speaking on God's behalf, when 'authority' is such a key issue in the dialogues, that it is totally credible that he would continue to make the claims he does.

Job 36:3 I will get my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker- Elihu often speaks of his "opinion". "Opinion" really means "knowledge", and the Hebrew word is used only by Elihu (Job 32:6,10,17). He claims his knowledge comes from "afar", from God (Job 36:3), but he also recognizes that God alone has totality of "knowledge" (Job 37:16). So we are again left with Elihu as an enigma, not totally reflecting God's knowledge, although considering that his view is in line with God's. This enigma of Elihu is purposeful; as explained on Job 32:5, his function is to elicit *our* opinions; we too who like to think our view is in line with God's, and yet admitting we lack His total knowledge.

Job 36:4 For truly my words are not false. One who is perfect in knowledge is with you-

That is after all a huge claim for any mortal man to make. Elihu uses the same phrase about God in Job 37:16. Elihu seems here to be claiming to speak directly on God's behalf.

Job 36:5 Behold, God is mighty, and doesn't despise anyone. He is mighty in strength of understanding- Job felt despised or cast away by God (Job 10:14) just as the exiles did, but this wasn't the case; God will not despise or cast away His servant people (Job 36:5; Is. 41:9; Jer. 31:37; 33:26). The grace of it all was that although he wanted to cast away his life (Job 7:16; 9:21), just as God's people cast away His covenant (Is. 8:6; 30:12; Jer. 6:19), God would not cast away His people in their exile and depression (s.w. Lev. 26:44), even if they cast him away. See on Job 26:2.

Job 36:6 He doesn't preserve the life of the wicked, but gives to the afflicted their right-

God doesn't preserve any human life- because all have sinned, whether majorly or not, in human eyes. Elihu may be using this argument to get Job to accept he has indeed sinned, even if it was 'not much' by human standards.

Job 36:7 He doesn't withdraw His eyes from the righteous, but with kings on the

throne, He sets them forever, and they are exalted- This was exemplified in the Divine influence upon Persian kings like Cyrus in allowing the restoration. Hence the mention of kings on the throne is particularly relevant to the exiles. We recall how Ezra and Nehemiah experienced God's eyes and "good hand" upon them, so that kings sitting on thrones made decrees of restoration. The contrast is with how Job was righteous in his *own* eyes (s.w. Job 32:1). What matters is that *God's* eyes are upon us, imputing righteousness to us in *His* view.

Job 36:8 If they are bound in fetters, and are taken in the cords of afflictions- The force of "then" in :9 is that if people suffer, then God uses it to help them toward knowing themselves and repentance. This may be true on one level; and the reference to the fetters and cords of imprisonment continue the similarity with the captives in Babylon, who were intended to be reformed by their experiences so that God could bring about their restoration. But this isn't really the case with Job. His sufferings weren't in order to reform him nor to elicit his repentance, as the prologue states clearly. But the sufferings continued because of his blasphemy, and became intended to bring him to repentance.

Job 36:9 then He shows them their work, and their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves proudly-

The same words for "to show... transgression" are used of how the prophets sought to show Israel their sin (Is. 58:1; Mic. 3:8).

Job 36:10 He also opens their ears to instruction, and commands that they return from iniquity- Job had been 'chastened' (s.w. "instruction"; Job 5:17). The positive effect of "chastening" is only experienced upon repentance, returning from iniquity. Judah in exile didn't repent, and so they were left with the problem of having been 'chastened' apparently in vain, and not experiencing a 'return' to the land because they didn't 'return' to God. The friends fail to realize that "chastening" may not necessarily be for our own personal sins; the suffering servant was 'chastened' not for his own sins, but to achieve our peace with God (Is. 53:5 s.w.). As discussed on Job 35:3, this is Elihu's appeal for Job to realize that he has committed iniquity [in his words about God since the sufferings began], and he needs to repent / return from that iniquity. Job does eventually do this, saying that he repents in dust and ashes. Elihu is saying that Job is intended to repent of his sins, even though he considered them insignificant. And then he would be restored. That is finally just what happened. This is why Job 36:13 will go on to warn that only the wicked "do not beg mercy with supplication". Job needed to do this...

Job 36:11 If they listen and serve Him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures-

Job has earlier argued that the wicked did indeed "spend their days in prosperity" (s.w. Job 21:13). Elihu is saying that this is far from the true picture; true years of pleasure are only for those who serve God. Again we note how carefully Elihu listened to Job's words and quotes them verbatim. And that is the essence of our own future judgment...

Job 36:12 But if they don't listen, they shall perish by the sword; they shall die without knowledge-

The idea that Job is "without knowledge" is repeated by God (Job 38:2) and accepted by Job (Job 42:3). Again, we see Elihu functioning as an introduction to God's ideas. We at this point wonder whether Job is indeed "without knowledge". Elihu's language provokes that question; and then we have it answered in God's usage of the phrase. Elihu's function is to provoke the question.

Job 36:13 But those who are Godless in heart lay up anger. They don't cry for help when He binds them- Job did indeed cry to God for help (see on Job 35:13) but not from his heart.

Job 36:14 They die in youth. Their life perishes among the unclean- Elihu is reasoning from the position that Job is about to die in relative youth; and he is lying there amongst the unclean, apparently terminally ill.

Job 36:15 He delivers the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ear in oppression- As is mentioned in the next verses, the afflictions continued in order that Job's ear might be opened, and that he would repent.

Job 36:16 Yes, He would have allured you out of distress, into a broad place, where there is no restriction. That which is set on your table would be full of fatness-

This is so hard to believe- that Job's terrible situation was actually a blessing because it was going to eternally save him and bring him to a place of ultimate freedom, every man's dream, "with no restriction". And so Job should praise and magnify God for how He was working with him (Job 36:24). And "stand still and consider the wondrous works of God" with him (Job 37:14).

Elihu implies that if Job repents, then he will be brought out from a narrow place into a broad place (Job 36:16). God perhaps comments on this by saying that the "broad place" is in fact the whole earth (Job 38:18). Man is already in freedom; it is a case of accepting it. Whilst I have argued that the idea that suffering leads to spiritual development and repentance was irrelevant in Job's case, it was relevant to Israel in outline terms, especially to the exiles in Babylon for whom the book was rewritten (see on Job 1:1). Elihu's speeches especially have many Chaldee influences in them, suggesting that an ancient Hebrew story was rewritten in Babylon, under inspiration. God's intention was likewise to allure His sinful people to the freedom of repentance (Hos. 2:14), far from the restriction of captivity and judgment (s.w. Is. 9:1), to a feast of fat things in the restored kingdom (Is. 25:6).

Job 36:17 But you are full of the judgment of the wicked. Judgment and justice take hold of you- Elihu implies that Job has refused God's offers of repentance (:16) because Job continues to suffer. GNB "But now you are being punished as you deserve"- in that although the sufferings were initially "without cause", they continued because Job was blaspheming and impenitent.

Job 36:18 Don't let riches entice you to wrath, neither let the great size of a bribe turn you aside- The prologue began with the satan / sons of God / friends wondering whether Job's Divinely given wealth was the basis for his faith. But their initial doubts developed into various other theories- not least that Job's wealth was because he had accepted bribes. Now Elihu warns Job not to let his wealth allure him to Divine condemnation ["wrath"]; but rather to be allured by God's encouragement to repentance (:16).

Job 36:19 Would your wealth sustain you in distress, or all the might of your strength?- The idea is as in :18, that Job is foolish to think that his wealth can buy off Divine condemnation.

Job 36:20 Don't desire the night, when people are cut off in their place- This alludes to Job's strong desire to die (Job 7:2), to obey what his wife told him to do, cursing the day of his birth and wishing it be turned into a night of eternal darkness (Job 3:8). Again we see Elihu's careful attention to Job's words; final Divine judgment for us all will factor in all our words and most hidden thoughts, which God counts as our spoken words even if they never came out of our mouths.

Job's clear desire was to meet God in the light, and he himself has noted that it is the wicked who desire the night as they think they can sin in secret, hidden from God and man.

Job 36:21 Take heed, don't regard iniquity; for you have chosen this rather than affliction- Elihu several times states that Job has made a choice; and he has chosen to continue in sin, which means the sufferings will continue, and shall lead him to death. GNB "Be careful not to turn to evil; your suffering was sent to keep you from it". This may possibly be an explanation of why Job suffered, and a critically important key to understanding why Job suffered. Had he not, then God foresaw that he would have fallen into evil in some way. And it took all the grief in order to stop Job from that. He suffered "without cause" only in the sense that it was not punishment. It was to bring him closer to God to save him from some future fall which God foresaw. Because the most important thing is that we come to eternity, not that we get through this life nicely. Truly "he is the greatest teacher of all" (:22 GNB). And God does foresee our possible future sins, hence the Lord perhaps alluded to the book of Job when He told Peter that "Satan has desired to have you, but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not" (Lk. 22:31,32).

Job 36:22 Behold, God is exalted in His power. Who is a teacher like Him?-

Indeed this is so true. Who could ever think that all that happened to Job was to teach him. Although it seems to me that Elihu's understanding of God 'teaching' Job refers to the continuation of the sufferings, in order to teach Job that his blasphemous reactions were wrong.

Job 36:23 Who has prescribed His way for Him? Or who can say, 'You have committed unrighteousness?'-

God has been accused by Job of being unrighteous, and Job is being accused here of telling God what His way ought to be. The same root word for "unrighteous" here is translated throughout the book as sin, deceit, wrong, wickedness (Job 5:16; 6:29,30; 11:14; 13:7; 15:16; 22:23; 27:4; 34:32; 36:23). Elihu is right to condemn Job for this, calling God a sinner, and to exhort Job to accept God as his teacher (:22) rather than someone he can take to court and wish dead.

Job 36:24 Remember that you magnify His work, whereof men have sung-

Elihu could be saying that Job had sung hymns of praise, magnifying God for His work- and not really meant them.

Job 36:25 All men have looked thereon. Man sees it afar off-

GNB: "Everyone has seen what he has done; but we can only watch from a distance". Job wasn't satisfied with the necessary distance between God and man; his demands for explanation were inappropriate.

Job 36:26 Behold, God is great, and we don't know Him. The number of His years is unsearchable- Literally "the number of years". This is the same phrase as in Job 15:20: "The wicked man writhes in pain all his days, even the number of years that are laid up for the oppressor". Clearly he has Job in view, who was oppressed by raiders, and was apparently writhing in pain constantly. Eliphaz suggests that Job must suffer this for a Divinely decreed "number of years". This is the phrase used of the number of years Judah and Israel were to suffer for their sins in exile at the hands of their oppressors (Ez. 4:5; Dan. 9:2). "Laid up" is AV "hidden". Perhaps Elihu alludes to this when he uses the same phrase to say that "the number of years" cannot be "searched out" because God is great (Job 36:26 AV). This may refer to how Daniel tried to search out the number of years Judah ought to be in captivity, and had to conclude that the 70 years time period was flexible, depending upon Judah's repentance and other preconditions. We note Ez. 4:5 gives a different period.

Job 36:27 For He draws up the drops of water, which distil in rain from His vapour- It is possible that from about this point in the narrative, we are intended to imagine a thunderstorm developing. This begins with rain at this point. It comes to full term in the theophany where God Himself as it were comes down and speaks to men. See on Job 36:33; 37:1,2; 38:34. LXX "the drops of rain are numbered by him, and shall be poured out in rain to form a cloud". Elihu is still answering Job's objections that God is so far away that He pays no attention to human sin or righteousness. God in fact is aware of the minutest behaviour, and that awareness will result in the thunder of His judgment. Just as each drop of rain, every one of which He is aware of, results in a thunderstorm.

Job 36:28 which the skies pour down and which drop on man abundantly-

God's goodness to man is not merely like God sending rain abundantly on all men, as part of the water cycle which runs on clockwork. God Himself will appear in the gathering clouds, to demonstrate that He is not absent in His greatness, but very present.

Job 36:29 Yes, can any understand the spreading of the clouds, and the thunderings of His pavilion?-

Elihu makes the valid point that if Job cannot understand how God is working all around him, how can he reasonably demand to understand how God is working in his life.

Job 36:30 Behold, He spreads His light around Him. He covers the bottom of the sea- This again has relevance to the exiles. They felt they were at the bottom of the sea of nations, just as Jonah felt he had gone down to the depths of the sea. And yet from there he was restored, just as the exiles could have been if they followed the path of Job.

Job 36:31 For by these He judges the people. He gives food in abundance- The

"these" appear to refer to the clouds, a symbol of judgment and yet also providing rain which "gives food". Out of judgment comes blessing. But Elihu wrongly predicated this upon the personal repentance of Job. However the principle was true for the exiles; the judgment of Babylon could have led to their release and return to the land, enjoying the blessings of a restored Kingdom, "food in abundance". Hence LXX "For by them he will judge the nations". But this potential scenario didn't work out; Babylon and her confederate nations didn't fall in the dramatic, supernatural way envisaged, the Jews didn't repent, and most refused to participate in the possible restoration.

Job 36:32 He covers His hands with the lightning, and commands it to strike the mark- AV "With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it not to shine by the cloud that cometh betwixt". This is Elihu's commentary upon Job's words in Job 26:9: "He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it". As so often in the drama of Job, truths are presented but without context. This is indeed true; but Job and the exiles had to learn that the cloud that came between God and themselves was that of human sin (Is. 44:22), even though God responded by bringing that cloud (Job 36:32). The years of exile were the day of cloud (Ez. 34:12; Lam. 3:44). But through that cloud, the light of God's saving glory was still visible (Job 37:15).

God’s amazing control of events in the natural world is surely through Angelic influence. God gives the lightning- often associated with Angels- a specific charge [as He does to His Angels] that it “strike the mark”. Job has earlier complained that God is using him as target practice. Elihu goes along with this, and sees it reflected in the natural creation.

Job 36:33 Its noise tells about Him, and the livestock also concerning the storm that comes up- The idea is that the animals sensed the thunderstorm that was about to burst, and so should man. This again lends weight to the suggestion that a literal thunderstorm was gathering, which came to final term in God's theophany.

JOB CHAPTER 37

Job 37:1 Yes, at this my heart trembles, and is moved out of its place- Elihu has in view the approaching thunderstorm (see on Job 36:27,33). He says that just as the animals are trembling and moved because of it, so is he (Job 36:33).

Job 37:2 Hear, oh, hear the noise of His voice, the sound that goes out of His mouth- Elihu asks Job to hear the voice of the thunderstorm (see on :1). Of course Job could hear it physically, but Elihu has the idea that there is a Divine voice within it. And this is indeed true, Elihu functions to introduce the appearance and speaking of God which begins in the next chapter. But we must not fail to note that this is Elihu's appeal for Job's repentance. And Job doesn't respond. "Hear, oh, hear..." again invites us to imagine in what earnest tone of voice Elihu spoke.

Job 37:3 He sends it forth under the whole sky, and His lightning to the ends of the earth- God was appealing not just to Job but to the ends of the *eretz*, the land promised to Abraham. This was the potential scenario possible at the restoration. The restoration prophets envisage the supernatural destruction of Babylon coinciding with

the repentance of the exiles and leading to the repentance of a minority of the Gentiles at "the ends of the earth"; the borders of the *eretz* promised to Abraham where they were located, in Babylon and Assyria. The idea was that they would together form a new multi-ethnic people of God in the land, under a new covenant. But this potential didn't happen. For they didn't hear the voice of God.

Job 37:4 After it a voice roars. He thunders with the voice of His majesty. He doesn't hold back anything when His voice is heard- Elihu perceives there is a voice, a Divine voice, far beyond the literal roar of noise associated with the thunderstorm (see on :2). If that voice was "heard", as Elihu exhorts Job to hear it (:2), then nothing will be 'held back'. God is willing to do marvellous things (:5). This was of great relevance to the exiles. Had they heard / obeyed that prophetic voice, then the great potentials prophesied as possible in the restored Kingdom would have come true. God would have held nothing back. The Kingdom of God would again have been established in Israel.

Job 37:5 God thunders marvellously with His voice. He does great things, which we can't comprehend- The great things God does are all conditional; when or if His voice is heard / obeyed (:4). What we read in the following verses is therefore pregnant with wider meaning than simply describing God's control of the natural creation, thoughts elicited by the bursting of the thunderstorm. This is why the language is used in the restoration prophets concerning what could have happened if the exiles had been obedient to the prophetic word. That God indeed "does great things" was recognized by Job as well as the friends (Job 5:9; 9:10 s.w.). But they were to be taught now by the thunderstorm leading up to the actual revelation of God Himself that indeed God can do all things. "I know You can do all things" was Job's final response. The restoration likewise would have been a case of the Lord doing great things (Joel 2:21).

Job 37:6 For He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth'; likewise to the shower of rain, and to the showers of His mighty rain- God's command to the water is understood as meaning that God's prophetic word of restoration could bring about the restoration of the Kingdom for the exiles (Is. 55:10,11). See on :5.

Job 37:7 He seals up the hand of every man, that all men whom He has made may know it- GNB "He brings our work to a stop; he shows us what *He* can do". Job clearly thought that his works were the basis for his blessings, but this was not the complete picture. For the potentials planned by God to be realized, man must first realize he has no power of himself. His hand or power must be sealed up, so that God's prophetic word for His exiled, suffering people could be sealed up (s.w. Dan. 9:24). This is what Job was taught, and it was what God wished the exiles to understand (see on :5).

Job 37:8 Then the animals take cover, and remain in their dens- As those responsive to the wind go into their "dens" (AV), so in turn out of its den or room comes the storm of Divine theophany (:9). As the animals were running in response to the storm (Job 36:33), so should all men. God's people were likewise bidden obediently enter their chambers in order to be saved from the wrath to come (Is. 26:20).

Job 37:9 Out of its room comes the storm, and cold out of the north- See on :8. Just as

destruction had been called forth upon Judah from the north, so God calls forth His prepared natural phenomena from the north.

Job 37:10 By the breath of God, ice is given- The breath of God is His Spirit. And this was the point so relevant to the exiles. God's Spirit was potentially able to transform their entire existence, just as it operates throughout the cosmos and upon the earth.

And the breadth of the waters is frozen- LXX "He guides the water in whatever way he pleases". This is similar to the idea of the heart of kings being as water in His hands (Prov. 21;1); Cyrus and the rulers at the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther were all under God's control, but His activity was dependent upon His people hearing His voice (see on :5).

Job 37:11 Yes, He loads the thick cloud with moisture. He spreads abroad the cloud of His lightning- AV "By watering He wearieth the thick cloud". God created these thick clouds and could dissolve them at will, and maintains them within a perfect balance; whereas the exiles in their depression were under the impression that the thickness of the clouds meant that God could not therefore see nor judge (s.w. Job 22:13,14, see notes there). See on :15,16. But LXX "And if a cloud obscures what is precious to him, his light will disperse the cloud". This connects with the exiles being precious to Him (Is. 43:4). Even the cloud of His own anger with them could be dispersed by Him, such is His saving love and grace.

Job 37:12 It is turned around by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the surface of the habitable world- "Turned" is literally 'returned', and is pregnant with allusion to how God's prophetic word could make the exiles return. But that turning around was by "His guidance", AV "counsels". It was by response to God's word that this turn about could happen; see on :5.

Job 37:13 whether it is for correction, or for His land, or for grace, that He causes it to come- The reference to God's land again begs for reference to the situation with the exiles. The whole suffering of Job / Israel was for multiple possible reasons. It was to correct, it was so that His Kingdom or land would be restored, and through it all the whole exercise was to parade His grace.

Job 37:14 Listen to this, Job. Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God- We perhaps imagine Job agitated and distracted. He is asked to calm himself and consider the thunderstorm and its implications. This is clearly preparing him for the final appearance of God's word to him through that storm which will begin in the next chapter. Clearly the function of Elihu is to prepare us for God's words and revelation which is to come. "Listen to this... consider..." is clearly another appeal for Job's repentance. Job has spoken earlier of God's greatness; but Elihu appeals to Job to consider not only God's power in creation, but the way that everything reflects a Divine mind, so "clever" and complex, so far beyond any human understanding. And so Job is not to be so surprised that this same God has worked in his life in a way quite beyond human understanding. Truly, we cannot attach ultimate meaning to event in our lives, just as we cannot in His works in creation.

Job 37:15 Do you know how God controls them, and causes the lightning of His cloud to shine?- See on :11,16. Note the emphasis upon God's control of the clouds, and that

clouds aren't random occurrences but all intricately balanced with His light shining within them. This is in response to the impression held by the exiles, and wrongly imputed to Job in Job 22:13, that the thickness of the Divine clouds meant He could not see nor judge them (Is. 29:15; 40:27; Jer. 23:24; Lam. 3:44; Ez. 8:12).

This is perhaps commentary upon Job's words of Job 26:9: "He encloses the face of His throne, and spreads His cloud upon it". As so often in the drama of Job, truths are presented but without context. This is indeed true; but Job and the exiles had to learn that the cloud that came between God and themselves was that of human sin (Is. 44:22), even though God responded by bringing that cloud (Job 36:32). The years of exile were the day of cloud (Ez. 34:12; Lam. 3:44). But through that cloud, the light of God's saving glory was still visible (Job 37:15).

Job 37:16 Do you know the workings of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge?-

Elihu's description of the natural creation and the approaching thunderstorm leads him to ask Job a series of rhetorical questions- and God uses just the same argument to Job. Job of course cannot answer the questions about God's greatness and how He operates in the cosmos nor upon earth. This is to highlight how Job's demand for answers to questions about his sufferings is quite inappropriate. Job doesn't understand God's ways in nature, so he cannot expect to understand God's ways in his life- let alone bring God to court over these issues. If man cannot even behold the sun which had now appeared after the thunderstorm had cleared the skies, "the clear shining after rain" ["Now men don't see the light which is bright in the skies", Job 37:22], how foolish is Job to think he can face off against God in court and have Him condemned. He indeed is the discontented, over privileged toddler stamping their foot...

Job 37:17 You whose clothing is warm, when the earth is still by reason of the south wind?- GNB "No, you can only suffer in the heat when the south wind oppresses the land". The land of Israel had indeed been oppressed and the people had suffered. But this was all because of their abusers who had as it were been blown in by God's wind / Spirit.

Job 37:18 Can you, with Him, spread out the sky, which is strong as a cast metal mirror?- Elihu seems to hold the ancient view that the sky was in fact made of spread out material. This view, rather like the language of demons in the New Testament, is used without correction. Because the science is not the essential point; rather the idea is that the heavens are as a mirror, and by looking at the natural creation, one sees a reflection of God's work with us. And this is preparing us for God's words which are to soon come, which bid man do just this.

Job 37:19 Teach us what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness- Job had made his case against God and for himself in Job 31. Elihu is urging Job to understand how wrong this had been.

Earlier, Job had judged himself, setting in order his legal case, but declaring himself righteous (Job 13:8). By Job 23:4, Job is realizing that he needs to set his case in order before God; but he can't find God, or get God to engage in this game of judgment. He needed the final appearance of God at the end of the book to review his case, and declare that he is in fact wrong and condemned. But by grace, God will count him as right. He was prepared for this by Elihu's speech in Job 37:19: "Teach us

what we shall tell Him, for we can't make our case by reason of darkness". "Make our case" is s.w. "set my cause in order".

Job 37:20 Shall it be told Him that I would speak? Or should a man wish that he were swallowed up?-

Possibly we have here another formula offered to Job by Elihu, as to what he should say to God. Perhaps :19 is what Elihu thinks Job should say at this point: "Teach us what to say to God; our minds are blank; we have nothing to say" (GNB). And :20,21 continue that: "I won't ask to speak with God [as Job had previously, repeatedly demanded]; why should I give him a chance to destroy me? And now the light in the sky is dazzling, too bright for us to look at it..." (GNB). But there is still silence from Job. It needs God to give him two further chances before he repents.

Elihu's speech becomes more helpful and appropriate the closer he gets to his conclusion, which is followed by God's words, which Elihu is preparing us for. For that is his function. He is here making the legitimate point that the God who can do such wonders doesn't need to be informed that Job wants to talk to Him. And in the light of all the great potentials which He has prepared, Job's earnest wish for death was inappropriate.

Job 37:21 Now men don't see the light which is bright in the skies, but the wind passes, and clears them- The essential light of God was obscured by clouds. But the wind of God's Spirit, which had blown in the great heat of suffering (:17), would likewise clear the clouds and reveal His light. In the immediate context, this could be simply talking of the sun, which was now shining after the wind has cleared the thunder clouds. But there is no talk here of rain. We read of clouds and wind. I suggest the light bright in the skies was she shekinah glory, and then in Job 38 God's voice will speak out of this theophany. Wind, clouds, bright light and God's voice are all the classic components of a theophany, and not simply a thunderstorm coming and going. Job cannot look at the sun, nor at the shekinah glory; so how foolish and misplaced was his desire to see God Himself in a court.

Job 37:22 Out of the north comes golden splendour. With God is awesome majesty- LXX "From the north come the clouds shining like gold: in these great are the glory and honour of the Almighty". Job several times mentions "the north", connecting with the invaders of Israel "from the north" who would all the same finally be used to glorify God.

Job 37:23 We can't reach the Almighty. He is exalted in power- "Reach" is the word used of how Job sought to "probe" (AV "find out") the Almighty (Job 23:3; 28:12), whereas Elihu appears to agree with Zophar that "the Almighty" cannot be 'found out' or 'reached' (Job 11:7; 37:23). God's own appearance at the end is perhaps an answer to this. He cannot be 'found out' by intellectual argument or personal righteousness. Instead, He 'finds out' people and saves them by grace. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes that it is not so much a case of man 'knowing God', but rather of being "known of God" by grace (Gal. 4:9).

In justice and great righteousness, He will not oppress- Elihu's speech becomes more helpful and appropriate the closer he gets to his conclusion, which is followed by God's words, which Elihu is preparing us for. For that is his function. Elihu's conclusion is that God doesn't willingly afflict or oppress, and the same conclusion was reached in the context of the exiles by Jeremiah (Lam. 3:33 s.w.).

GNB "God's power is so great that we cannot come near him; he is righteous and just in his dealings with us". Job had wanted to come near to God in a legal sense, in judgment. Elihu is rightly saying that isn't possible, as Job himself had grudgingly realized in his speeches. But instead we are asked to trust that He is ultimately just in all His ways. We don't need to get God in court to prove that. All this of course was a big ask for Job, the righteous man who had lost his ten children, his health, wealth and everything, "without cause". Elihu is saying that God cannot be probed nor fully understood, but His justice cannot be questioned. That is therefore a matter of pure, total trust. And that is what it is to believe in God.

Job 37:24 Therefore men revere Him. He doesn't regard any who are wise of heart-

The punch line of all Elihu has said over six chapters is that God is to be feared rather than men who claim to be wise hearted; GNB "He ignores those who claim to be wise". This may appear a strange final point, bringing six chapters of speeches to a final conclusion. But in fact, the essence of Job's problem was that he had absorbed the positions and guilt of the friends, who were known as the wise; and who in turn claimed to be perpetuating the wisdom of previous wise men. They had falsely accused Job of being an adulterer, thief and abuser... and so in Job 31 Job has bitterly complained that God is accusing him of those things and therefore making him suffer. And therefore, Job says, God is unjust and a bad God. All this came about through Job paying too much regard to those who claimed to be wise of heart. So Elihu rightly concludes by making this point. God ignores human wisdom and judgment of men / ourselves, and so can we.

JOB CHAPTER 38

Job 38:1 Then Yahweh answered Job-

LXX: "After Elihu had ceased speaking, the Lord spake to Job from a tempest and clouds". The implication is that God takes over speaking from Elihu, confirming our suggestion that Elihu is indeed as he claims, speaking God's word.

Elihu has multiple times appealed for Job to repent, giving him word formulas of how to express it. But he has been silent. Despite that lack of repentance, God so wants Job that he himself now appeals to him. Job's response was inadequate and so God gives a second speech / appeal. Only after this does Job properly repent. Job has asked so many explicit questions, around 122 are recorded [and God answers by asking Job half this number, 61 questions]; and Job's sufferings beg very many implicit questions. Just some of Job's questions are to be found in Job 3:23; 7:12,17-21; 10:2-14,18; 13:3,18-27; 16:19-22; 19:7,25-27; 23:3-7; 30:20; 31:6,35-37. God's "answer" doesn't much address the questions, but rather seeks to convict Job of his sin, of his smallness and irrelevance, and of the greatness and basic goodness of God. Humble repentance is what God seeks, and when finally Job utters a few sentences expressing that- God says that he has spoken right about Him, and dramatically blesses and restores him.

The purpose of the day of judgment is for our benefit, not God's. He is not like a human judge, who must collect and review the evidence, weigh it up, and give a judgment. He knows the end from the beginning. The day of judgment is to prepare us to go from how we now are, into eternity. It wouldn't be much fun being as we are now, for ever. "We shall be changed", Paul says, at the resurrection. That change is not only physical but also mental and spiritual. The lion shall eat straw like the ox;

lion shall still be lion, but his mental and physical nature will have to be changed. Job longed for a day with God in court, and he got it. God Himself appeared and judged Job, convicting him of his sin; and he repented, and was then restored and his circumstances changed, looking forward to our "change" after the day of judgment. His whole view of God, the world and himself was changed by that judgment encounter. James speaks of the patience / endurance of Job resulting in the "end of the Lord", being pitiful towards man and saving us. But he speaks of this in the context of appealing for us to be "patient unto the coming of the Lord". God's final appearance to judge, convict and save Job is set up as representing the Lord's second coming in judgment. He has kept asking to "see" God and after his judgment, he will sarcastically, perhaps, say that "Now my eye sees Him". Not literally of course, but he means that in his conviction of sin, he had had his meeting with God. We are to endure [not 'be patient' as Job was far from patient], so that in the long run of our lives our faith remains, despite periods of darkness and short term loss of faith as Job experienced: "Be patient until the coming of the Lord... Be you also patient... For the coming of the Lord is at hand! You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the Lord is full of pity and is merciful" (James 5:7,8,11).

Bible teaching about judgment has this feature of it being a purgation; not a second chance, a second crack at all the issues we failed on, but all the same, a changing of our imperfect nature, physically and mentally. The Catholic idea of purgatory is seriously wrong, but like all false teachings, it has elements of truth to it that we must not also throw away. Consider the Biblical connection between judgment and purging / improving / changing of character:

Mal. 3:2,3: “But who can endure the day of His coming? ... He will be like a refiner's fire, like a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver”. This doesn't just mean that God's people will be sorted out, the good from the bad. It is saying that the good will be washed, refined and purified by the judgment experience. It is this which removes the dross.
Is. 4:4: “When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning”.
1 Cor. 3:13–15: “Each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done... If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire”. Whilst the immediate context speaks of the quality of our converts, the wider principle is that we are all building now. And the day of judgment will examine what we built. Possibly our apparent love, generosity, kindness, grace etc. was just all surface level; it will be revealed for that, and burnt up. But we ourselves shall pass through that fire to salvation.

1 Cor. 5:5 speaks of the flesh being destroyed but the spirit being saved in the day of judgment. But *sozo* , "saved", can as well be rendered "healed". The flesh will then be destroyed but the spirit healed.
1 Pet. 1:7 seems to be saying that the process of judgment day will also strengthen what spirituality we do have, and make it far brighter and eternal: "Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious

than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honour on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed".

God's replies to Job would be considered an *ad hominem* attack- had it come from a man. Instead of engaging with facts, evidence, or logical reasoning, the speaker tries to win the debate by making the opponent look untrustworthy or foolish. By shifting the focus to the other's personal inadequacies in other areas, attention is diverted from the actual issues. And those actual issues were very big- to man. A tornado from God had slain Job's ten kids. He was suffering all manner of things "without cause" (Job 2:3). Job's many questions and complaints about God are left unanswered and not even engaged with. That stands out clearly. Job is told that he is merely trying to "catch Leviathan with a fishhook" (Job 40:25). But this is the whole point- God is right. Job, like any man, is a fool. As thick skinned and stupid as the beasts. All he has said is not in fact logical reasoning, he has no evidence. Because the whole point is that God's ways are beyond man to understand. But God's reply provokes all that is within us to object to this style of dealing with an opponent. But that is the whole point. We have no leg to stand on. And yet we see so clearly that the friends ignore Job's situation and arguments, and just launch into *ad hominem* attacks on him (see on Job 5:2). We as readers are led to dislike the friends' *ad hominem* attacks on Job. But then God does just that to Job. Again we see how God demonstrates that He is so far above all our reasoning and demands for what we consider 'reasonable' engagement. And yet the end of the Lord in all this is that He is so pitiful and of such tender mercy (James 5:11).

The answer is to Job, not Elihu who has just spoken, nor to the friends. The whole focus of the book is upon Job's restoration, and out of that comes the restoration of the friends.

Out of the whirlwind- The restoration prophets speak of the whirlwind coming to judge both Israel and her abusers (Is. 40:24; 41:16; Jer. 23:19; 30:32), and it is through the whirlwind that God's cherubic glory is revealed in exile in Ezekiel. But out of that whirlwind, Yahweh speaks. We read here of Yahweh for the first time; His Name was to be declared through those judgments.

The whirlwind is time and again a symbol of Divine condemnation (s.w. Ps. 55:8; 83:15 "pursue them with Your tempest, and terrify them with Your storm"; Prov. 1:27 "when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when your disaster comes on like a whirlwind"; Prov. 10:25: "When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more"; Is. 29:6 "She will be visited by Yahweh of Armies with thunder, with earthquake, with great noise, with whirlwind"; Is. 40:24 "He merely blows on them, and they wither, and the whirlwind takes them away as stubble"; Is. 41:16 "You will winnow them, and the wind will carry them away, and the whirlwind will scatter them"; Is. 66:15 "Yahweh will come with fire, and His chariots shall be like the whirlwind; to render His anger with fierceness"; Jer. 23:19 "Behold, the storm of Yahweh, His wrath, has gone forth. Yes, a whirling storm. It shall burst on the head of the wicked"; 25:32 "a great storm shall be raised up from the uttermost parts of the earth. The slain of Yahweh shall be at that day from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth"; 30:23 "the storm of Yahweh, His wrath, has gone forth, a sweeping storm: it shall burst on the head of the wicked"; Ez. 13:11,13 " there shall be an overflowing storm; and on you great hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall tear it... I will even tear it with a stormy wind in My wrath; and there shall be an overflowing storm in My anger"; Hos. 8:17 "they sow the wind, and they will reap the whirlwind"; Hos. 13:3 "they will be like the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing floor"; Am. 1:14 "with a storm in the day of the whirlwind"; Zech. 7:14 "I will scatter

them with a whirlwind among all the nations"). But from this symbol of Job's condemnation there came the appeal for repentance and the comfort of God's final salvation. We understand why, as Elihu hears and sees the whirlwind approaching from a distance, he absolutely begs Job to repent (Job 37:1) before it arrives. But Job remains silent. And so it comes.

In Job 9:17, Job had complained that God crushes him with a whirlwind. By appearing in the whirlwind, God as it were goes along with that, as if to say "Yes, and no apologies". Not a hint of pity nor tender mercy; but through that we come to "the end of the Lord", full of pity and tender mercy (James 5:11). Many connections with Job 9 will now follow. Job is initially persuaded that the Divine whirlwind is God's unreasonable anger with Him, the same kind of whirlwind that had slain his children. In Job 9:34 Job had said that he would agree to a meeting with God if God first removed His rod from Job, i.e. restored him. God's appearance to Job is therefore met cynically by him; he doesn't want to engage with Him.

Job 38:2 Who is this who makes counsel dark by words without knowledge?-

Elihu had told Job that he could make no legal case against God "by reason of darkness". On one hand, we know so little. By demanding answers from God, and dogmatically suggesting his own, Job was darkening the light of God's plans for him. But he could not understand those plans. He had to trust that they were light, they were good, God is a good God, and all his complaints were darkness, somehow obscuring that good. Even though this "good" involved slaying his 10 kids, and insisting Job has nonrecourse to any explanation as to why. In this we see the danger of all groups who claim absolute truth, for whom there is a rational explanation for everything, the answers to everything being, so they say, either in the Bible or in the writings of their founding fathers. This is not to say that there is not truth, but that truth is simply God's ultimate salvation of His people in His Son. The paradox is that by Job striving to have all the answers, he was darkening the pure light of what God was trying to do with him.

Just as digital communication through typed words can lead to misunderstanding because we fail to hear the tone of voice in which the communication is being made, so we can misunderstand God's closing words to Job because we don't hear the tone in which He said them. James 5:11 says that we see the end of the Lord, very pitiful and of tender mercy. I suggest we read His words here spoken in a pitiful and tender, merciful way. "Who is this...?" need not be read as God mocking Job. It is a question that begs the answer "I, mere man". We think of the question is rhetorically used in Ps. 24:8, "Who is this king of glory?", answered by "Yahweh strong and mighty". Likewise Is. 63:1 "Who is this that comes from Edom...? It is I... mighty to save". More examples in Ps. 25:12; Jer. 46:7; 49:19; 50:44; Lam. 3:37. In none of them does "Who is this...?" imply any mockery of the object of the question. For more examples of God speaking tenderly and pitifully to Job, although at the same time in anger and hurt, see on :3. What may be read as bitter irony from God may better be read as rhetorical questioning, spoken with pity and tenderness, intended to produce the required repentance. God could have gone through Job's words and specifically pointed out all the blasphemy. He doesn't callously humiliate Job, but leads him to humility in a totally gentle and non-abusive way. He gently demonstrates His superiority, without in any way crushing Job or demeaning him. In fact, it is done beautifully; and this is some explanation for the extensive sections about Behemoth and Leviathan. Whether or not that argument works well on us in our age, who don't

believe in the existence of evil monsters, it was just what *Job* needed to gently get him to see perspective.

The answer to this "Who...?" is 'I Job a mere man'. And so God goes on in :3 to ask Job to answer as a man. "Like a man..." doesn't have to mean 'show yourself to be a strong man, parade your masculinity'. That would be to retroject into the interpretation our current usage of that phrase. God is simply asking Job to remember his humanity, and to answer as a man. God's "counsel" is His plan, His intention, His rationale (as in Ps. 33:11 "The counsel of Yahweh... the thoughts of His heart"). The essence of God's plan is human salvation. Job was darkening this by claiming to understand it. He will now be shown that he cannot understand it in creation, let alone in his own life. Perhaps God's opening comment that Job suffered "without cause" effectively means "without a cause that man can understand".

The "counsel" of God refers to God's plan, and possibly to the meaning of Job's sufferings. But Job had obscured God's intentions by his bad responses to them. This is why God says that Job has frustrated His saving plan by his words- the significance of words in Job is huge. The words in view are those Job uttered during the dialogues. Faith is trust that God is working according to a design and plan. But God will demonstrate that His designs in creation cannot be understood by man. They can only be trusted in and finally observed. We cannot possibly perceive the mechanics of the atonement, of grace, of salvation. Otherwise faith would not be faith. And this is why so many who overly emphasize doctrinal or theological purity actually don't have a strong personal faith in salvation.

The LXX suggests Job had another agenda which he was trying to hide from God, despite Job's protestations of absolute openness and saying precisely what he thought: "Who is this that hides counsel from me, and confines words in his heart, and thinks to conceal them from me?". This would seem to be the sense, because Job pleads guilty to this charge in Job 42:3. There, he has "hidden counsel without knowledge". And he has done that by 'darkening' that counsel by all his words, which would have been better left unsaid.

Or we can read it as in the Masoretic Text, as an accusation that Job was darkening God's word ["counsel"] by his own words. He was not simply accepting the truth of God's word because he was so full of his own words. And this is what we see in ourselves and humanity generally so often; the Bible's words are crowded out by the words of our own presuppositions.

The Lord and His word is the light of the world. But we can darken that light, if we do not properly reflect it. God complained that Job had darkened His word (Job 38:2 NIV); the truths which Job should have taught to his friends he relayed very imperfectly, through the prism and distortion of clinging on to his own traditions and preconceptions of God, and his deep desire for self justification.

'Taking counsel in our own soul' is typical depressive human response (Ps. 13:2). We think our best and only counsellor is ourselves, in our self talk, we ask ourselves the questions and get often wrong answers. The spiritual mind takes counsel in God; David speaks in Ps. 119:24 of God's words being his counsellor, and describes God's words as His "counsel". If those words are in our hearts, then that will be the response we get. Otherwise we are mired within ourselves, bogged down with endless self talk and introspection which leads to no good answer, and often to very contorted and wrong self advice. "There are many advices [Heb.] in a man's heart; but the counsel of Yahweh shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Job 18:7 says that a man's "own counsel [s.w.] shall cast him down". God's comment on Job is that he had "darkened [God's] counsel

by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). Job did this by doing what David is here tempted to do, taking counsel in his own soul. Job had refused the "counsel" of the friends, which was wrong; but had turned into himself for counsel and thus had "darkened" or obscured the light of God's counsel. Job agrees with this when he confesses that indeed he has hidden, or hidden himself, from [God's] counsel, and he was without knowledge. That is my paraphrase of the difficult Hebrew of Job 42:3: "Who is / how is he that hides counsel without knowledge. Therefore have I uttered that I understood not".

Job 38:3 Brace yourself like a man, for I will question you, then you answer Me!- On one hand, "Like a man" is not said as it might be said today, as an appeal to masculinity. Rather is it asking Job to realize he is human, and to answer these questions as a human. The implication is that by exalting his own words above God's (see on :2), Job was forgetting his humanity and effectively attempting to rise above God. His questions of God had been inappropriate, just as the friends had been wrong to seek wisdom by asking the sages, mere men (Job 8:8; 21:29 s.w.); it is for God to question us. For we and not God are in the dock. But "man" is *geber*, we could also render "like a hero", in the spirit of 1 Cor. 16:13 "Quit yourselves like men, be strong". Job had boasted that he would come before God like a prince, sure of his rightness. God bids Job now act like the hero Job thought himself to be.

God's entreaty in Job 38:3 is repeated by God verbatim in His second speech in Job 40:7. The English translations, including the NEV, all miss the force of one word in the entreaty. KJV "Gird up *now* thy loins". The Hebrew behind the "now" is usually used of an inferior begging a superior, and we could as well translate it "Please". Elsewhere it is translated "I pray / beg / beseech you". Most translations ignore it. But on :2 I argued that although God speaks with anger, as one may do to a beloved child, He also speaks with pity and tenderness. You can speak with those feelings to a beloved child who has spoken wrongly. To respectfully ask Job to "please, I beg you" act like a man is not, I suggest, to be read as sarcasm. But as reflecting genuine love, pity and respect.

God will go on to speak about the world and the natural creation. One reason for this is that He seeks to persuade Job that in fact the world is not centred about man. So much else is going on in the natural creation, which man is unaware of and sees only a fraction of. Suffering makes us think that the world is centred around me, and any wider thought is typically beneath the assumption that the world is centred around man. Job's sufferings remain as they are, but God is vastly expanding the horizon behind them. Man and his sufferings are of no real account. All this is a radical challenge to the significance of human freedom; man assumes that his freedom is paramount, a given right. When in God's cosmos, it is not. Likewise we have to reassess what we mean by human dignity, human rights and the meaning of the human person. The book of Job shows that for sure, man has no rights; and God's view of human dignity is profound but doesn't coincide with what we would like it to be.

Job 38:4 Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding- The friends had argued that traditional wisdom from a few generations of elders declared that Job's sufferings would be because he had sinned exceptionally. God reframes the perspective by saying that wisdom was in the beginning... and Job and the friends weren't there. In the drama, we imagine a significant silence after each question. The laying of foundations is the word used for

what the exiles were to do for the temple in Zion (Ezra 3:6,10 etc.). Just as God had laid those foundations without any human observation or strength, so He would lay the foundations of the restored Zion (Is. 44:28; 48:13). But the exiles like Job had forgotten that (Is. 51:13). Zechariah teaches this same parallel between God's laying the foundations of the earth, and His empowering the laying of the temple foundations (Zech. 4:9; 8:9; 12:1). But how that was to be done was beyond human understanding. Job was silent when asked as to how it was done. The 'how' of God's purpose is a challenge to our faith, and this is reflected in our theological efforts to explain the 'how' of God's Kingdom. There is an element of mystery to it; for it is by grace alone, beyond our effort and understanding.

Job 38:5 Who determined its measures, if you know? Or who stretched the line on it?- God had both stretched the line of destruction upon Zion (2 Kings 21:13; Lam. 2:8), and that of restoration (Zech. 1:16). He gave the "measures" for the reconstruction of Zion and the temple system (s.w. often in Ez. 40:5,6 etc.); and yet He had likewise measured out the earth (s.w. Is. 40:12). The restoration of Job and all God's people was to be predicated upon the fact that His work could not be measured and was known finally only to Him (s.w. Jer. 31:37; 33:22). Just as in Gen. 1:9 "Let the waters be marked out with a line", so in the new creations God works, He has the power to determine the dimensions of His work in a way we do not.

Job 38:6 Whereupon were its foundations fastened?- The answer is 'Apparently upon nothing'. And this is the way of faith; to believe that out of apparently nothing, restoration can come. This was the challenge to Job, the exiles and to all of God's people. Or we can see this as God's comment upon Job's primitive belief in a flat earth that floats around in space: "He stretches out the north over empty space, and hangs the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). The word for "foundations" is better "sockets". God perhaps is probing Job's cosmology. Is the earth and life upon it really floating around with no foundation, founded upon nothing? Are the sockets of the earth really driven in... to precisely "nothing" as Job had so dogmatically stated? Is not something Divine, God, ultimately, actually somehow beneath it all... unperceived and misunderstood by Job?

Or who laid its cornerstone- This again was of special significance to the exiles who were bidden follow Job's path to restoration. The laying of the cornerstone of the new temple was no less an act of pure grace than that of creation in the first place. Hence Zech. 4:7 "Who are you, great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you are a plain; and he will bring out the capstone [cornerstone] with shouts of ‘Grace, grace, to it!’". The exiles didn't make use of that grace, and so these plans were reworked, to the even greater provision of the cornerstone in the person of the Lord Jesus (Ps. 118:22).

These questions allude to Job's belief that the earth was flat and rested upon a foundation which had a cornerstone. When asked about these things, Job cannot answer. And we know that in fact the earth is a sphere and doesn't rest upon such a pedestal with a foundation and cornerstone. Job is portrayed as pitifully ignorant even of his own misconceptions.

Job 38:7 when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?-

It was usual that absolutely everyone involved in a building project shouted for joy when the corner stone was laid (Zech. 4:7; Ezra 3:10). All the Angels had been present, shouting for joy... but man, and Job specifically, had been absent. This

continues the theme of the prologue, that stuff was going on in Heaven involving the Angels that man was totally not party to. Neither in presence nor in time. And as a result of this kind of thing, Job lost everything. LXX "When the stars were made, all my angels praised me with a loud voice". This may be correcting the idea expressed by Job and the friends that there are sinful Angels, and God is angry both with Angels and men.

There is an obvious connection with the "sons of God" of the prologue in Job 1:6. I explained there that they refer to Job's fellow worshippers, although they had their Angelic representatives in the court of heaven. But the friends are the fellow worshippers, and the satan figure morphs into the friends. The contrast is therefore with how the sons of God should be rejoicing at God's work in testing and restoring Job, just as their Angelic counterparts did at creation. But instead they were caught up in their petty jealousies and conspiracy theories, and failed to see the wonder of God's new creation.

Job 38:8 Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it broke forth from the womb-

Previously, Job has spoken of Yamm, the evil sea monster (Job 9:8), feeling that God was brutally fighting him as He does Yamm. But God here presents the sea as totally under His control, with limits set by Him (:11)and actually created by Him, birthed out of Him. And He speaks to the sea as to a toddler that is obedient to his control, even if it is unruly: "*Thus far you may come but no farther*, and here I stop your proud waves" (38:11).

There are several allusions in Job to Babylonian legends concerning Marduk – indicating that the book must have been re-written in Babylon with allusion to these legends. Thus the *Enuma Elish* 4.139,140 speaks of how Marduk limited the waters of Tiamat, and set up a bar and watchmen so that the waters wouldn't go further than he permitted. But this very language is applied to God in Job 7:12 and Job 38:8–11. One of the purposes of Job was to urge Judah that Yahweh was greater than Marduk, He and not Marduk was to be Israel's God.

The sea was understood to be the abode of evil monsters. Yet Job stresses how God is in control of the raging sea. Just look out for all the references to the sea in Job (J. Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea: Echoes of a Canaanite Myth in the Old Testament* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1985)). The book of Daniel perhaps makes the same point – the beasts that arise out of the raging sea are all under God's control and part of His purpose with Israel (Dan. 7:2). God artlessly claims to have created the sea (Job 38:8–11). In the Canaanite pantheon, Baal was seen as well matched in conflict by Yam, the sea god. But it's emphasized by God that He created the sea, shuts it up within bounds, brought it out from the womb (Job 38:8). See on Job 39:2.

As God 'shut up' Job (Job 1:10 "Haven't You made a hedge around him" s.w.), so He could 'shut up' the sea, with all the evil associated with it (Job 38:8). For at creation, He had commanded the waters where to go and they obeyed just one word from Him. The point is, God is using poetry to reframe these pagan myths in the context of His omnipotence, to show that His awesome power means that there's no room left for these supposed beings to exist. It's noteworthy that many times the Bible speaks of the power of God over raging seas – for the sea was so deeply associated with evil in the minds of Semitic peoples (e.g. Ps. 77:19; 93:4 and the fact that three of the Gospels emphasize how Jesus walked over raging sea – Mt. 8:23–27; Mk. 4:36–41; Lk. 8:22–25; "Who is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him!").

Job 38:9 when I made clouds its garment, and wrapped it in thick darkness- The "thick darkness" is created by God, it is He who can shroud Himself from human

understanding; but this doesn't mean that He cannot "judge through the thick darkness" (Job 22:13 s.w.). The thick darkness was only from man's viewpoint; not from God's. The fact man feels God to be distant and shrouded doesn't mean He actually is. And this is a fundamental truth for all time, that our perceptions of God don't mean that this is what He actually is. For God was not created by man in his image and likeness, but the other way around.

The thick darkness was a "swaddllng-band" for the sea (AV). The newborn sea, fresh as it were from the womb (:8), is completely subject to God as its Creator, and is absolutely not a form of radical evil outside of His control, as was imagined by the surrounding peoples.

Job understands that it is *God* who sends the good and evil, the light and the darkness, into his life (Job 30:26). Significantly, he states his faith that *God even marks out the boundary between light and darkness* (Job 26:10) – a similar idea in essence to the reassurance of Is. 45:5 that God creates both light and darkness. The 'darkness', however we experience and understand it, is framed and limited by God; it is not a power or being with independent existence outside the realm of God's power. God confirms Job's understanding later, when He says that it is He who can swaddle the sea [another figure for uncontrollable evil] in bands of darkness (Job 38:9) – as if to say that it is God who gives things like darkness and the sea their sinister appearance and perception by men; but He is in control of them, using them in His hand. See on Job 38:10.

Job 38:10 marked out for it My bound, set bars and doors- Job's idea that God fixes limits for the darkness is repeated by God saying that He sets limits for the raging sea. God controls evil, or our perception of it (e.g. of the sea as being evil), and He sets limits for it – which was exactly what He did to the power of 'Satan' in the prologue to Job. All these statements by God about His use of and power over things like darkness and sea, with the perceptions of them as being independent forces of evil, are quite different to Canaanite and Babylonian views of creation. In them, gods like Baal had to fight Yam, the evil sea god, with clubs provided by other deities; in the Babylonian version, Marduk has to arm himself with various weapons in order to try to get supremacy over Tiamat (S. Dalley, *Myths From Mesopotomia: Vol. 4, The Epic of Creation* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1989) pp. 251–255). But Yahweh as revealed in the book of Job has utter and absolute power over the sea [monster] and the [supposed god of] darkness – for He created the sea and the darkness and uses them creatively for His purpose. That's the whole purpose of the many 'nature passages' in the book of Job. And the language of Genesis 1:9 is evidence enough of His power. He speaks a word – and light, darkness and seas are created, the waters gathering obediently where He commands them. Likewise God isn't in any battle with Leviathan – rather is the monster actually His "plaything" (Ps. 104:26 says likewise). The way the doors and bars of even the sea are under God's control connects with how God was to open the great doors of Babylon, to cause the city to fall and release the exiles back to His land (Is. 45:1).

Job 38:11 and said, 'Here you may come, but no further. Here your proud waves shall be stayed?'- The waters were representative of the invading nations. There was a limit to Judah's sufferings, because the waters of the nations had their limits. Job likewise was to be tested so far but no further. Jer. 5:22 teaches that this feature of God should make men respect and love Him- which Job needed to now do: "I am the LORD; why don't you fear me? Why don't you tremble before me? I placed the sand

as the boundary of the sea, a permanent boundary that it cannot cross". In Job's case, God had set a boundary around him- his life was not to be taken from him.

Job 38:12 Have you commanded the morning in your days- God consciously makes the sun rise each day (Mt. 6:26)- it isn't part of a kind of perpetual motion machine. Hence the force of His promises in the prophets that in the same way as He consciously maintains the solar system, so He will maintain Israel. But this is by grace, totally without human involvement nor understanding of the processes, the whys and wherefores with which the dialogues have been so pointlessly taken up.

And caused the dawn to know its place- This is God's comment on Job's words of Job 28:23 about wisdom / relationship with God: "God understands its way, and He knows its place". Just as there is a sense in the natural creation that things such as the dawn have a specific "place" known by God alone (Job 38:12 s.w.), so the way of true relationship with Him, "wisdom", is known by Him alone. We do not find that "place" by intellectual effort, searching hither and thither, but by being open to God's leading of us as Job was.

Job 38:13 that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and shake the wicked out of it?- If the "earth" as in the sense of *eretz* Israel is in view, then the ends of the earth were where the exiles were located, in Persia / Babylon. The idea of a dawning which chases away evil is used in Mal. 4:2,3 of what could have happened at the restoration of the exiles- had they followed Job's path.

Job 38:14 It is changed as clay under the seal- Although Job is written in ancient Hebrew, there are many signs of how it was rewritten in Babylon. The Babylonians used seals which were impressed upon clay rather than wax. Perhaps the idea is that as the seal changes clay (what man is made from) from a formless lump into something highly significant, so God can work with man. But the original is very unclear. LXX: "Or didst thou take clay of the ground, and form a living creature, and set it with the power of speech upon the earth?"

And stands forth as a garment- The idea is of an embroidered dress, where valuable stones make the pattern stand out in relief. Again the sense is that God can transform the very ordinary into something of beauty and significance.

Job 38:15 From the wicked, their light is withheld. The high arm is broken-

God says that He withholds light from the wicked. But Job has twice complained that God gives him light: "Why is light given to him who is in misery, life to the bitter in soul... Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, whom God has hedged in?" (Job 3:20,23). It seems God is trying to tell Job that although Job has sinned and He demands Job's repentance, the fact Job is alive and 'has light' from God by His special decree to the Satan, is proof enough that God also sees Job as some kind of righteous. He sees His sinful servant as righteous... because He loves him. And Job is intended to join the dots, in the midst of this 'out of the whirlwind' judgment of him by God... and see that through all that, God loves him.

LXX "And hast thou removed light from the ungodly, and crushed the arm of the proud?". Job has complained that light has been removed from him, and so he is being reminded that he has indeed sinned, and is "ungodly", although relatively very righteous, and counted as righteous by the God who so loved him. This is a lesson needed for all 'Godly' people, especially middle class Western Christians, and it was

what the exiles had to learn in order that they might repent. Perhaps God is quoting with approval Job's lament that the light of the wicked is darkness (Job 24:13-17).

Job 38:16 Have you entered into the springs of the sea? Or have you walked in the recesses of the deep?- GNB "Have you been to the springs in the depths of the sea? Have you walked on the floor of the ocean?". Job is reminded that he is ignorant of many things in creation, which remain inaccessible and remote. And so it is with insisting to know everything about Divine process with us. These things are purposefully hidden, and it is part of recognizing our humanity to realize that. Earlier, Job argued that those who are well travelled would agree with him, that the wicked often prosper. He states this in counter to the friends' argument that very old, wise people have learnt that wicked people never prosper. Job saw travelling around as a source of wisdom. Here God asks Job whether he or anyone has travelled very far at all. GNB of :24 makes the same point: "Have you been to the place where the sun comes up, or the place from which the east wind blows?". God's point is that human wisdom is of no account. This was the final conclusion of Elihu's speeches, on God's behalf- that He ignores those who are claimed to be wise. Job had argued that travellers were wise because they had seen so much. But they had never been hardly anywhere on the earth, let alone the cosmos. Man is therefore utterly helpless when it comes to knowledge; he has to accept God and His ways.

Job 38:17 Have the gates of death been revealed to you? Or have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?- Job earlier complained that "On my eyelids is the shadow of death" (Job 16:16 AV). Job felt he was facing death right before his eyes, and the shadow of that death was cast over his eyes. Job thought he had been there, standing at the gates of death (Job 10:21,22; 17:16). But God disagrees, challenging Job that he has not in fact seen "the gates of the shadow of death" (s.w.). Job had only seen death from a personal, human perspective. God sees death for what it really is, and it is far more terrible than man perceives. For from God's perspective it carries with it the tragedy of the eternity which a man has missed, if he has rejected God. And God is saying that Job hasn't see death from that perspective.

Job 38:18 Have you comprehended the earth in its breadth? Declare, if you know it all- Elihu implies that if Job repents, then he will be brought out from a narrow place into a broad place (Job 36:16). God perhaps comments on this by saying that the "broad place" is in fact the whole earth (s.w. Job 38:18). Man (including Job) is already in freedom; it is a case of accepting it.

Job 38:19 What is the way to the dwelling of light? As for darkness, where is its place- The dialogues have much to say about light and darkness; but the question of their ultimate origin is with God. This was what the exiles had to be reminded of (Is. 45:5-7). Job had rather simplistically concluded that the place of darkness was death (Job 10:21,22). But there was more to it than that. All the various theories of the origin of evil in a cosmic being have been deconstructed in Job. And now God reveals the ultimate truth- that the origin is with Him. Light is distinct from the sun, moon and planets, as Genesis itself teaches (Gen. 1:3,16). The question of ultimate origins is with God.

GNB "Do you know where the light comes from or what the source of darkness is?". The source of evil / darkness is the issue. And it is in God. Any theories about

monsters or entities of evil [we could say 'a personal devil'] were and are mere guesswork.

Job 38:20 that you should take it to its bound, that you should discern the paths to its house?- Job's experiences were of affliction set in his "path" (s.w. Job 19:8). And the Bedouins he curses in Job 30:1-12 were those who had abused him in that "path" (Job 30:13). So it seems he has in view the Sabeans who had abused him in the prologue, and yet this section also has clear reference to the friends. Yet that "path" of affliction which God had given Job was the path of wisdom and relationship with Him which was indiscernible to the human eye (Job 28:7 cp. 28); the fact that the ultimate path is invisible to the secular, naked eye is a truth stamped upon the natural creation (Job 38:20), and yet after the affliction or trouble, this path shines clearly (Job 41:32). And this was to be Job's experience at his restoration, as it could have been likewise for the exiles.

The path to darkness is developed by God in Job 41:32 when He comments that He has made Leviathan, the beast of the sea, the supposed creator of evil, and Leviathan's path "shines" as he supposedly moves through the waters of evil. The boundary between light and darkness is thus confused. God makes the path of darkness and shining path of white light, according to Job 41:32. As creator of both light and darkness, only He can do this.

GNB "Can you show them how far to go, or send them back again?". It was God who had set a limit on the darkness touching Job- his life was not to be taken. But God alone can do this.

Job 38:21 Surely you know, for you were born then, and the number of your days is great!- This is also an answer to the way the friends considered that there was wisdom accrued through the number of days lived. Within the context of eternity and God's creative power, such knowledge is as nothing. It is therefore only the truth revealed from God which is a source of truth, and not length of human days. God is engaging with the idea of the friends, that number of days is related to wisdom. But compared to the specter of infinity, that is a very weak argument.

Job 38:22 Have you entered the treasuries of the snow, or have you seen the treasures of the hail- This implies that God has gone exploring though His own creation- making Him even more marvellous than being just the creator. Hail is a common symbol of God's judgment (Ex. 9:18-29; Ps. 18:12, 13; 78:47,48; 105:32; Is. 30:30; 32:19 etc.). These things are stored up by God for use at the appropriate time. Both Job and the exiles needed to realize that they were not merely at the whim of God, but He had prepared their experiences in order to achieve specific ends.

Job 38:23 which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?- Earlier Job has argued that judgment is "reserved" until the last day (Job 21:30 s.w.), and therefore the wicked appear to prosper. God is here confirming that view. Eliphaz claimed that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle (Job 15:24). But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

Job 38:24 By what way is the lightning distributed, or the east wind scattered on the earth?- AV "By what way is the light parted?", referring to refraction. God has not simply made the good, but He has refracted it in various ways. Peter gets a glance at this when he writes of the refracted beauty of God's grace (AV "the manifold grace of God", 1 Pet. 4:10). Job is being taught that life is not as simple as light and darkness, good and evil; but these things are refracted by God in different ways, such is the beauty and complexity of His workings. And He was working in Job's life with such attention to detail. Job was so wrong to think that God was so great that He had forgotten him or was insensitive to him. God's answer is that He has a very deep awareness of every tiny activity in all creation. He knows how the fur of a horse ripples, how man's clothes feel warmed by the east wind, the effect of rain that lands on rocks where no man has ever been.

Job 38:25 Who has cut a channel for the flood water, or the path for the thunderstorm- The flood waters were a symbol for evil such as the invaders who had taken Judah into exile. But God cuts channels so that His flood waters dissipate, just as His wind / Spirit drives away the clouds that come between God and man. And He had directed the path of that particular thunderstorm to come directly upon Job.

"A way for the lightning of thunder" is "A path for the bolt of thunder". What appears random high speed zigzag is in fact all running according to an exact path predetermined by God. There is no random path, the path has been determined ahead of time.

"A channel" is literally a trench (s.w. 1 Kings 18:32; Ez. 31:4), and :25-27 are presenting the water cycle as an irrigation system created by God. But it is to bring water to remote land where man has never been and no crops are sown. Why? That's the thing. Man has no idea why God would bother doing all this work "without cause"- apparently. Job's sufferings are likewise apparently "without cause" to human eyes. God gives no answer to Job's 122 questions. He just says that He is at work and man must trust that. Water was valuable in the land of Uz... and God's use of it may appear wasteful and pointless. But that is what man is left to grapple with. God satiates the wasteland (:27), using the same word Job has used to complain that God has satiated him with bitterness (Job 9:18). God is saying that there is indeed no rhyme nor reason to the suffering- to man's eyes. But He is God. And He makes life possible in unexpected places.

A related theme is that God sends rain and creates life far from where man has ever been. Job is asked where he was when creation occurred. He, indeed no man, was present. The impression is that God is doing many things which man has nothing to do with. Man is not in fact the centre of the cosmos. Just as the book opens with the scene in Heaven... intentionally shrouded in obscurity, impossible for man to totally expound. But as a result of those issues far above man, Job on earth suffers the loss of all things. But then we are left with the enigma of :26; God "causes it to rain on a land where no man is", but this clearly alludes to Gen. 2:5: "the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the land, and [because] there was no man to till the ground". The rain was caused to come because of man. But God causes it to rain where no man is. Clearly 'something's going on here' but we cannot perceive what, exactly. God sent rain for man, but it often falls where there is no man and never has been and never will be. There's a bigger picture going on that man cannot perceive. And that is about all God has to say to Job about the problem of human suffering. His Divine heart breaks for man, but He expresses no pity nor comfort for man at this point. Not a hint of it. But

it's like Joseph acting one way before his brethren when his heart was breaking for them...

Job 38:26 to cause it to rain on a land where no man is; on the wilderness, in which there is no man- God's actions cannot be simply understood by men. To the ancients, it would have appeared pointless to send rain on the remote deserts. But His goodness, represented by the rain, operates on a level far beyond our comprehension. It is not utilitarian, intended to just produce some easily discernible good. His grace is far greater than that.

These questions demonstrate to Job that he has no idea of the rationale behind God's behaviour. He cannot see it in creation, and so neither can he in his own life. His 122 questions therefore go unanswered specifically by God. God's answers to Job are effectively saying: 'You in fact are not at all the centre of the universe. You and your pain and your complaints are nothing in the bigger picture of things'. But God says it in such a way that the spiritual man is not offended, doesn't stomp off muttering about 'cold comfort', but actually 'gets it'. God brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26)- to make the point that man does not in fact hold the central place in the universe which he imagines he does.

And yet we can read God's argument as being that if and when He sends rain on previously unknown places, man then goes and lives there. Man follows God's blessings. This is precisely the thought of Ps. 107:35-38: "He turns desert into a pool of water, and parched land into sources of water, and he makes the hungry dwell there, and they establish an inhabited city. And they sow fields and plant vineyards, and these produce fruit of the harvest. And he blesses them and they grow very numerous, and he does not reduce their livestock".

Job 38:27 to satisfy the waste and desolate ground- Although the gift of His grace in rain falls sometimes where it apparently has no purpose (:26), it also falls on other areas where the tender grass is nourished by it. And His purpose is to revive even the apparently useless and waste land; both in the life of Job, and of His deserted land and people.

To cause the tender grass to spring forth?- "Waste and desolation" is the language of condemnation (s.w. Zeph. 1:15). But God makes the point that He sends rain "to satisfy the desolate and waste ground"- the very place where the condemned lived whom Job despised in his prosperity (Job 30:3 s.w.). But God doesn't despise even the most desperate of society. He sends rain to cheer them whom the righteous despise. And this was to help Job be convicted of his own desperation, of how wrong he had been to despise others and trust that he was righteous; and to further convict him that God still sought to revive him, as He did those deserted lands.

Job 38:28 Does the rain have a father? Or who fathers the drops of dew?- The question of origins remains to this day. No matter how persuasive are theories of evolutionary development, the question of ultimate origins has to always come back to God. And this question of origins, God is arguing, is really a signpost to the simple idea of grace. For creation is in a sense grace itself.

I have noted throughout Job that the surrounding myths and cosmology are constantly deconstructed. The common idea was that rain is the semen of the rain god. But here we are told that this is nonsense- God is the father of the rain. We note that He performs the function of both male and female for the water- father of rain and

dew (:28), and mother of ice and frost (:29). Or we can read these questions as having the answer: Nobody. These elements had no father or mother; and so they came from God.

The idea may be that if a woman brings forth an ice cold baby, it is dead, a stillbirth. The first ancient people knew of a stillbirth was that the child was cold. Just as Job had earlier wished to have been born dead and cold. But from God's womb comes the ice, icy cold. And it is not labour in vain, just as Job's birth was not in fact in vain.

Job 38:29 Out of whose womb came the ice? The gray frost of the sky, who has given birth to it?- "Came" is the word for 'bring forth' in Job 28:11: "The thing that is hidden He brings forth to light". God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (Job 28:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (Job 28:9,10,28). This is what was happening on Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouring the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

Job 38:30 The waters become hard like stone, when the surface of the deep is frozen- Not only the creation of water and things is wonderful, but equally the transformations of created things. This is what God was to do to Job, and He was offering to do the same to the exiles. The waters are to be understood as the forces of evil. But God can freeze them over. They come out from Him, from His womb. He is the author of evil (Is. 45:5-7).

Job 38:31 Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loosen the cords of Orion?- Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11 s.w.). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). The constellations are bound together in pattern by God. And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

The constellations of the stars were thought to influence life upon earth, hence AV "the sweet influences of Pleiades". They don't, but God doesn't deconstruct that in so many words, just as He never denies in explicit terms the existence of demons. But

demonstrates He is so far more powerful than them that they effectively don't exit. Likewise here, God says that He who created the stars can control their influence upon man; for it is He who moves them around into their positions. Man is never under the influence or power of radical evil that is outside God's control.

There is a play of ideas here. "Can you bind (tie up) the ties of Pleiades?". The stars of Pleiades were thought to have ties or influence upon human life on earth. But God can tie up those ties. Just as He moves the stars around to form patterns like the bear or the plough.

God's point is that His entire creation moves according to a carefully designed order. It is not random movement. And He is behind it all, although Job has no idea about the mechanisms. There is a coherence in the cosmos, in everything, and also, therefore, in Job's life. But he cannot see that. He sees only apparently random behaviour by God; just as the immature believer may see God active only in a few ways and a few times in a few aspects of their lives. He has no way of seeing the coherence, nor the patterns and principles: "Do you know the laws of heaven?" (:33). But the fact creation goes on as it does, is evidence that there is a logic and coherence. It's just above man to perceive it. And Job, as all men, is asked to trust in that higher logic and coherence, rather than bringing God down to the level of a man, and demand that He explains His movements in human terms. Likewise any human assessment of God's movements and work is inappropriate; and Job's speeches have been full of such misguided and inappropriate assessments. Job's first attempt at 'repentance' accepts that indeed, he doesn't understand these things. But that is not enough; God's second speech is required before Job comes to being convicted of his sin and properly repenting. Many of God's questions probe whether Job has any creative power. He has never called a new day into being, nor has he commanded the hawk to fly. The cosmos is not just wound up on clockwork and ticking away. God is somehow consciously creating and causing all the time. Whereas Job has no creative power. He is not God. Man may change matter from one form to another, but he cannot create matter. God can. And likewise, there are parts of God's creation, in fact the vast majority of it, that man cannot enter: "Have you entered unto the springs of the sea and have you walked in the recesses of the deep?" (:16). Job likewise cannot enter into the vast majority of God's working with him. Neither can we. All we can do is trust in a loving God.

Job 38:32 Can you lead forth the constellations in their season? Or can you guide the Bear with her cubs?- AV "Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season?". The context would suggest that "Mazzaroth" [a plural word] is a constellation like Orion just mentioned in :31. This would mean that the signs of the Zodiac are not in view here, as has been falsely claimed. It could be that "Mazzaroth" was a group of stars the people of the times thought they had observed which we now know as something else. It could be a variant of Mazzaloth, the gods made to these stars (2 Kings 23:5). In this case God is saying that even if they believed the stars influenced life on earth and made idols to them, God was the ultimate controller and mover. It's rather like the usage of the language of demons in the New Testament. The scale of miracles implies God was far greater than any supposed demons, but the wrong understanding is not specifically targetted; rather by appealing to the greater principle of God's majestic power, it is shown to be bankrupt and void of real power.

Job 38:33 Do you know the laws of the heavens? Can you establish its dominion over the earth?- GNB "Do you know the laws that govern the skies, and can you make them apply to the earth?". This is perhaps the clearest Biblical condemnation of any attempt to practice astrology. The movement of the stars was under God's control, but is *not* related to the outcomes of life upon earth. For God can work in parallel ways with the stars as well as with human life and situations upon earth.

Job 38:34 Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover you?- This is said in the context of the thunderstorm which began as noted on Job 36:27. That thunderstorm was brought about by God's sovereign action, and was not called up by men commanding God to bring it. The movement of God through His grace is likewise sovereign, otherwise grace would not be grace.

Job 38:35 Can you send forth lightnings, that they may go? Do they report to you, 'Here we are?'- The same challenge was made to Ezekiel and the exiles, in the visions of the lightnings of the cherubim. The simple point of all this is that this lightning quick and powerful activity is for our sakes, to the end of achieving saving restoration. Job and the exiles complained that God was apparently slow to act. But He is working with lightning speed.

The idea is that no, Job couldn't do any of these things. It's as if God is saying that only He could do things like He had done to Job. Job couldn't have done them himself.

Job 38:36 Who has put wisdom in the inward parts? Or who has given understanding to the mind?- GNB "Who tells the ibis when the Nile will flood, or who tells the rooster that rain will fall?"; LXX "And who has given to women skill in weaving, or knowledge of embroidery?". But the preceding and following context is of God's control of the planets and atmosphere. So the idea may be that the lightnings also have their own wisdom, given to them by God, as it were. Hence one suggested translation is "Who has put wisdom in the thunderbolts? or who has given understanding to the tempest?".

Job 38:37 Who can number the clouds by wisdom? Or who can pour out the bottles of the sky- The number of clouds changes constantly, and depends on how you define a cloud. Only God can do this. The answer of course was that they could not be numbered by man, but only by God. This is the same word used in the restoration prophecy of Jer. 38:22: "As the host of the sky cannot be *numbered*, nor the sand of the sea measured", so God's grace would be poured out in restoring His people. And that challenge was at the very heart of the covenant with Abraham, whose seed couldn't be numbered. Job was being taught the same lesson. He believed it, but the exiles generally didn't, and so their restoration didn't happen after the pattern of Job's.

Job 38:38 when the dust runs into a mass, and the clods of earth stick together?- The idea is that God sends rain from the clouds at the time when it is most desperately needed. The dry bones of both Job and Israel were to be rained upon with the Spirit. And this kind of thing is seen in the natural creation.

Job 38:39 Can you hunt the prey for the lioness, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions- The theme now changes to the animals, and perhaps Job 39 would better begin at this verse. The point is that although the lioness hunts, this is in league with God:

"The lions, roaring after their prey, do seek their meat from God" (Ps. 104:21). The lions who hunted Job and Judah were likewise from God, and were not acting without Him. God provides food for the young lions- but that food is animals which their mother hunted and killed, blessed with success by God. And that is perhaps God's point- that His provision for one results in the suffering of another. And the ethics of that *quid pro quo* cannot be unravelled by man. Ps. 104:21,25-28 present the same paradox: "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God... there are innumerable living things, both small and large animals... and leviathan, whom You formed to play [with]. These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season. You give to them; they gather. You open Your hand; they are satisfied with good". The "good" God does to Leviathan and the hungry lions is hardly "good" for the animals He gives them to kill. It is "evil" for the victims; the fact this isn't a vegetarian planet means there has to be hunting, killing, death and eating of the carcasses. Yet God emphasizes His care for the animals and His provision for all of them. And no cute, smart, meme-like resolution of all this is given, it is for man to accept. He can in fact do nothing else. What he can do is to recognize his humanity, that he is man and God is God. Likewise there is no ultimate resolution to the question of whether God punishes sin by retribution in this life, and rewards righteousness with blessing. Whilst this certainly doesn't happen in the primitive way the friends [and Job] imagined, it is still the case that Job and his generation were materially blessed for obedience. And Job's sufferings, according to Elihu, were somehow related to sin. And when Job repented, he was again materially rewarded. But for all the reasons Elihu makes clear, it is not just simply so. And no resolution of the paradox is offered. The paradox is indeed highlighted in the story, and interpreters attempt to resolve it. But the story and the text itself offers no resolution to it.

Job 38:40 when they crouch in their dens, and lie in wait in the thicket?- "Crouch" is the word for to humble, to crouch down. The theme of the book of Job is that man must be humbled before he can be used by God (s.w. Job 9:13; 22:29). And this is coded into the natural creation. The lioness must crouch down before she pounces.

Job 38:41 Who provides for the raven his prey- The raven was considered a bad omen. But still God cares for them; and how much more for His people. This is the force of the Lord's argument in Lk. 12:24, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them". Hence Ps. 147:9 emphasizes that "He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry". Clearly God doesn't simplistically punish the evil and bless the righteous immediately in this life. His grace reaches out to all. Including the unclean and condemned; remember that God is talking out of the whirlwind, the symbol of His condemnation.

When his young ones cry to God, and wander for lack of food?- Job feels he has 'cried out' to God for justice and not been heard (Job 19:7; 30:20); and that there is nothing wrong with crying out to God in distress, it is a perfectly natural reaction (Job 24:12). One comment upon this is that the young ravens cry out to God for food and yet are not always heard (Job 38:41 s.w.). But God in the wider picture sustains all of creation by grace. Job did well to cry out to God even if there was no answer, because the hypocrites do not 'cry out' to God when they are facing judgment (Job 36:13 s.w.). Job feels hurt that God has not responded to his 'crying out' because he says that when the needy cried out to him, he had heard (Job 29:12 s.w.). But here we see his works

based approach; he thought that his response to those who cried out to him meant that therefore God must respond to *his* crying out. And God is not so primitive. His apparent silence is because His response is not predicated upon human works and charity. It is by grace alone, as is taught in His final appearance to Job. The exiles likewise were to finally see the response to their crying out to God in the restoration (Is. 58:9), just as their representative Jonah cried out to God from the belly of *sheol* amidst the sea of nations, and was heard (s.w. Jonah 2:2).

JOB CHAPTER 39

Job 39:1 Do you know the time when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears fawns?- The idea is that man may not know the exact time, but God does, and it is built into His plan; see on :2. "Watch [over]" is the same word used for how God had set the parameters for Job's trials in the prologue; his life was to be preserved (s.w., Job 2:6 "spare / watch over his life"). But Job like the friends became obsessed with immediate suffering and issues to the point that he overlooked these basic parameters set by God. We can do the same. He complains that God watches over him too closely (Job 13:6; 33:11 s.w.), and yet complains that God isn't watching over him (Job 29:2). God's response is to direct him again to the natural creation, where God's constant 'watching over' His creation is evident. He even watches over the exact gestation time of mountain goats, who were invisible to human eyes (Job 39:1 s.w.). And likewise Job was to understand that the time of his sufferings, like the period of exile for the captives, was likewise intensely noted by God and had not been forgotten. The God who knows the gestation period of every obscure animal (:2) knows the exact time periods of human suffering. The implication of course was that the time period would result in a birth of new life, and this happened in Job's case. The Lord sees the labour of a pregnant woman as our present suffering, but the birth is paralleled with "I will see you again and you shall rejoice". And Job finally comes to a point where he can say "Now my eye sees You". But as Job didn't know the gestation period of many animals, so he did not know the length of the period of suffering God had given him. As God 'turned the captivity of Job' so He would of the exiles. We can look back and analyze our lives for the same feature of time periods, although perhaps most of them are unperceived by us, just as Job didn't know the gestation period of the animals.

Job 39:2 Can you number the months that they fulfil? Or do you know the time when they give birth?- This continues the theme of Job 38, that everything has its bounds and limits, and timings set by God. This was so relevant to the exiles who considered their suffering endless; it was a reminder that restoration had been promised after a period, even if they didn't know that exact time (see on :1) and that script is written into all God's work in creation.

The answer of course was that they could not be numbered by man, but only by God. This is the same word used in the restoration prophecy of Jer. 38:22: "As the host of the sky cannot be *numbered*, nor the sand of the sea measured", so God's grace would be poured out in restoring His people. Job was being taught the same lesson. He believed it, but the exiles generally didn't, and so their restoration didn't happen after the pattern of Job's.

In Canaanite myth, Aquhat [another 'Satan' figure in their theology] could alone "count the months" (Robert S. Fyall, *op cit* p. 75) – but the same phrase is used here in Job 39:2 about how God alone has this power. See on Job 38:8.

Job 39:3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young, they end their labour pains- This is the language of later Isaiah; the travail of Zion would come to an end, in the rebirth of a restored Kingdom of God in Judah. That at least was the Divine intention, although the Jews largely precluded its realization by their own refusal to really want it.

Job 39:4 Their young ones become strong. They grow up in the open field. They go forth, and don't return again- LXX emphasizes this idea of 'going forth', which as noted on :1,2 looks ahead to the going forth of the Jews from captivity: "Their young will break forth; they will be multiplied with offspring: their young will go forth, and will not return to them".

"Grow up" is the word for 'bring forth' in Job 28:11: "The thing that is hidden He brings forth to light". God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (Job 28:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (Job 28:9,10,28). This is what was happening in Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouring the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

God's point is that these wild animals have a hard life; they have long gestation periods, struggle to find food, have painful deliveries, and never see their young again as they wander off into independence. But Job is complaining about the loss of his ten beloved kids whom he no longer sees? God made nature like this... so Job is not to complain about loss of children. Again we note how no explanation nor hint of tenderness, comfort nor pity is found in these arguments- from the God who at the end of Job will be revealed as "very pitiful and of tender mercy" (James 5:11).

Job 39:5 Who has set the wild donkey free? Or who has loosened the bonds of the swift donkey- This loosing of bands is the language of Judah's bands being freed and their freedom to return to Zion. Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11 s.w.). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). And therefore, Job

and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

Job 39:6 whose home I have made the wilderness, and the salt land his dwelling place?- It was from the wilderness that Job's troubles came. The Bedouins attacked from there, and the destructive wind came from there. But God was somehow in all that.

Job 39:7 He scorns the tumult of the city, neither does he hear the shouting of the driver- Job in his depression feels as Israel suffering in Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 5:6,13), considering that death was the only way out of the misery of hearing the "voice of the taskmaster", "the shouting of the driver" (Job 3:18). But he fails to see that out of that misery they were redeemed and restored to their land. This is alluded to when attention is drawn to how God's creations "hear not the voice, the shouts and curses of the driver". God's people didn't have to "hear" the voice of the taskmaster; there was a way of redemption offered.

The LXX here has a strange appropriacy to the release of the exiles from captivity, and the edicts of the Persian kings allowing them to reestablish their kingdom without paying any taxes: "He laughs to scorn the multitude of the city, and hears not the chiding of the tax-gatherer".

Job 39:8 The range of the mountains is his pasture, he searches after every green thing- LXX "He will survey the mountains as his pasture, and he seeks after every green thing". The returned exiles would have free pasture in all their land, as Ez. 34 and other restoration prophecies had intimated. Life is hard for the wild donkey, having to traverse hard and dangerous territory just to get a small bit of greenery to eat. And God designed life on earth like that. There is no word of comfort to Job. But it's like Joseph appearing sternly indifferent to his brothers, whilst his heart broke for them. Truly in the story of Job we see the end of the Lord, God taken to the ultimate term, to the n th degree... and He is very pitiful and of tender mercy.

Job 39:9 Will the wild ox be content to serve you? Or will he stay by your feeding trough?- LXX "And will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or to lie down at thy manger?". The reference may be to Cyrus being the servant of Yahweh in allowing the exiles to return.

Job 39:10 Can you hold the wild ox in the furrow with his harness? Or will he till the valleys after you?- The wild animals may appear to the human eye to be aimlessly wandering hither and thither. But they are actually ploughing furrows for God. The apparently aimless wandering of Job and the exiles was likewise under God's control, and was actually intended to bring forth a great harvest from the apparently barren land.

Job 39:11 Will you trust him, because his strength is great? Or will you leave to him your labour?- No man could "trust" the randomly wandering oxen. But God has such a close relationship with those things which seem random and aimless that He doesn't actually need to hold those wild animals in harness (:10), He can trust them to do His work without Him harnessing them. And the same progression is to be seen in His work with apparently wild men; they begin needing a harness (:10), but then progress to working independently and yet within the overall furrow of God's direction.

Job 39:12 Will you confide in him, that he will bring home your seed, and gather the grain of your threshing floor?- Man struggles to have faith / trust (:11) or confidence in things and processes which appear random and out of his control. But God has such confidence, and He invites Job and all His people to do likewise. Job's sufferings, like Judah's, were not random and aimless. They can be trusted to achieve the work intended, and bring about a great harvest; incredible as that might seem to secular, onlooking man.

Job 39:13 The wings of the ostrich wave proudly; but are they the feathers and plumage of love?- I suggest that the following verses are arguing that the ostrich may appear to behave strangely, but is not in fact without love or care for its young. No animal totally lacks parental instinct. The people of Job's time thought that the ostrich did lack it; just as Job and the exiles were questioning whether God really loved and cared for them. Her wings wave as she dashes around the desert in the day time; but the question is, does she really have love for her own? God likewise was and is active through the wings of the cherubim. But does He care for His little ones? That is the sense in which the ostrich becomes a significant animal. Her feathers are in fact the "plumage of love" and not merely the cosmetic, useless decoration of a vain female.

Ostriches can't fly although they flap their wings, empowering them to run fast. Their wings may appear pointless, a Divine mistake. But there is a purpose and function to ostrich wings. Man can't see it, and so accuses God of time wasting and error. Just as Job was doing. The paradox is that the plume and feathers of ostrich wings represented truth and justice in the ancient Near East, and representations of them have been found over courts and judgment thrones. The lesson of the ostrich was in fact of ultimate truth for Job.

Job 39:14 For she leaves her eggs on the earth, warms them in the dust- "Ostriches, having scratched a hole in the sand, and deposited their eggs in it, cover the eggs over with a layer of sand, sometimes as much as a foot in thickness, and, leaving them during the daytime to be kept warm by the heat of the sun, only incubate at night". As noted on :13, the question is as to whether the ostrich really loves her young. She does; for no animal is without parental instinct. And likewise with God; He covers His little ones in the dust, and uses the darkness of night, the trials of life, to incubate them personally.

Job 39:15 and forgets that the foot may crush them, or that the wild animal may trample them- The idea may be that the ostrich can forget about her eggs, with no fear that they may be crushed, as she has buried them well (see on :14). The eggs of both God and the ostrich are preserved; neither man nor wild beasts of nations can destroy them. Job was not going to be crushed as he feared (Job 4:19; 5:4). God likewise hides and covers His people (Is. 26:20), although to the eye of secular, imperceptive man, He may appear not to care. But in the analogy, His people had to be prepared to accept that covering; for indeed many of them were trodden down / trampled by the wild beasts of the nations.

Job 39:16 She deals harshly with her young ones, as if they were not hers. Though her labour is in vain, she is without fear- "Young ones" is Heb. "sons". The ostrich is introduced as hard to understand- "loving, or unloving?" is the opening question about the ostrich (:13). And indeed she apparently deals harshly with her young ones. The

Bedouin peoples amongst whom Job lived thought that the ostrich was unloving, that it didn't care for its young; and they had proverbs to this effect, alluded to in Lam. 4:3. But the ostrich is not without parental instinct. Why does she incubate at night and hide her eggs in the day time? Not so that she can flit around the desert at her own pleasure, but because she is out looking for food for her young, and at night she incubates her eggs- working around the clock for her little ones. God's labour for His exiled people was likewise, and was also at times in vain (Ps. 127:1; Is. 49:4). But He did not fear, He didn't give up because some were indeed crushed and trodden down by the wild beasts of the nations, but continued working for them. And God did at times appear to treat His people as if they were not His; for "you are not My people", because they had chosen not to be (Hos. 1:9; Jer. 23:39).

We could render "She makes chicks that are hardy without her. That worthless is her labour, she has no worry". The translators seem influenced by the common misconceptions of ostriches not caring for their young. For no animal is without parental instinct toward their young. Job by contrast was worried that his labour was in vain. God says that He makes rain land on desolate rocks, apparently "in vain", just as Job suffered apparently "without cause". But that is all just an appearance. Job worried about his children, his "chicks", praying for them and naturally desolated when they were all slain. The ostrich doesn't have that grief. She is hard wired by God to act, apparently, quite differently. But it's all a question of appearances.

Job 39:17 because God has deprived her of wisdom, neither has He imparted to her understanding-

The reference to "God" in the third person, within a speech by God, shows that this is God quoting the views of men. Literally, God forgot to give her wisdom. That is how it appears to men, but God doesn't forget. Just as Zion thought her Lord had forgotten her, and Job likewise imputed folly to God.

The ostrich is presented as being an apparent contradiction; lacking understanding and yet able to run swiftly and be stronger than a horse and its rider (:18). As explained above, the ostrich is not without wisdom nor without parental instinct. But it can appear she is; and indeed some of her young are lost and crushed. See on :18.

Job felt he had been deprived of everything, including wisdom and understanding (Job 26:5). But this was not because he was unwise; he is presented as a perfect man (Job 1:1). God is able to give and take wisdom, as is seen in the natural creation (Job 39:17 s.w.).

Job 39:18 When she lifts up herself on high, she scorns the horse and his rider- This lifting herself up refers to how the ostrich does this in order to run at great speed. She has been given good qualities such as speed and power, and also apparent foolishness which leads to some of her young being lost (:17). It is this union of apparently differing qualities which is the impression men have as they look at the wok of God towards His little ones. The ostrich runs in circles; which might appear foolish but actually exhausts some of her enemies. Again, what appears foolish is in fact purposeful and wise. There is rationale, order and harmony in God's creation, even though that creation can be cruel, with ostrich eggs crushed in the sand- even though man fails to perceive it. And so there was too in Job's life; although he failed to perceive it. This is about the closest God gets to making any comment on why Job had suffered. There are records of horsemen hunting and killing ostriches; the idea is that the ostrich is being presented as foolish enough to think she can outrun a horse

and not be slain by the horse rider. But as discussed above, this is in fact an appearance of foolishness.

Job 39:19 Have you given the horse might? Have you clothed his neck with a quivering mane?- The apparently foolish ostrich is a match for the might of the horse (:18). But all these abilities are given by God, contradictory as they may seem to the secular man observing them. This is addressing the complaint of Job, that God appears to act toward man in contradictory ways (Job 10:16). God knows how the mane of a horse quivers; Job is quite wrong to think that God doesn't pay attention to man in his smallness. He is intensely aware of literally everything in the cosmos.

Job 39:20 Have you made him to leap as a locust? The glory of his snorting is awesome- "Awesome" is literally 'terrible' or 'as terrors', which the friends believed would come upon Job (Job 20:25 s.w.). "Terrors" are again the judgment of God upon an apostate Israel, whom Job was suffering for whilst innocent, after the pattern of the later Lord Jesus (Dt. 32:25 s.w.). Those "terrors" were likely understood by the friends as some kind of demonic beings. God deconstructs this by explaining that the great beasts He has created likewise were 'terrible' (s.w. "terrors"). But the simple point was that He had created them and was totally in control (s.w. Job 39:20; 41:14).

Job 39:21 He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength. He goes out to meet the armed men- Just as the ostrich is on one hand apparently foolish and yet has qualities of speed and bravery (:18), so the horse has great strength and is eager to fight, not fearing the sword which can slay it (:22). It is this union of apparently differing qualities which is the impression men have as they look at the wok of God towards His people.

Job 39:22 He mocks at fear, and is not dismayed, neither does he turn back from the sword- See on :21. "Dismay" is the word used of how the exiles were urged not to be dismayed but to believe that God would indeed bring them from exile to restoration in His restored Kingdom (Is. 51:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27). Job begins by being dismayed / scared (Job 7:14), but develops to not be dismayed (Job 31:34 s.w.), following the example of the Lord's battle horse (Job 39:22).

Job 39:23 The quiver rattles against him, the flashing spear and the javelin- This is all the language of Divine judgment (Nah. 3:3; Lam. 3:13). The horse doesn't fear that, just as Leviathan doesn't (Job 41:29). He is as he is, not always wise, but free from the fear of judgment, not fearing the battle as men fear it. And this was perhaps how God wants His people to be, and this was in fact how Job was.

Job 39:24 He eats up the ground with fierceness and rage, neither does he stand still at the sound of the trumpet- "Stand still" is the word for 'belief'. The idea may be that 'he hardly trusts his ears for joy' that the battle is beginning. The sound of the trumpet can be understood as the call to judgment. The horse doesn't fear the battle nor the call to judgment, but is eager for it- just as Job was, and as David and Paul also were. And yet the horse fails to understand the real implications of it all. In this sense God may be justifying Job's attitude to judgment.

Job 39:25 As often as the trumpet sounds he snorts, 'Aha!'. He smells the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting- Eliphaz claims that God is

preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle (Job 15:24). But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

Job 39:26 Is it by your wisdom that the hawk soars, and stretches her wings toward the south?- The invasions of Judah from the north were as birds of prey flying south as they migrate- all under God's control. Hawks migrate south, so the reference may be to the amazing sense the birds have regarding migration. That reveals far more about God than that He is merely a physical creator; He has wisdom and intricate knowledge, contrary to Job's impression that God had forgotten him. As discussed on :1, there are time periods in a person's life that he may well not be aware of. There is a time for migration, when the bird first stretches its wings and departs southwards. That time is set by God.

Job 39:27 Is it at your command that the eagle mounts up, and makes his nest on high?- The eagle was a symbol of the enemies of God's people (Dt. 28:49). But their movements were completely under God's control.

Job 39:28 On the cliff he dwells, and makes his home, on the point of the cliff, and the stronghold- The eagle dwells on a point which is inaccessible to man. That seems to be the point. But the eagle is completely under Divine control (:27), although man is unable to engage with it. It was this which Job needed to learn.

Job 39:29 From there he spies out the prey. His eyes see it afar off- The extraordinary eyesight of the eagle was legendary. The context is of God teaching Job that all his concerns with process and 'why' this or that are inappropriate; for even the animal creation has better eyesight than he does. Job earlier compared the passing of his life to the swiftness of an eagle (Job 9:26); perhaps now he is being taught that such comparison is inappropriate. The relevance to the exiles may be that they were "afar off" from the promised land, but in a moment could be brought there, just as the eagle can in an apparent moment close that distance which was "afar off" (Is. 43:6; 49:12; 60:4,9).

Job 39:30 His young ones also suck up blood. Where the slain are, there he is-

On one hand, God is demonstrating that He does provide food for the animals He created. But sometimes the young ravens "wander about for lack of food" (Job 38:41). He doesn't always provide, at least, not what they immediately want. And the young eagles likewise are fed at the expense of the prey that has been slain for them. What is good for the predatory animal is bad for the prey. This is not, therefore, a moral universe. God speaks, in a sense, without pity nor sympathy for Job; just as nature appears pitiless. But as James 5:11 observes, at the end of the Lord we find Him very pitiful and of tender mercy. Job wanted God to act as he thought a just human judge should act, punishing the wicked and blessing the righteous. But that is too simplistic a picture; the issues in the cosmos are greater than that and require God, not a human judge. Delicate care and purpose must still be found in a God who gives the lion its prey. A human judge would defend the defenceless prey and condemn the lion. We

simply cannot project our sense of right and wrong onto the universe, let alone onto God. Trust in God means trusting His moral purpose, that He is finally "good" and not evil. Even though we cannot perceive how that is working out. Something, somebody, far greater than man is needed to judge this whole situation. And that is God.

There is indeed a Divine hand in all this, but it is hardly an Alice in Wonderland experience. And Job is asked to see God's same basic love and provision for him, even in the midst of a broken world and fallen creation. Job's sufferings, therefore, are not for any immediately discernible purpose. But the hand of God is in them. And Job is wrong to think that God has singled him out for some special suffering; and the friends likewise were seriously wrong about this. It is part of how creation currently is. No reason is given by God, although we are shown by creation that God is actively present and intricately working through it all, making rain land on remote dry rocks, creating the ostrich who appears uncaring for her young... God is asking Job to simply trust Him. And to realize that anything less that total trust is sin, that needs to be repented of.

The Lord appears to allude to this in Mt. 24:28. He is answering the disciples' concerns as to where and how the judgment will take place. Perhaps He sees their undue concerns with process to be similar to those of Job. He directs them back to this passage, which teaches that we are not to overly concern ourselves with these questions, contrary as that attitude is to the 'scientific' mindset of the age of reason. It is the reality of it which is to be focused upon.

JOB CHAPTER 40

Job 40:1 Moreover Yahweh answered Job- We perhaps are to imagine a pause of silence in the drama at the end of Job 39. We enquire what is the function of "Moreover Yahweh answered Job and said", when it preface just one verse. I suggest we are to infer that Yahweh paused in the hope of Job's response. But he is stubbornly silent. God orders Job to answer in :2. He does but then puts his hand on his mouth to show that he will not further answer. This is arrogant rebellion against God, just as Elihu accused him of.

Job 40:2 Shall he who argues contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer it-

“Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty? He who argues with God, let him answer for it”. This is God's response to a righteous, good living man whose ten kids were killed. 'Can't I even ask about it?'. 'No, you may not. How dare you. How dare you complain or challenge Me'. We all struggle with this. But that is the point. We see just the outskirts of God's ways. It is for us to trust in the words of James 5, that we see in Job the end of the Lord, God taken to the final term of the equation. And He is very pitiful, and of tender, saving mercy. What we are asked for is total, white flag, abject surrender, total capitulation, intellectually and morally. And who ever is man to be offended at God, the God of all love, grace and salvation. Your stamping of your foot and stomping off from the God you don't like takes nothing away from His existence. These indeed are deep things out of darkness. In the end, faith / trust and humility go together, and they are what God wants.

"Argues" is the word used for "umpire" in Job 9:30. The word for "umpire" suggests 'one who is right', a reasoner, an advocate, one who pleads (s.w. Job 16:21), a reprover (Job 40:2 AV, s.w.). Job's request was not simply for a mediator; he would

have used a different word if so. He seems to have wanted to put God in the dock, but knew this was not appropriate; he wants someone else to do this who can legitimately do it. And he is rebuked for this here in Job 40:2. This is all legal language. Job appeals for 'witnesses' (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a 'case' with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job's declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job's earlier plea: "Sleeplessly I wait for His reply" (Job 16:22). It's as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of 'Satan', suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about 'Satan' figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the "holy ones", had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: "To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job's guilt] is true" (Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Job 40:3 Then Job answered Yahweh- The paradox is that he answered Yahweh by saying that he cannot answer Him (:3). And that indeed is man's only possible answer to God. Although I will suggest on :4 that Job is effectively refusing to further engage in the court case, and chooses to remain legally silent.

Job 40:4 Behold, I am of small account- "Behold" can be rendered "if". As if Job is saying that if indeed he is so small, or cursed, then he will not bother saying anything further. "Of small account" translates the word for "cursed" (Job 3:1; 24:18). The one who felt cursed was to be blessed, just as the Israel whom he unknowingly represented. The Hebrew word translated "vile" is the usual word for "cursed". It is the word Job earlier used to curse his birthday. Job considers God is cursing him and therefore vows silence and non engagement with Him. We could render: "What? Shall I answer You?". He feels he has been wrongly cursed and therefore refuses to answer God. Just as God called to Adam from out of the wind / *ruach*, so God is calling to Job from the whirlwind with similar rhetorical questions- seeking to convict him of his sin. Job had earlier objected to God treating him as Adam: "If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom" (Job 31:33). He felt he had no sin to hide and didn't deserve to be cursed. Now he realizes that God has cursed him. But he makes no admission of sin and decides to take his legal case no further, and to remain silent when under accusation. God's "Where are you?" to Adam is perhaps matched by His question to Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4). Whilst Adam and Eve shift their guilt onto others, Job finally in Job 42 will repent without conditions. We may note that Job rephrases God's question: "Who is this that darkens counsel with words without knowledge"; Job repeats it as "who is this that hides counsel without knowledge...". He sees himself as indeed hiding from God. He accepts he is Adam.

But God achieves this repentance not by specifically probing Job's wrong doing, as He did with Adam. He seeks instead to expand Job's perspective. Instead of the

'Have you disobeyed Me?' to Adam, which failed to elicit repentance and led to cursing, God takes a more complex approach with Job. He will show him that man is indeed very small and God very gracious, and any attempt to play God [as Job had tried to] was blasphemous and foolish. The beasts of evil whom Job blamed for his sin [Behemoth and Leviathan] were deconstructed as being of God and of no ultimate power. Leaving Job alone responsible for his sin. And this approach works. Job is led to repentance and is then hugely blessed.

But at this point in Job 40, Job appears unconvicted of his sin. He accepts the display of God's awesome power in the whirlwind and in Job 38 and Job 39. But he has previously said he will not answer God until God removes His "rod" from Job, and stops scaring him with His power. And he stubbornly sticks, for now, to that position. His statement that he is "cursed" is a complaint against God, not a confession of sin. Rather like we are unpersuaded of a man's moral character by being shown wonderful inventions and things he has made. Given that, how, then, were God's displays of His power and greatness supposed to elicit trust in His moral character, and to elicit repentance in Job? I repeat, that we are unpersuaded of a man's moral character by being shown his huge power and status. I suggest that God was working specifically at getting Job to repent of his blasphemous accusations against God, and his desire to have his day in court with God. Given God's power and might, this was totally wrong. And God has further demonstrated that man has no 'rights' nor ability to understand what He is doing with men. He asks us to trust Him. That is God's point, and by Job 42 it leads Job to repent for the words he had wrongly spoken throughout the previous dialogues.

What shall I answer you?- Earlier, Job in Job 31:14 had confidently boated that only if he had committed adultery would be feel before God that he was unable to speak; "What shall I answer Him?". Job's point was that as he had not despised the cause of his servants (:13), therefore he did not have anything to fear before God's judgment. God's final appearance was proof enough that he of himself had no right to answer back to God. "What shall I answer You?" (Job 40:4) was his final word. But here, Job insists he could only be speechless before God if he had committed sins like adultery- which he was insistent he hadn't. Job is led to realize that he has sinned and fallen short of God's glory, although he had avoided the sins like adultery which counted as major sins in the view of his society.

The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (Job 2:8; 42:6). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (Job 40:4). Job intercedes for his children (Job 1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (Job 42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'Satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love, however and through whomsoever He was manifested.

I lay my hand on my mouth- When Job finally lays his hand upon his mouth, he is only doing what he had earlier told the friends to do in recognition of their folly (Job 13:5; 21:5). Through the pain and irritation of their speeches, Job came to value and appreciate the need for silence before God. But it was only when personally confronted by God at the end that he realizes that he too had spoken too much and he repents of that in silence. In Job 24:25 he has boasted of the strength of his own

speeches: "If it isn't so now, who will prove me a liar, and make my speech worth nothing?". Job has argued himself into an invincible position, in his own eyes. Indeed, all he says is true; but like the friends, truths are expressed but within a wrong context. Finally Job is to lay his hand upon his mouth in repentance (Prov. 30:32; Mic. 7:16) and recognize he has not spoken rightly, although he earlier demanded the friends lay their hands upon their mouths before the power of his arguments (Job 21:5). God confirms this by remarking that whoever has hope of overcoming Leviathan, His great beast (perhaps representing death and human mortality) is a liar to think he has such hope (Job 41:9 s.w. "liar"). Job has forgotten his humanity, despite being 'right' in his arguments. This is the problem with possessing truth; it can lead us to wrongly forget our humanity and consider ourselves invincible.

Earlier, Job had confidently challenged: "Who is he who will contend with me? For then would I hold my peace and give up the spirit" (Job 13:19). Job is challenging anyone to come forward and contend with him in court by proving him wrong. If they did, then he would be silent ["hold my peace"] and willingly die. This of course is exactly what happens at the end. God does contend with Job, and he is proven guilty. He lays his hand upon mouth, and we can deduce from his challenge here that he wanted to die. He was then saved from that position by grace alone. The connection with the exiles is in Is. 50:8, where a similarly convicted Israel would be justified by Divine grace to the point they could again challenge any to convict them of sin, seeing that "He is near that justifies me".

Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

LXX "Why do I yet plead? being rebuked even while reproving the Lord" sounds as if Job says there is no point making his legal plea against God, because God is now interrupting him and criticizing him instead of answering the case. If this indeed was considered adequate repentance, why doesn't God rejoice in it as He does in Job 42 when Job repents? Why make a second speech? Why disagree immediately with Job's

statement that He will not answer God? Why force Job to answer when Job has said he will not answer?

Job 40:5 I have spoken once, and I will not answer; Yes, twice, but I will proceed no further- We can understand Job's silence either as conviction of guilt, or as a stubborn refusal to further engage with God's legal case. I suggest it was indeed a refusal to answer- for God goes on to insist "You will answer...". But his silence was exactly what he had earlier said he would do only if he were guilty. So he is [unintentionally] showing his guilt in his own terms. Perhaps he means 'I have spoken once in that I have just said that I have no answer. And now, I am speaking twice, I am saying this. But now I promise absolute silence'. He really appreciates that his many words have been inappropriate.

Because God sees and knows absolutely all, we must recognize that He realizes the unspoken implications of our words. It's possible that Job's words about silence here are seen by God as Job effectively condemning God, because presumably they were said merely as a mask over Job's inner feelings that God had been unjust with him (Job 40:8). But when Job uses effectively the same words in Job 42:6, God accepts them. God's ability to see to the core should therefore not only affect our words but elicit in us an honesty of heart behind the words which we use.

However, it is possible to understand Job's laying of his hand upon his mouth as a refusal to speak; his words are but the muttered resignation of the helpless. He himself uses the term to mean 'cease to speak' (Job 13:5; 21:5). "I will not answer" could mean that he refuses to give an answer to the legal case God has raised against him. He spoke "once", to just admit that he is very small and therefore will not be answering God. But he has been asked by God to answer Him. Hence God's anger, and demand in :7 "You *will* answer Me". His repentance is altogether inadequate. He has simply said that he is very small compared to God, which is no real concession as he has said this before. What Job here says is little more than he says in Job 9, where he says he'd be unable to answer God in a court case because God would scare him by throwing about His powerful manifestations: "how can man be just with God? If man wishes to contend with Him, he can't answer Him... If I had called, and He had answered me, yet I wouldn't believe that He listened to my voice. For He would bruise me with a storm... He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer Him" (Job 9:2,3,16,17,32). And the storm has indeed come. He has predicted that even if God were to 'pass by' him, to reveal Himself as He did when He 'passed by' Moses in a theophany- Job wouldn't pay attention: "If ever He should go by me, I shall not see him: if He should pass by me, neither would I know [recognize] it" (Job 9:11 LXX). Now God has appeared in the whirlwind, and the wind makes God pass by him, and so he stubbornly sticks to his promise that he will pay no attention. Not only in Job 9 but in Job 13 too, Job twice laid down conditions for his answering God. He insisted that he would only do so if God removed the sufferings from him and stopped terrifying him by His power (Job 9:35; 13:22). God does neither of these things; for the whirlwind terrified Elihu and surely it did Job too (Job 37:1). God's recounting of His awesome power was surely to similar effect. But God makes Job answer Him, after Job's stubborn silence.

And Job brazenly continues his position, that he will not answer God. "Answer" is being used in a legal, forensic sense. Job is declining to answer to the case laid against him. He is saying that he will now "answer" no more. This silence, although not to his credit, is a far cry from his claim that before God he would "fill my mouth

with arguments", come before God "like a prince", and present a case that God can't answer (Job 31; 9:34; 13:20). By saying at this point that he is so small that he refuses to answer further... is typical of how guilty people will make a small concession. But making a concession, and a small, general and obvious one at that, is not repentance nor remorse. Any parent, judge or schoolteacher will have been through all this many times. Job has been silent before Elihu, now before God he is effectively the same, claiming some "right to silence" in court, standing mute, refusing to engage in the legal process. When he had earlier been so eager to do so, so full of words and in Job 31 he had as it were written out his case and statements and signed them. But this silence was really a contempt of court; for Job refuses to enter a plea before Elihu nor before God after God's first speech. He will not say guilty or not guilty. God rightly comments that this is an attempt to frustrate God's justice (40:8). Nor does Job withdraw his case against God, despite having mused about it and developed it in his thinking in about every one of his speeches in the dialogues. In fact, Job retracts nothing specific, despite being so full of words previously. That God should try yet again with him says so much for God's patient love. And we could argue that Job's final statement of repentance in Job 42 was not that great. Just as the repentance of Adam and Eve wasn't of high quality [and repentance does have quality and range to it]. But God is so eager to accept repentance; as soon as Job makes his brief statement of repentance, God dangles it before the friends, exalting that Job has spoken rightly about Him. His forgiveness and acceptance of Job's repentance is implicit, it isn't specifically stated; but Job suddenly has such high status before God that He says He is willing to accept Job as an intermediary to save the impenitent friends. We get the impression that God is relieved, that Job has finally repented and come through. He accepts a few words of repentance and then doubles Job's wealth and parades him as the saviour of the friends. We marvel that God Almighty should be so concerned about one man's faith in the land of Uz that He gets so anxious and then relieved when he comes through. This huge sense of Divine relief suggests to me that the words of the satan at the start were really the niggling thoughts and doubt within God Himself. All the drama, suffering, hurtness that has gone on... has tested the critical bond between God and man, the divine and the human, to the ultimate term.

Job 40:6 Then Yahweh answered Job out of the whirlwind- This is God's answer to Job's silence (:5). Perhaps the implication is that Job has not yet come to recognize his humanity and repent in the way he needs to. Hence God speaks again. "Out of the whirlwind" means the whirlwind is continuing; and as explained above, the whirlwind meant Divine condemnation. It has not been lifted because Job has not properly repented.

Job 40:7 Now brace yourself like a man- The idea is that Job is to answer as a human, to recognize his humanity and answer the questions as a man. Job is perhaps not so much asked to repent as to realize his humanity.

I will question you, and you will answer Me- His questions of God had been inappropriate, just as the friends had been wrong to seek wisdom by asking the sages, mere men (Job 8:8; 21:29 s.w.); it is for God to question us. For we and not God are in the dock. And Job's vow of silence in :5 was not in fact answering God's previous questions. "You *will* answer Me" is direct response to Job's stubborn refusal to answer.

Job 40:8 Will you even annul My judgment?- As noted on :5,6, this could be seen as a

criticism that Job hadn't said more. He had simply accepted he was condemned and vowed silence. The phrase is used of how Israel had broken covenant with God through breaking His judgments in the sense of His commands (Lev. 26:15). Job at this point absolutely represents the exiles, who had broken covenant and needed to repent and accept the new covenant offered to them (s.w. Jer. 11:10; 31:32).

Will you condemn Me, that you may be justified?- The final speeches of God and Elihu brought home the point that the righteousness achieved by man was not comparable with God's righteousness (e.g. 40:7-10). Any attempt at self justification is to condemn God as a false accuser. We are left to draw the conclusion: that the only way for man to be just with God is through total repentance of sin [even if it's "just" the sins of youth or what other men would call "minor" or surface level sin] and the imputation of God's righteousness to man, by absolute grace. We must give due weight to the words of the prologue, that God saw Job anyway as "perfect", as justified. The sense may be that God is saying 'You are justified, by My grace; you don't have to condemn Me by self-justification in order to be justified. You are justified by My grace without your effort'. God's justification of Job and Job's innocence are thereby reconciled.

LXX "Do not set aside my judgment: and dost thou think that I have dealt with thee in any other way, than that thou mightest appear to be righteous?". God convicted Job of sin so that he would repent and thus be counted righteous. This was God's intention, and therefore God has rightly accused Job of clouding His intention ["counsel"] by words without knowledge. By assuming that he was being wrongly condemned or judged, Job was in his own mind setting aside God's judgment / condemnation of him.

God seems to be saying that Job was condemning Him there and then. Job did so by his refusal to answer God in the previous verses. We can read :2,8 as God using legal terms to ask Job whether he really wants to continue his foolhardy demand to have a day in court with God: "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let the one who argues with God answer!... Will you frustrate My justice, will you condemn Me so that you have right?". Job's silence is surely the worst defiance. He should have explicitly retracted all those times he had longed for and demanded a court case with God. Job is just a petty fault finder... wasting court time with frivolous complaints. Yet for man, God slaying all your ten kids, destroying your health, wealth and standing amongst men... is everything. God dismisses it as petty fault finding. This is not what we want to hear. We expect to be taken seriously. But such is the distance between God and man that such issues are treated as petty fault finding.

Job 40:9 Or do you have an arm like God? Can you thunder with a voice like Him?- The reference is to the thunderstorm which was perhaps still ongoing. God's arm is often associated with His salvation. Man cannot save himself, as he has no saving arm like God's; and to attempt to do so is to justify ourselves, thereby condemning God (:8).

Verses 9-12 are effectively God asking Job whether Job can really dress up as a judge and judge Him. The whole claim is bizarre: "Do you have an arm like God and can you thunder with a voice like his? Deck yourself with pride and dignity, cloth yourself with majesty and splendour. Pour out the outbursts of your anger, and look on all the proud and abase them. Look on all the proud and humble them, tread down the wicked where they stand". It is God alone who is clothed with pride and dignity, majesty and splendour (Ps. 93:1; 104:1; Is. 5:16). We are disappointed that Job says very little in response to all this. He finally makes a brief statement agreeing that he

doesn't understand and has spoken wrongly, but God responds with His second speech in order to elicit proper repentance. And even that is but a few words. Whilst God saw the sincerity behind those few words, we still wonder at the depth of Job's repentance. For he makes no specific withdrawal of all his blasphemous demands to judge God. But God accepts repentance even when it isn't as specific as it might have been, and we should do likewise.

The words of Job are perhaps easier to understand than those of God. Possibly because God's words and arguments to Job were tailored uniquely to him. He had a belief in Leviathan and Behemoth as the monsters of chaos and evil. And so God talks so much about them. He draws a powerful picture of them, just as they were in Job's mind, and says that if Job is to act as God, then he can tame them, play with them, lay his hand upon them etc. He cannot, he is trying to catch the sea monster with a flimsy fishing rod. One big issue God has with Job is that he is playing God. And if he is God, he can deal with the monsters as God alone can. God alone can touch them because He alone created them. Job is being made to see the logical implications of his position in judging God and condemning Him. Job is saying he is greater than God. If you aren't going to condemn God, it is for you to accept His accusation and judgment of you as a sinner.

Job 40:10 Now deck yourself with excellency and dignity. Array yourself with honour and majesty-

It is God who is often described in these terms, e.g. Ps. 104:1, “O Lord my God, You are very great; You are clothed with honour and majesty". God is inviting Job to play God for a day. Job has effectively played God in his attitudes, and now God invites him to imagine being God. He is not God, and the whole argument leads to his acceptable repentance. Sin is, in essence, playing God, and repentance is realizing this and recognizing who we are. Repentance is to declare God right and ourselves wrong; to perceive what and who man is, and who God is. Job had acted as if he were dressed like God: “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban” (Job 29:14). But this had been a playing God. We can play God by judging others, by judging our own sins as of no real account, by doing things in our own strength, becoming control freaks on no matter how micro a level... by assuming that the world is to be judged by our own idiosyncratic ideas of right and wrong.

This alludes to the garments of the priests, for glory and beauty. Job had already been stripped of his glorious priestly robes, as we learn from Job 19:9: "He has stripped me of my glory, and taken the crown from my head". The stripping of Job recalls the stripping of the priest Aaron of his clothes and "crown" [mitre[when his priesthood ended (Num. 20:26,28). The same word is used of the stripping of God's people of their glory (Ez. 16:39; 23:26; Mic. 3:3), which only happened because they themselves did not strip themselves of their clothing in repentance (s.w. Is. 32:11; Ez. 26:16). Job's stripping and inability to reclothe himself was therefore to elicit repentance in him. And this is what is now finally achieved at the end of the book. God is of Himself "clothed with majesty and strength" (Ps. 93:1), "with glory and beauty" (Ps. 104:1). Job need not seek to play God by using legal rituals and religious clothing. This was not going to help Job.

Job 40:11 Pour out the fury of your anger- Heb. "the floods of wrath", preparing the way for Job to be taught that he need not fear such floods himself (:23).

Look at each one who is proud, and bring him low- This judgment of pride is God's work, and not Job's. If God alone is the judge and the One who can condemn,

all Job's struggles over issues of justice ['judging'] were thereby inappropriate. And that is true today, in a world where judging issues of justice appears to be the passion of every man.

Job 40:12 Look at each one who is proud, and humble him. Crush the wicked in their place- Job has observed that the wicked prosper, whilst he the righteous is suffering. God reminds Job that He has the power to condemn, and He will do so- looking at literally each one who is proud, throughout time and space. Job cannot do this. His unspoken desires that the wicked be judged by himself are addressed here. He obviously felt the injustice so deeply- that he suffered, whilst the wicked prospered. God's answer is that Job is incapable of judging them. But He will. Recognizing our inability to condemn and judge will help us in coping with the painful issues of injustice which surround us.

Job 40:13 Hide them in the dust together. Bind their faces in the hidden place- The faces of the condemned were covered, as Haman's was. The judgment of the wicked was to be death in the dust (and not eternal conscious torment). The question is, can Job condemn men and turn them to dust? No he can't. So his struggles over issues of justice were misplaced, and were actually an implication that he thought that his arm could bring salvation.

Job 40:14 Then I will also admit to you that your own right hand can save you- The question is, can Job condemn men and turn them to dust (:13)? No he can't. So his struggles over issues of justice were misplaced, and were actually an implication that he thought that his arm could bring salvation.

Job 40:15 See now, Behemoth, which I made as well as you. He eats grass like an ox- Behemoth is literally "beasts", plural, although Behemoth is subsequently referred to in the singular. I suggest therefore that this is a plural of majesty, the one great beast. The connections with the hippo and crocodile are not exact; the connections are because people of the time believed that such animals had been spawned by the evil monsters of land [Behemoth] and sea [Leviathan]. Surely people of Job's time would have understood them as the equivalent of what people today would call "satan". It was by the deconstruction of "satan" that Job came to repentance. "Behemoth" can be read as the intensive plural of *behema*, a beast. Whatever actual beast is in view, perhaps the hippopotamus, it is simply presented as a beast. The argument will develop, that Job is part of the same creation as Behemoth, the most awesome and terrifying things created by God. And if he is at peace with his place within that creation, he need not fear. See on :20,23. The Egyptians considered the hippopotamus [Behemoth] and crocodile [Leviathan] to be symbols of evil and chaos. Possibly that is also the case here. Evil in its wildest imaginable mythological form... is God's pet, created by Him, played with by Him, commanded by Him. And the chaos of Job's life... was likewise totally under God's control. The surrounding legends featured some Divine warrior in battle against the evil beasts. God subverts this by saying that He created them and plays with them as His pets.

Job 38:8-11 has presented God as creator of the sea, thought to be the epitome of chaos and evil. But God was its creator. And now God presents as the creator of both Behemoth and Leviathan, the evil beasts of the land and sea respectively. *He is their creator*, just as He is creator of both good and evil in Is. 45:5-7. This is what brings Job to repentance. He cannot blame sin on anyone nor any monster apart from

himself. And he cannot see the ultimate source of "evil" in the sense of calamity as being anyone nor anything apart from God. Job 39 has described God's total control over the animate and inanimate in the creation that Job observed. Now God will move on to Behemoth and Leviathan- legendary, unseen evil monsters. God likewise created them and they are totally under His control. And it is the argument about them which apparently leads Job to the required repentance. Evil, however man imagines it, is under God's control- although how He uses it, and to what ends, are beyond human understanding.

"Which I made as well as you" could refer to the way that living creatures were made on the same sixth day as man: "living creatures after their kind, livestock, creeping things, and animals of the earth after their kind" were all created on the sixth day too (Gen. 1:24). And those scary monsters of the sea were all declared "very good"- not evil. In Gen. 1:21 we read of great sea serpents / monsters [AV "whales"] being created and blessed: "God created the great sea monsters, all kinds of creatures that live in the water, and all kinds of birds. And God was pleased with what he saw. He blessed them all" (GNB). Those monsters thought to be the epitomy of radical evil were all created and blessed by God, and pleased Him. It's not that God has a 'dark side' and these monsters came from that; He creates good and evil, light and darkness (Is. 45:5-7). He did not create the earth "in chaos" (Is. 45:18, NEV "in vain"). The chaos monsters believed in by Job and his friends did not, in fact, exist. Creation is not in chaos, as God argues so extensively throughout Job 40 and Job 41. It is not understandable by man, it may appear chaotic as the ostrich appears a chaotic creature, but that is mere appearance to man. Rain lands on desolate rocks far from man, but that is not in fact random. Latter Isaiah is full of reference to the book of Job, and we can fairly take the statements in Is. 45 as commentary upon the implications of God's speeches to Job.

Giving extensive description of the physiology of two monsters appears an irrelevant answer to the problem of suffering. God isn't giving any specific answers to Job's 122 questions. And perhaps that is the point. Job's sufferings, on one hand, are utterly irrelevant considering the size of the cosmos and the vast scale of God's creation. But once Job utters words of repentance, God will as it were go crazy in blessing him and enthusing about him, making the richest man of the east twice as rich. The behemoth and leviathan are clearly presented in terms of apocalyptic, with a kaleidoscope of images and meanings associated with them. Job has earlier accused God of treating him with the same hatred He [as Job imagined] had towards the beasts of evil: "Am I the Sea, or the Dragon, that you set a guard over me" (Job 7:12). Job understood Leviathan as a beast that was cursed by all good people: "Let those curse [that night of Job's birth] who curse the Sea, those who are skilled to rouse up Leviathan" (Job 3:8). God engages with this in showing that in fact He created these beasts, they are under His complete control; and fondly plays with them, even though He finds them incredibly dumb, blockheaded and stupid, just as a man may fondly play with his pet dog and call it "You silly thing!" as he does. It is the leviathan / behemoth speeches that lead Job from mere surface level regret to true repentance.

It is the speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan that lead Job to finally repent acceptably. But God introduces no new arguments. He simply repeats the arguments of Job 39 from the animal creation, just to a greater extent. So it was perhaps the passage of some more time, rather than new arguments, that lead Job to true repentance.

Behemoth and Leviathan don't and didn't actually exist. God draws a detailed and

accurate picture of these beasts as Job believed in them, and then comforts Job that He created them and easily controls them. The final reality of Job is that God and not scary monsters brought the trials upon Job. The evil beasts were in Job's mind and had no real existence, although God knew in great detail how Job imagined them.

The talk about behemoth and leviathan is prefaced by God asking Job to dress up as God, as judge of all, and then deal with these beasts as God does. They were the symbols of evil and chaos- but God created them, just as He creates both good and evil, darkness and light (Is. 45:5-7). Job however is as it were just trying to catch leviathan with a fishing rod. No human weapon can be used to catch nor kill leviathan (Job 41:19-21), only the One who created these beats can capture, control or kill them. That is God, not Job. There is no hope for any man that he can do this- "the hope of him [such a man] is vain" that he can ever overcome, tame or destroy the beasts (Job 41:9).

Perhaps we are to see in this a reference to Nebuchadnezzar being made to eat grass like an ox. The wild beasts of Judah's aggressors were all under God's control, even the most apparently mighty of them. Leviathan and Behemoth are monster figures appearing at the end of the book of Job, to form a kind of inclusio with the opening reference to Satan; and they are clearly part of God's final answer to Job's "case". Behe–mot can be understood as a reference to Mot, the Canaanite god of death. There are copious connections between these beasts and the language of Isaiah about the Assyrians and Babylonians. They too had been created by God, and were used by him to bring His people to repentance so that like Job, their captivity might be turned.

I repeat again- that Job in Job 40:4 is not penitent. He is simply silent in refusal to participate or give evidence in the court case against him. And his silence condemns him, according to how he had earlier spoken of only being silent if guilty. But God makes another effort to elicit his repentance, and He does so through the speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan. We naturally enquire *why* and *how* those speeches elicited Job's eventual repentance. One possibility is that he held the view of supernatural evil which many do today. He thought there were indeed beasts of chaos and evil, who were responsible for disaster in human life and also for human sin. He is being shown that these beasts, even if they are real, were created by God and are powerless in their own right. Man alone has total responsibility for his own sin and cannot blame the supposed beasts of evil.

Job 40:16 Look now, his strength is in his thighs. His force is in the muscles of his belly- These descriptions would be appropriate to a hippopotamus. "Look now" could suggest they were standing by a river, and the animal arose out of it at God's command. The theophany in a whirlwind by a river, with lightnings, is what Ezekiel experienced. The hope was that the exiles would likewise be moved to follow Job's path through repentance to restoration.

Behemoth is strong, "his strength is in his thighs". He has bones like “tubes of bronze” (:18). This connects with Job's complaint that he is not strong enough to endure what has come upon him: “What is my strength that I should wait?” (Job 6:11 NRSV). He likewise complains that his bones and flesh are not made of bronze (Job 10:11; 6:12). Behemoth is far stronger than Job; he is the land beast that represents the power of evil and chaos, to Job's mind. Yet God has created him and uses him at His will and bidding. Yet Job has sought to bring God to court and accuses Him of injustice. Job has often referenced the weakness of his own mouth, teeth and tongue (Job 3:1; 7:11; 13:17; 16:4, 5; 19:23; 23:4; 24:25; 27:4; 29:22; 40:4). But these are the very features of the beasts, especially Leviathan, which are brought to Job's attention. He is nothing to be compared with what God has created; so how can he seek to fight God as an equal in court.

Job 40:17 He moves his tail like a cedar. The sinews of his thighs are knit together- The tail of a hippo is only about one foot long. So we conclude that this beast is portrayed as only based upon a hippo, but all the same a mythical creature which Job believed in. Or we could say that hippos were seen as the spawn of these mythical beasts.

Job would have feared the beast as it moved its tail, for they arise out of rivers to feed on crops. But he need not fear, for the hippopotamus eats plants not men (:15). Again Job was being taught that in the face of apparently overwhelming opposition, his life would be preserved. And this was the lesson for the exiles too. See on :20.

Behemoth and Leviathan are based upon the hippo and crocodile, but are clearly the composite beasts of land and sea respectively whom Job believed were the sources of chaos and evil. And yet he also believed God was the source of the evil in his life. He is being challenged to trust that whatever the reality of these beasts, God was behind them, had created them and controlled them. And if he were God, he could do the same too. The presentations of these beasts leave Job with no choice but to either humble himself before God, or admit his powerlessness before them and be destroyed by them.

God created the monster of evil. The monster of evil is in fact the leading creature in the cosmos, chief of God’s ways. There is no dualism in the cosmos. The God who is so loving and providing to all is also the God who has created evil as His play thing. Job has to either be crushed by this, or believe it and repent.

It could be argued that God is pointing out the intrinsic weakness of this beast. "His strength is in his loins." (:16) may be a way of saying that he puts all his strength into reproduction, as if to say "His brains are in his balls". We can read :17 as a reference to his testicles: "the sinews of his stones [the word for 'testicle'] are wrapped together" (AV), implying he is in fact impotent. It has a tail that doesn't move, solid as a cedar; but tails need to move and be flexible to be effective. His sinews are "knit together" or intertwined / twisted; sinews mustn't be twisted. Sinews or tendons bind the bones to the muscles; twisted tendons are painful and inhibit movement. A beast

of twisted tendons won't have much function; he may appear scary but he isn't functional. His bones and muscles may be huge and strong, but if they aren't well connected to each other, he has no function. This is why these beasts are never presented by God as any threat to man. We could argue that "The lotus trees screen him as his defence" (:22) suggests that he is scared and hides behind trees. His bones which seem so strong are in fact hollow like tubes (:18). LXX of :18 has "his backbone is cast iron". An inflexible backbone means he was not very flexible, and we could translate :19 as meaning that he is "a thing made to be laughed at by His angels". If he represents evil, then he is not in fact very powerful. These descriptions would present behemoth as lacking function, not able to do much, looking powerful and strong but not functional; almost just a model, a dead image, even though he appears to move about. Behemoth is described as eating grass like an ox (:15), the language of Isaiah about a lion who has been rendered powerless. His bones are only tubes, not as solid as they appear (:18). We surely expect such a fearsome looking creature to be a carnivore and to prey on men. He is described as having huge teeth-which makes him a carnivore, surely. But he eats like an ox; the other animals aren't frightened of him and play around him (:20). He is not at all predatory. He looks more aggressive than he is, and only looks like a beast of prey. He is presented in :21 as inactive and lazy, he lies down in the shade of trees to keep out of the sun, and retreats behind "the wild lotus". Hardly the picture of a dangerous, ravening predator. Leviathan likewise is never described as doing anything hostile or predatory. And yet his appearance [especially his teeth, which are fot for a carnivore] begs the inference that he is predatory and dangerous; but that is never once mentioned. The silence about that is highly significant. "And sorrow is turned into joy before him" subverts the common idea that a beast of evil turns joy to sorrow (Job 41:22). He may appear terrible, but he doesn't function as feared.God is powerfully showing Job that these forces of sin and evil don't exist. He is deconstructing them. Leaving Job standing alone before God, with nobody and nothing to blame for his sins, and nobody other than God as the source of his sufferings. Just as there clearly is coherence and purpose in the physical universe, so there is order and meaning in God's working with man-but again, unperceived by man.

What perhaps brings Job to his knees in repentance is that he is now persuaded that the beasts of evil have no real existence. All disaster is from God; and all sin is solely his own fault. There is no buffer factor between God and himself. Nothing to blame. This helps answer the difficult but critical question: How does the depiction of behemoth and leviathan lead Job to such repentance? It explains why Job says that because he now knows that God can do *all* things, that he therefore repents. The connection between God's utter sovereignty and Job's repentance is because he rejects the idea that there can be anything somehow to blame for his sins and his sufferings. It's God and Job, with no other factor or entity present. It's why despite all the similarities between the epilogue and the prologue, the satan figure of the prologue is distinctly absent in the epilogue.

Job 40:18 His bones are like tubes of brass. His limbs are like bars of iron- Babylon's defences of brass and iron would likewise be no barrier to the restoration of God's people, for all was under His control (Is. 45:2), and Israel could be made as strong (Mic. 4:13) seeing they were part of the same creation that had made this animal (:15).

Job 40:19 He is the chief of the ways of God. He who made him gives him His sword-

Or, "the first of God's ways". God speaks of Behemoth and Leviathan with a fondness: Leviathan was created as a plaything for the Angels, and God plays with Leviathan like a bird in a cage (Job 41:5). God speaks as if He is rather affectionately protective of them: "Look at Behemoth, whom I made as I made you" (Job 40:15) ; "He is the first of God's ways"; "Under the entire heaven he is mine" (Job 41:3). These beasts were thought to be the gods of evil, chaos and suffering; and Job likely blamed them for any personal sin God was choosing to punish. By such language, God is totally deconstructing Job's ideas about the origins of sin and evil. The beasts are presented as frightening and apparently strong, but not very functional and not actually aggressive to man. It's the same lesson we see in the way that the 'satan' figure of the prologue isn't found in the epilogue. God is all and in all, and man stands before Him alone and with no other moral entities between them.

The primary reference may be to the very sharp teeth of the hippopotamus. This would be a connection to how the sword of Babylon had been Yahweh's sword. Even the most awful wild beast in Israel's experience, Babylon, was under God's control and manipulated by Him. Hence LXX "This is the chief of the creation of the Lord; made to be played with by his angels". It is God who not only created Behemoth, but can effortlessly control him in accord with His purpose. That's the comfort of the message. Indeed the descriptions of the natural world which lead up to the Leviathan / Behemoth passages are there to underline this point; and it's interesting that those passages zoom in upon the cruelties and even brutalities within nature. Yet these are all of God's ultimate design and creation, and under His providential control. Job had earlier perceived this; for he responds to the friends' allusions to an evil 'Satan' figure as the source of his suffering by observing: "Ask the animals... The birds of the air... [they show that] the hand of the Lord [and not any supernatural 'Satan'] has done this" (Job 12:7–9).

Job 40:20 Surely the mountains produce food for him, where all the animals of the field play- The animals of the field don't fear the hippopotamus, although Job did (:17). But he need not fear, for the hippopotamus eats plants not men (:15). Again Job was being taught that in the face of apparently overwhelming opposition, his life would be preserved. And this was the lesson for the exiles too. Job was to recognize that he too was part of the same creation that had brought forth the hippopotamus (:15), and if he did so, then he too could live at peace in the presence of such an awesome beast.

Job 40:21 He lies under the lotus trees, in the cover of the reed, and the marsh- LXX "by the papyrus", perhaps a reference to Babylon's mastery over Egypt. But the connection is to some words of Bildad in Job 8:11 "Can the papyrus grow up without mire? Can the rushes grow without water?". Bildad's idea is that Job's prosperity was like a quick growing papyrus which would soon wither (Job 8:12) because it had not enough water or mud. Bildad's reasoning is wrong, but clearly the Lord quarried His parable of the sower from parts of these ideas. For He speaks of the man who has no "depth of earth" as the one who responds eagerly to the word sown, but falls away "when affliction of persecution arises for the word's sake" because he has 'no root in himself' (Mk. 4:5,17). Bildad was therefore not simply saying that Job's persecution was because he had sinned; but rather he implies that Job had lost his faith after the persecution arose, because he had no real root in faith. In this Bildad was also wrong, for Job continually seeks to God in his tribulations. Behemoth was quite at home in the "mire" or "marsh" (s.w. Job 40:21); and the connection is in order to demonstrate

that even the "mire" was created by God and just as He saved Jeremiah out of the mire of the dungeon, so He could save Job and the exiles. And the only other usage of the word is in the description of the healing of the "miry places" (Ez. 47:11) if the exiles were responsive to the prophetic call to restore the temple and city made in Ez. 40-48.

Job 40:22 The lotuses cover him with their shade. The willows of the brook surround him- Trees often represent nations, and here we have a picture of the nations being subservient to Babylon. LXX "And the great trees make a shadow over him with their branches, and so do the bushes of the field".

Job 40:23 Behold, if a river overflows, he doesn't tremble. He is confident, though the Jordan swells even to his mouth- As noted on :20, Job was to recognize that he too was part of the same creation that had brought forth the hippopotamus (:15), and if he did so, then he too could live at peace in the presence of overflowing, flooded rivers; which represent the invaders of God's people and His judgment of men (see on :11). Even if those rivers came up to his mouth, they would go no further. Just as Job had been promised in the prologue that his life would be preserved. And the swelling of the rivers of Israel's enemies would likewise not destroy Israel. They need not tremble as the faithless did in the times of Isaiah.

And yet God almost seems to be mocking these beasts, the hippopotamus, crocodile or whatever they were. One reading of :23 is that this animal is so stupid he faces a flooding river and thinks by opening his mouth he can just swallow it all up. He is proudly big and strong, in his own eyes, "king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34), but totally dependent upon God. And also incredibly pigheaded, stubborn and foolish, played with by the Angels. And in a way, that was Job.

Job 40:24 Shall any take him when he is on the watch, or pierce through his nose with a snare?- The idea is as GNB "The most amazing of all my creatures! Only his Creator can defeat him". And indeed God would overthrow Babylon and allow the exiles to return.

JOB CHAPTER 41

Job 41:1 Can you draw out Leviathan-

We now have a 33 line poem about Leviathan. It surely matches the 33 line poem of Job about his own utter innocence in Job 31. It is a response from God but not an answer. Just as Job's 122 questions are met by God's 61 questions in response, exactly half. A nod to the fact God had heard Job, and was aware of his 122 questions. But had God answered them one by one... Job would have been destroyed by God, intellectually and morally. And God wants to save him... from his self righteousness as displayed in Job 31.

Leviathan and Behemoth are monster figures appearing at the end of the book of Job, to form a kind of *inclusio* with the opening reference to Satan; and they are clearly part of God's final answer to Job's "case". Leviathan appears to be the Canaanite version of the orthodox 'Satan' figure, perhaps a reference to the 'Lotan' of the Ugaritic myths. In great detail, these figures are deconstructed. They are shown to

be *created* beings – created by the one almighty God of the Old Testament, to be completely under His control to the point that He can even tease them, so enormously greater is His power than theirs. These Canaanite 'Satan' figures are thereby shown to have no significant existence; and they certainly don't exist as opposed to God. They are totally under His control. And yet these monster figures clearly have characteristics shared by known animals, such as the hippopotamus, crocodile etc. Those similarities are intended. It's been well observed: "To say that Leviathan has characteristics of the crocodile and the whale is not to say that it *is* such a creature, but rather to suggest that evil is rooted in the natural world" (Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (Leicester: I.V.P. / Apollos, 2002) p. 27) – and the point is so laboured in Job that the natural world is of God's complete creation. 'Evil' in a form independent of Him, in radical opposition to Him, simply isn't there.

It's significant that dragons in the form of serpents were common in Babylonian theology. Figures on vases show serpent griffins, there was one on Marduk's temple in Nippur, and also on the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. These would have been familiar to Judah in Babylonian captivity; and we have suggested that the book of Job was edited there, under inspiration, for their benefit. They may well have seen a similarity between the Babylonian monsters and the Leviathan / Behemoth beasts. That God is greater than Leviathan and can do what He wills with him would therefore have had a special meaning to the faithful Jew in exile. In a restoration context, Isaiah comforted Judah that God would destroy "Leviathan the gliding serpent; He will slay the monster of the sea" (Is. 27:1). The real 'monster' faced by Judah in exile wasn't a supernatural being; it was a concrete kingdom of men on earth, namely Babylon. God taught Job, and through him showcased to the watching world, that all such imaginations of Leviathan, monsters in the raging sea, crooked serpents etc. were vain – in any case, God had created them and used them to do His will with His people, symbolized as they were by Job. His sitting in dust and ashes is very much the picture of Judah sitting by the rivers of Babylon, bemoaning their losses. The language of Job's captivity being 'turned' (Job 42:10) is the very term used about the restoration of Judah from Babylon (Jer. 29:14; Ps. 126:4).

With a fishhook, or press down his tongue with a cord?- God almost jokes with Job, that he had been trying to draw out Leviathan with a fish hook (Job 41:1), and I see that as a commentary upon so many human attempts to get a handle on the way God is the adversary / Satan figure in our lives. Shrugging it off as chance and bad luck, believing in a personal Satan in the sea or in Heaven, thinking God is punishing us... all this is trying to capture Leviathan with a mere fishing rod. The book of Job isn't an explanation for specific human suffering – and many who turn to the book looking for that come away disappointed. Rather is it an account of God's sovereign power, putting meaning into the word "All–mighty" when applied to God. On a 'doctrinal' level it is indeed a deconstruction of the ideas of supernatural 'Satan' figures. But on a more personal level, it challenges us to follow in Job's faithful footsteps, as it challenged Judah in captivity. See on Job 42:2.

I suggested on Job 40:16 that Behemoth was a hippopotamus which arose from a river. "Look now" could suggest they were standing by a river, and the animal arose out of it at God's command. The theophany in a whirlwind by a river, with lightnings, is what Ezekiel experienced. The hope was that the exiles would likewise be moved to follow Job's path through repentance to restoration. Here now God seems to bring a crocodile out of the same river, "Leviathan". Unlike the hippopotamus which is a herbivore, the crocodile was likely to attack and eat Job. He was thrown back to the

promise of the prologue that God would preserve his life, just as He would the national life of Judah from every wild beast. Job's experience with Behemoth was to prepare him for the encounter now with Leviathan the crocodile.

Job 41:2 Can you put a rope into his nose, or pierce his jaw through with a hook?-
The mythology which Job likely believed held that the hero would conquer beasts like leviathan through close combat. God can do that. But can Job? God is really labouring the point that Job is not at all God, and that his positions had effectively made himself as God. And he so needed to repent of that. Heb. "Or bore his jaw through with a thorn". To bore Leviathan's nose would have been a major job, and would require a major iron nose ring and chains. Using a thorn would be as pathetically ineffective as trying to catch Leviathan with a fishing rod.

This and the following verses use the language of captivity. Prisoners were treated in this way in victory processions. The language is so relevant to the exiles who had been led away into captivity; and God could lead their captors captive, in a way only He could, just as He as it were led Job's captivity captive.

Job 41:3 Will he make many petitions to you, or will he speak soft words to you?- This is exactly how captives spoke to their captors; see on :2 (cp. 1 Kings 20:32). The "soft words" may refer to pleading for his life with intense entreaty and begging. Leviathan was utterly subject to God. He had made a covenant of submission to God, and was His obedient servant (:4).

Job 41:4 Will he make a covenant with you- Captive kings were forced to make covenants with their captors; see on :2.

That you should take him for a servant forever?- Just as Job is described as God's "servant" (Job 1:8), so is Leviathan (Job 40:28; 41:4). Job and Behemoth / Leviathan [the LXX presents them as one and the same beast] were in fact part of the same creation as Job, and likewise God's servants. No evil power uncontrolled by God is at work in Job's life. We also need to give due weight to the fact that God speaks the Leviathan / Behemoth passages "out of the storm", which had been gathering since Job 37:2. This is significant because storms were seen as manifestations of evil powers. Yet here (and elsewhere in Scripture), the one true God speaks out of such storms, to demonstrate how far greater He is than any storm god; and showing by implication that such storm gods don't exist, and the 'evil' which supposedly came from them was in fact under His control.

In pagan myth, Baal was temporarily conquered by Mot, and the Ugaritic poem about their conflict which was found in the Ras Shamra texts speaks of how Baal was made a "slave forever" (Umberto Cassuto, *Biblical and Oriental Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1975) Vol. 2 p. 6). This very language is picked up in Job 41:4, where God mocks that in no way would He become a "slave forever". The allusion shows that the one true God is in no way Baal. He is greater than Baal. Unlike Baal, He is in no conflict with Mot nor anyone. Baal's sister, Anath, muzzled a dragon with great difficulty – but Yahweh muzzled Leviathan and then sported with him (Job 41:1–5). The poem challenges Baal to "Pierce through Lotan the serpent, destroy the serpent the seven headed tyrant" (Cassuto, *ibid* p. 7). Yet this is exactly the language picked up in Is. 27:1: "Yahweh will punish with His powerful, great and mighty sword Leviathan the serpent, Leviathan the serpent, and He will slay the dragon". Yahweh's utter supremacy over any other god is so great that it makes all ideas of cosmic conflict simply laughable. Ps. 92:10 likewise: "Lo, thine enemies, I YHWH, lo, thine

enemies shall perish, all evil doers shall be scattered" alludes to Part 3 lines 8 and 9 of the poem about the Mot–Baal conflict: "Lo, thine enemies, O Baal, lo thine enemies wilt thou pierce through, lo, thou wilt destroy thine adversaries" (Cassuto, *ibid* p. 8). Note too that Baal's enemies, i.e. Mot and the demons of the underworld, are paralleled with "evildoers". Human sinners rather than demons are the real issue.

Job 41:5 Will you play with him as with a bird? Or will you bind him for your girls?- The idea is that the mighty Leviathan was like a caged bird, submissive and entertaining, which brought much delight and intrigue to God's delicate and tender servant girls, who kept caged birds for fun. God is not only the victorious captor of Leviathan, but He can play with him as a pet, and even give him as a pet to His children. And God's children are His people. The same idea is in Job 40:19 LXX "This is the chief of the creation of the Lord; made to be played with by his angels". Ps. 104:26,27 makes the same point: "this Leviathan You fashioned to play with. All of them look to You to give them their food in its season". God tames all animals including Leviathan, but man cannot. Job's bitter question in Job 7:12; 26:12 complains that God is treating him like He treats the sea monster: "Am I Yamm or am I the Sea Beast, that You should put a watch on me?". Quite possibly God alludes to this complaint when He speaks of His relationship with Leviathan, another sea beast, possibly meant to be understood as the same as Yamm. God simply says that He likes playing around with Leviathan. God is not against Leviathan, He is a friend of Leviathan. Job and the friends have a simplistic view of good and evil, as many do today, imagining a cosmos split between God and the Satan. The book of Job often deconstructs this, showing God to be all powerful, all the scary monsters thought to be interfering with Job are in fact all at peace with God and under His control. Of course this is all stated in the account of God creating the sea monsters at creation (Gen. 1:20,21). And man was created to have dominion over all God's creations both in the sea and on the land (Gen. 1:26).

Job 41:6 Will traders barter for him? Will they part him among the merchants?- This alludes to how captives were sold into slavery; see on :2.

Job 41:7 Can you fill his skin with barbed irons, or his head with fish spears?- These weapons would have no effect on the head of a crocodile, which is covered by extremely hard skin. No human device or weapon could destroy the crocodile, only God could take him captive.

Job 41:8 Lay your hand on him. Remember the battle, and do so no more- The idea may be that if Job tries to lay hands on the crocodile, he will do it only once and will not live to do it again. Eliphaz claims that God is preparing to judge Job like a king ready to ride into the battle (Job 15:24). But God's later revelation includes Him demonstrating that man cannot participate successfully in any battle with what God has willed (Job 41:8), and the horse runs foolishly into battle with no regard for consequence (Job 39:25). The connection with the words of Eliphaz may be in that it was effectively Eliphaz who was rushing into battle to do judgment against Job; and he was acting like the foolish horse, forgetting that God alone will fight in the battle, and win (Job 38:23).

"Remember the battle" may be a reference to the well known mythology of the battle between the beast of the sea and other gods [Yamm against Leviathan, later transformed into Marduk against Tiamat in Babylonian mythology]. Job is asked to

recall how terrible and fierce was that battle [in the mythology he believed in- for no such battle actually happened]. And he is being asked how he as a mere man can ever engage in battle with Leviathan.

Job 41:9 Behold, the hope of binding him is vain. Won't one be cast down even at the sight of him?- "Behold..." again suggests that God has made this creature appear to Job; He uses the same term about the 'appearance' of Behemoth. "Vain" is literally "a liar". In Job 24:25 he has boasted of the strength of his own speeches: "If it isn't so now, who will prove me a liar [s.w. "vain"], and make my speech worth nothing?". Job has argued himself into an invincible position, in his own eyes. Indeed, all he says is true; but like the friends, truths are expressed but within a wrong context. God confirms this here by remarking that whoever has hope of overcoming Leviathan, His great beast (perhaps representing death and human mortality) is a liar to think he has such hope. Job has forgotten his humanity, despite being 'right' in his arguments. This is the problem with possessing truth; it can lead us to wrongly forget our humanity and consider ourselves invincible.

Job 41:10 None is so fierce that he dare stir him up. Who then is he who can stand before Me?- The reference is to how crocodiles are seen sleeping by the banks of rivers, but no man dare "stir him up" or even creep near him. But despite God's awesomeness, Job at that point was standing before God. The "sons of God" of the prologue likewise stood before the Lord. The idea is that this can only be possible through God's grace, and Job and the friends had been unaware of how awesome it was to be able to stand before God. If a man dare not attack these monsters, and Job is secretly terrified of them- how can he seek to attack God in court? No man including Job dare even put a bridle in the mouth of Leviathan (:13).

We could translate: "Is he not fierce when one arouses him? Yet who is he that he will take his stand over against Me? Who has confronted Me that I should sue for peace?". Job could not enter into a court case with a beast whom God had created, let alone with the creator of all. And this beast of evil could never confront God. He belongs to God; we could render :11 "Under the whole of heaven, he is mine". Theoretically, Job had seen the truth of all this: "Who has hardened (himself) against Him and survived?" (Job 9:4); but now he was 'seeing' what he had only heard by the ear, theoretically understanding it. Job had thought to confront God and take a stand against him in some court, in the fantasy of his mind. In fairness, each time Job fantasizes about this, he reflects that God is bigger and more powerful than him, so it won't really happen. *But Job is being judged for the things he fantasized about*. That's the point. Truly bad men do what good men only dream of. Our thoughts, even of fantasy, are how God sees us. We desperately need the Holy Spirit to change us.

Job 41:11 Who has first given to Me, that I should repay him?- This is quoted in Rom. 11:35 AV: "who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?". The context is Paul marvelling at God's utter grace. This was clearly how he was led to interpret this verse in Job. There is again legal language here; as if to say 'Who has put me under any legal obligation, forcing Me to do what you say and repay you what I owe you?". All Job's persistent demands to meet God in judgment were therefore inappropriate (Job 9:34,35; 10:3; 13:3,22; 23:3-7). Here we see, as James puts it, "the end of the Lord... that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy / grace". Paul in Romans 11 interpreted the end of the Lord in the same way. God gave to Job, not because he was righteous and therefore God was in Job's debt. Job seems to have

thought that his Divine blessings were owed him by God because he had served God. But it was all of grace; and Job was given even more at the end, despite having cursed God. The idea is that Job's righteousness had not done God a favour which He was bound to repay through blessing Job. What God wanted was unbought human loyalty. It is what man wants from his loved ones, his wife, his children- not loyalty and "love" for the sake of gifts, but loyalty and love simply so. The voice of the Satan in the prologue is really that of God's niggling doubt, that Job's loyalty was bought and not unbought. This is why God is so thrilled when Job comes finally to [some sort of] repentance, rewarding him so abundantly for really not much at all in terms of works.

Everything under the heavens is Mine- Much of the language used about Leviathan and Behemoth is also used about God's manifestation of Himself. Smoke from nostrils, flame from mouth (Job 41:11,12)= Ps. 18:8; Strength before and dismay behind (Job 41:14 Heb.) = Pestilence before and plague behind (Hab. 3:5); Strong ones and leaders cringe in fear (Job 41:17 Heb.) = Earth reels (Ps. 18:7) and mountains tremble (Hab. 3:6); Deep sea stirred up (Job 41:23,24 Heb.) = Deep sea laid bare (Ps. 18:5) ; Terrible teeth = Job felt that God was gnashing His teeth at him (Job 16:9); Breath carries men away = The breath of God's mouth will carry away the wicked (Job 15:30); On earth there is not his equal (Job 41:33) = Only ultimately true of God. Leviathan is called the 'cruel one' (Job 41:10) – and the very same word is used by Job about God in His afflicting Job in Job 30:21. Leviathan, the seemingly overbearing power of evil in the world, be it in the early satan myths or Baylon, is in fact a manifestation of God to such an intense degree that effectively it 'is' God; God, ultimately, is the adversary / Satan to Job. The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related; see on Job 42:6.

Job 41:12 I will not keep silence concerning his limbs, nor his mighty strength, nor his goodly frame- LXX "I will not be silent because of him: though because of his power one shall pity his antagonist". God pities Job because he had thought that in his own strength he could be right with God. This is perhaps what is in view in James 5:11, where we learn that at "the end of the Lord" in His relationship with Job, He showed Himself "very pitiful". This means that God is not shooting out these challenges to Job in anger or in offence at a mortal man, but rather in pity. Job before Leviathan was to be pitied. Let alone Job before God. And God did pity him and showed long patience to him, repeatedy giving him chances to repent until he did.

Job 41:13 Who can strip off his outer garment? Who shall come within his jaws?- The reference is to the scaly "coat" of the crocodile. If that cannot be taken off, there is no chance to open his mouth and enter between his jaws, where crocodiles have ""two rows of sharply pointed teeth, thirty or more on each side".

Job 41:14 Who can open the doors of his face? Around his teeth is terror- This may be an answer to Job's complaint in Job 16:9 that God "has gnashed on me with His teeth". Job 41:14 speaks of how terrible are the teeth of the creature God has made; but He alone can open the mouth of it and is fearless before its' teeth. The idea of the connection back to Job 16:9 is that God knows all about teeth. He has designed them, and even if Job thinks God is gnashing at Him like a beast, he must accept that God creates the beast and its teeth.

It is God alone who can "open" or "shut up" Leviathan (:15). Ginzberg demonstrates that the Jews saw the monster 'Rahab' and Leviathan as the same entity;

and twice Job stresses how infinitely greater than Rahab is Yahweh. When God starts speaking about Leviathan, He is therefore confirming the truth of what Job has earlier said about His power over Rahab / Leviathan. The context of Job's comments was to answer the theories of the friends – and God is as it were confirming that Job's deconstruction of their 'Satan' theories was correct. The same Hebrew words are used about God's binding and loosing of the stars [which were thought to control evil on earth] and His binding, loosing and opening of Leviathan's mouth (Job 38:31 cp. Job 40:29). Whether or not Leviathan / a 'Satan' figure, or the bad stars, are for real... God is in utter control of them, and there is thus no conflict, no war in Heaven, no ultimate dualism at all in the cosmos. Which is just the message we would expect from a monotheistic Old Testament book. Israel's God is truly the Almighty.

"Open" is the word for 'loosing'. Job sees God as capable of binding and loosing him, untying the cords that restrain affliction and then binding them up again (Job 30:11 s.w.). God's response is that indeed this is the case, and such binding and loosing is seen throughout the natural creation (s.w. Job 38:31; 39:5; 41:14). And therefore, Job and the exiles are to live in hope of being bound up in safety from affliction, just as God "untied His cord and afflicted me" in Job 30:11.

"Terror" is what the friends believed would come upon Job (Job 20:25 s.w.). "Terrors" are again the judgment of God upon an apostate Israel, whom Job was suffering for whilst innocent, after the pattern of the later Lord Jesus (Dt. 32:25 s.w.). Those "terrors" were likely understood by the friends as some kind of demonic beings. God deconstructs this by explaining that the great beasts He has created likewise were 'terrible' (s.w. "terrors"). But the simple point was that He had created them and was totally in control (s.w. Job 39:20; 41:14).

Job 41:15 Strong scales are his pride, shut up together with a close seal- The scales of the crocodile resemble shields. The idea is that this beast represents the enemies of God's people, with none of their soldiers breaking rank, just as the prophets envisage Israel's enemies. But these are also all designed and created by God and can be manipulated by Him at will.

Job 41:16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them- "Air" here is *ruach*, the usual word for wind or spirit. If "air" was all that was meant, a different Hebrew word would be used. The idea is that there is a designed unity here between the shields / scales which God's Spirit will not break apart. This is a unity created by God. Unity comes from Him alone. And this is what we see in functional relationships within marriages and true churches.

Job 41:17 They are joined one to another. They stick together, so that they can't be pulled apart- The idea is that they are soldered to each other by God; see on :16.

Job 41:18 His sneezing flashes out light. His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning- In Job 15:12 Eliphaz condemned Job: "Why do your eyes flash?". Job was indeed angry, with flashing eyes. But the expression of emotion is misinterpreted as being angry with God (:13). God's special creation, Leviathan, also had flashing eyes (Job 41:18,19). Perhaps this is God's way of saying that eyes flashing with anger is not necessarily sinful of itself, and is all part of the natural created order, and is not worthy of rebuke in itself. This is said against the backdrop of a Bedouin culture where expressions of emotion were only to be made in appropriate ways.

Job 41:19 Out of his mouth go burning torches. Sparks of fire leap forth- The Leviathan beast / crocodile which had crawled up to Job is now transformed by God into more than an animal (:20 too). He starts to appear like part of the cherubim vision. The "burning torches" is s.w. "burning lamp" in the theophany of Gen. 15:17; Ez. 1:13; Dan. 10:6 and Ex. 20:18. This apparently frightful beast is actually a manifestation of Yahweh's glory. And that burning torch is how Yahweh's salvation shone forth for the exiles (s.w. Is. 62:1), and how the revived Judah could become (s.w. Zech. 12:6).

Job 41:20 Out of his nostrils a smoke goes, as of a boiling pot over a fire of reeds- This continues the language of God manifestation / theophany; see on :19. The "smoke" is s.w. Gen. 15:17; Ex. 19:18 and other visions of God manifestation. "Goes" is the word for 'bring forth' in Job 28:11: "The thing that is hidden He brings forth to light". God can reveal everything physical, if He wishes. But man will still not find "wisdom" if he is searching for it as a 'physical' thing, obtained by a process of mining and subsequent refining. That reveals merely "stones of obscurity" (Job 28:3), nuggets of isolated truth. This message needs to be heeded by those who consider the Christian duty is to search out academic truth, mining it from the pages of the Bible and further processing it. This of itself is not to be despised, but this can be done as the Pharisees did it, and as the friends did- without coming to the awesome personal encounter with God and His grace with which the book of Job concludes. God can dry up the streams so that those panning in them thigh deep for precious stones- find them. He can bring them to light, but this is not the same thing as the "wisdom" of personal relationship with Him and departing from evil in our hearts (Job 28:9,10,28). This is what was happening on Job's life; God was 'bringing forth' light from death, deep things from darkness (s.w. Job 12:22). And this was realized by *God* bringing it forth, and not man's search for 'truth'. Job as a person was to be 'brought forth' *by God* as gold from that fire of affliction (Job 23:10 s.w.). Just as plants are 'brought forth' from the earth without the need for mining under the earth (Job 28:5 s.w.). This is why God's reply to Job keeps on using this word for 'bring forth', labouring the point that *God* 'brings forth' by His processes and initiatives, and not man. And that is as a code stamped upon all of creation (Job 38:8,29,32; 39:4,21; 41:20,21).

Job 41:21 His breath kindles coals. A flame goes forth from his mouth- Similar language is used in Ps. 18:8 of God's anger: "There went up a smoke out of His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it". The apparent anger of Leviathan is actually God's anger. God totally controls him. LXX "His breath is as live coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth". All this is the language of the cherubim. Leviathan, the great wild beast, was under God's control and Judah's whole experience with Babylon would result finally in the glory of Yahweh being revealed through this beast. The tragedy is that Babylon didn't fall as prophesied, at the time (it will in the last days, as Rev. 18 makes clear). The Jews preferred to remain in Babylon, and those who returned didn't act as they ought to have done. But it was the Divine intention that His glory be revealed through the fall of Babylon leading to Judah's exit from exile.

Job 41:22 There is strength in his neck. Terror dances before him- It could be argued that a crocodile has no neck, being more like a lizard, and so this would confirm that in view is a mythical creature of evil, based upon the crocodile, not a literal crocodile.

Or it can be argued that this would be true of the crocodile, whose neck is about the same diameter as its head. AV "Sorrow is turned into joy before him". "Sorrow" or "terror" is also translated "fear". This creature which would strike fear into any man actually turns fear into joy. Through this awful, terrifying beast under God's control, fear of judgment is turned into joy in God's presence. "And sorrow is turned into joy before him" subverts the common idea that a beast of evil turns joy to sorrow. He may appear terrible, but he doesn't function as feared.

Job 41:23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together. They are firm on him. They can't be moved- The body of the crocodile is so compacted together that all its parts must move together, and the crocodile therefore has difficulty in turning. This theme is continued in the reference to him having a stone firm heart (:24). This is all similar language to that of the cherubim, who turned not as they went (Ez. 10:11). See on :19,20. God's movement is likewise multi factorial, all touched by it are part of the wider plan to manifest His saving glory, and it moves one way- towards human salvation.

Job 41:24 His heart is as firm as a stone, yes, firm as the lower millstone- See on :23, which uses the same word for "firm".

Job 41:25 When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid. They retreat before his thrashing- Likewise Job and all men must retreat before God's raising up of Himself in manifestation, as was happening in the ongoing theophany. Job has already perceived this in theory, saying that he can do nothing when God raises Himself up (s.w. Job 31:23). But now what he had heard by the ear, known in theory, his eye was seeing (Job 42:5). "Retreat" is AV "they purify themselves"; and the friends would soon have to do this, through Job's agency in offering for them as he had once offered for the purifying of his children. "Thrashing" is the word for 'destruction', commonly used of the exiles' destruction (Is. 51:19 etc.). The exiles needed to see in that the raising up of God as leviathan, and to purify themselves in repentance.

Job 41:26 If one attacks him with the sword, it can't prevail; nor the spear, the dart, nor the pointed shaft- No weapon formed could prosper against Leviathan, just as no weapon formed against Israel would (Is. 54:17)- if they were on the side of God's manifestation, if this theophany was for and not against them.

Job 41:27 He counts iron as straw; and brass as rotten wood- All human strength was as nothing before leviathan; and Job grasps this lesson with both hands in the next chapter. See on :26. All human weapons would have no effect upon leviathan; they would be counted as effective as throwing straw at him. What seems invincible to man, however, is totally under God's control and of His creation. That's the point.

Job 41:28 The arrow can't make him flee. Sling stones are like chaff to him- Or "slingers". All the military strength and device of Gentile nations against Babylon would come to nothing. And yet Judah trusted desperately in Egypt and other Gentile nations to save them from Babylon. But God as the creator of this beast would remove it in due time. See on :26.

Zophar claims that Job was going to flee from the arrow of Divine judgment, but would all the same be struck through by it (Job 20:24,25). God's response was that

His creatures didn't flee from His arrows (s.w. Job 41:28). Neither did Job flee from God; he uses the same term to describe how the wicked vainly tried to flee from God (Job 27:22). He was in harmony with the natural creation. Zophar was wrong. Job didn't flee from God but quite the opposite- he keeps begging God to reveal Himself, and He does so at the end of the book.

Job 41:29 Clubs are counted as stubble. He laughs at the rushing of the javelin- This is all the language of Divine judgment (Nah. 3:3; Lam. 3:13). The horse doesn't fear that (Job 39:23), just as Leviathan doesn't (Job 41:29). He is as he is, not always wise, but free from the fear of judgment, not fearing the battle as men fear it. And this was perhaps how God wants His people to be, and this was in fact how Job was. See on :26. God is speaking and showing all this to Job out of the whirlwind of Divine judgment. Leviathan is closer to God than Job, for he is not afraid of such judgment. The allusion is to how Baal was thought to have defeated Leviathan with a club. God is clearly alluding to the mythology Job apparently believed in, and deconstructing it. God is Almighty. Leviathan is made by Him and therefore of no real power and certainly no radical factor in Job's sufferings. Leviathan, like Behemoth, is being deconstructed.

Job 41:30 His undersides are like sharp potsherds, leaving a trail in the mud like a threshing sledge- "His belly is covered with jagged scales"—a thing which is true of the crocodile, but scarcely of any other beast. LXX appears to more pointedly refer to Babylon, the 'golden city': "His lair is formed of sharp points; and all the gold of the sea under him is an immense quantity of clay". But the idea is that Leviathan has spikey scales that leave a mark on the mud when he lays on it, as if a threshing instrument or plough with sharp teeth had been driven over it.

Job 41:31 He makes the deep to boil like a pot. He makes the sea like a pot of ointment- Referring to how the path of the crocodile through water causes an impression of boiling water. The sea / water was seen as the habitation of evil, radical evil out of God's control. But Leviathan / the manifestation of God could make it boil, and yet also make it as placidly calm as a pot of ointment when he is finished. And that was what was about to happen to Job.

"Boil" is the word used of Job's afflictions in Job 30:27 AV "My bowels boiled". This is the word used for the boiling of the exiles under Divine judgment (Ez. 24:5). God is able to make things boil in the natural creation and then make them perfectly still (Job 41:31 s.w.); and the message was that the days of affliction, the intense boiling of Job and later the exiles, could be made still in a moment.

Job 41:32 He makes a path shine after him. One would think the deep had white hair- Referring to the white path of spray left by the crocodile as it passes through water. Job's experiences were of affliction set in his "path" (s.w. Job 19:8). And the Bedouins he curses in Job 30:1-12 were those who had abused him in that "path" (Job 30:13). So it seems he has in view the Sabeans who had abused him in the prologue, and yet this section also has clear reference to the friends. Yet that "path" of affliction which God had given Job was the path of wisdom and relationship with Him which was indiscernible to the human eye (Job 28:7 cp. 28); the fact that the ultimate path is invisible to the secular, naked eye is a truth stamped upon the natural creation (Job 38:20), and yet after the affliction or trouble caused by the passing of Leviathan, perhaps symbolic of the huge grief in Job's life, the pattern for Israel's future suffering

at the hands of the beast... this path shines clearly (Job 41:32). And this was to be Job's experience at his restoration, as it could have been likewise for the exiles.

Job 41:33 On earth there is not his equal, that is made without fear- "That is made" has the idea of a made or created being- hence GNB "he is a creature that has no fear". He is a created being- created by God. LXX "There is nothing upon the earth like to him, formed to be sported with by my angels". Again, we see taught the utter supremacy of God over the greatest of the wild beasts, Babylon.

Job 41:34 He sees everything that is high. He is king over all the sons of pride- The idea may be that the crocodile is king over all the animals, even the proud lions- representative of Babylon, in the context of the exiles. LXX "He is king of all that are in the waters", speaking of Babylon's supremacy over the nations. We note that throughout God's responses to Job, He rarely speaks of man. He speaks of His creation on earth and of the cosmos, but says little or nothing about man. Job's idea was that man must be at the centre of God's creation, and issues of human suffering must therefore be central to the cosmos. God's response is that this is laughably just not the case. And Job sees the point.

"He sees..." could imply that he has his eyes on Job as a proud man and is coming after him... And so this is God's final statement before Job finally repents properly. The idea seems to be that all proud people are terrified of him. And Job was one of them; he was cowering in fear before God's description of leviathan. Pride was Job's essential problem, indeed it is the root of all sin. This the punchline, the end stress, of God's final speech to Job. Humility is of the essence, and is critically important for true repentance.

JOB CHAPTER 42

Job 42:1 Then Job answered Yahweh- Job finally answers, and we are all ears. For God has said earlier that He doesn't accept Job's silence. He wants an answer of sorts, although there is no legitimate one. It has been observed that the Covenant name of Yahweh is not used in the speeches of Job and the friends. Instead they speak of God as *El* (power) or *Shaddai* (the fruitful one). This shows how they perceived God as the awesome power of the universe, the one who granted their physical blessings in response to their obedience to Him. 'God' was like a profitable insurance policy. But *Yahweh* is fundamentally a saviour-God, one who manifests Himself in men for their salvation, and is supremely manifested in the Son. Significantly, we are told in chapter 42 that Job finally spoke to *Yahweh*; it was to Him that he said: "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee" (:5). He came to understand God's Name, His personality, in far greater fullness. He came to appreciate far more the extent of God's manifestation in the true friend which he looked forward to. Our sufferings and traumas have a like effect, if we respond as Job did. Note that both Jacob and Samson, in their time of spiritual maturity, also reached a higher appreciation of the names of God. Reflect likewise how Abraham told Isaac that “Elohim yir’eh”, the elohim would provide the sacrifice; but after the wonder of the ram being provided, he named the place “Yahweh yir’eh” (Gen. 22:14). The experience of this foreshadowing of the cross led him to know the Yahweh Name more fully; and for this reason it can be shown that the cross was the supreme means of that Name being declared to men.

Job 42:2 I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be restrained-

The connection between God's utter sovereignty ["You can do all things"] and Job's repentance is because he rejects the idea that there can be anything somehow to blame for his sins and his sufferings. It's God and Job, with no other factor or entity present. It's why despite all the similarities between the epilogue and the prologue, the satan figure of the prologue is distinctly absent in the epilogue. See on Job 40:17.

This confession perhaps implies that earlier, Job had considered the continuation of his sufferings as being because God was somehow limited; unable to stop his suffering. He thought the forces of evil, symbolized in his own mind by Behemoth and Leviathan, were beyond God to control. Now, after God's speeches about them, Job sees God as perfectly able to control them. He thought God was a bad God, because he considered God unable to on one hand show love to him, and on the other make his life a misery. Or that He as the righteous God was unable to justify a sinner like him. God's purpose to save man at best was restrained by human failure and sinfulness. Our judgment day experience will teach us the same; God can do all things, and that includes saving even me.

Job has said this already in Job 10:13 LXX: "Having these things in thyself, I know that thou canst do all things; for nothing is impossible with thee". Job at the end repeats these words, but really understanding and meaning them as a result of his sufferings, turning theoretical knowledge into experience (:5). In Mt. 19:26 the Lord explains the irrelevance of riches and human power to salvation and entering the Kingdom, saying that "with God all things are possible"- without money. This is almost quoting Job 42:2, where Job comes to the conclusion that all human strength is meaningless: "I know that You can do everything". It may be that Jesus is even implying that through the tribulation of his life he had come to the same conclusion as Job.

I have pointed out that Job all through rejects the ideas promoted by the friends, the view of traditional wisdom (especially emphasized by Bildad, Job 8:8–10), that various supernatural 'Satan' monsters and figures were responsible for his experiences. Job began by saying that we receive both good and evil from God's hand (Job 2:10 cp. Is. 45:5–7). And he ends saying the same – that the Lord brought the trouble upon him (Job 42:11). He repeatedly sees God as the source of all his affliction. Hence God can say that Job has spoken about Him that which is right (Job 42:8). But Job came to realize the massive practical extent of what he had previously known in theory, what he had "by the hearing of the ear". Now his eye saw / perceived that truly no plan of God can be thwarted, by any of the various 'Satan' monsters imagined by men (Job 42:2). We too may say that we believe in the omnipotence of God; but such a belief requires us to throw out all beliefs in supernatural Satan figures. And that's not a merely intellectual exercise; to see the tragedies and cruelties of our lives as being ultimately from God and under His control is something which shakes us to the core. See on Job 41:1.

AV "That no thought can be withholden from thee". Perhaps now Job realizes that his sins had indeed largely been in his thoughts, and that he was justly being brought to judgment for them. This is a chilling challenge to religious folks who appear not to sin much in their actions but do so abundantly in their minds.

Job 42:3 You asked, 'Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?'- Job is here

quoting from God's accusation against him in Job 38:2 LXX (see note there), and accepting it as true. His many words had darkened or hid the word / counsel of God.

Therefore I have uttered that which I did not understand- Job here directly engages with God's words in Job 38:18, using the same words as when God asked him if he could 'utter' his 'understanding' of the breadth of the earth. Those amongst the exiles who repented would be able to 'utter the understanding' once they perceived God's grace (s.w. Is. 40:21; Jer. 9:12). Job had initially been sure that he could "understand" what God was doing (Job 6:30), but progressively came to realize that he could not "understand" God's ways (Job 9:11; 23:8). Now he realizes that even that confession that he didn't "understand" was inadequate, for if he really meant it, he would have not spoken as he had. It was through the work of the suffering servant that God's people would come to understand that which they had not understood (Is. 52:15 s.w.). For in the death and work of the Lord Jesus there was a like theophany going on to that which Job was experiencing, and our response to it should be as his.

Things too wonderful for me, which I didn't know- Job had earlier admitted that God's ways were too wonderful for him (s.w. Job 9:10), but now that theoretical knowledge of his own humanity was felt in reality (:5).

'Taking counsel in our own soul' is typical depressive human response (Ps. 13:2). We think our best and only counsellor is ourselves, in our self talk, we ask ourselves the questions and get often wrong answers. The spiritual mind takes counsel in God; David speaks in Ps. 119:24 of God's words being his counsellor, and describes God's words as His "counsel". If those words are in our hearts, then that will be the response we get. Otherwise we are mired within ourselves, bogged down with endless self talk and introspection which leads to no good answer, and often to very contorted and wrong self advice. "There are many advices [Heb.] in a man's heart; but the counsel of Yahweh shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Job 18:7 says that a man's "own counsel [s.w.] shall cast him down". God's comment on Job is that he had "darkened [God's] counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). Job did this by doing what David is here tempted to do, taking counsel in his own soul. Job had refused the "counsel" of the friends, which was wrong; but had turned into himself for counsel and thus had "darkened" or obscured the light of God's counsel. Job agrees with this when he confesses that indeed he has hidden, or hidden himself, from [God's] counsel, and he was without knowledge. That is my paraphrase of the difficult Hebrew of Job 42:3: "Who is / how is he that hides counsel without knowledge. Therefore have I uttered that I understood not".

Job 42:4 You said, 'Listen, now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you will answer Me'- In his brief speech, Job engages directly with God's words, here in Job 38:3; 40:7. His repentance and restoration were a direct result of his careful response to God's word, and this too was to be the path of Israel, if they would share in his restoration. God twice told Job that He was going to demand of him, and receive an answer (Job 38:3; 40:7). I suggest that God puts the words of repentance to Job, and Job then meekly repeats them. The same was intended to be true of the exiles' repentance (Hos. 14:2). This is what Elihu, on God's behalf, had several times offered Job- a formula of words he could say for repentance.

There appears to be a purposeful ambiguity in the text. GNB: "You told me to listen while you spoke and to try to answer your questions"; whereas LXX "But hear me, O Lord, that I also may speak: and I will ask thee, and do thou teach me". The LXX seems more likely, as the other readings then have little logical flow of connection with the next verse.

We could argue that these are God's words. He is asking for a greater declaration of sin from Job. And Job makes it in :5 albeit so briefly. And God is thrilled with it. We marvel at how God respectfully pauses twice for Job to have his say in response (Job 40:2; 42:4). Job was getting what he had fantasized about- a day in court with God, dialogue with the Almighty. But like Moses wanting to see God's face, he comes to see how totally inappropriate was his desire.

Job 42:5 I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You- This must be connected with Job 19:27, where Job reveals that his perception of the Kingdom is that *then* he would see God with his own eye. But by now he has come to the realization that what the depth of Divine understanding which he thought would only be possible in the Kingdom, was in fact possible *here and now*. This same progressive, awesome realization that *so much* is possible here and now is something which both individually and collectively we must go through. He had thought this would only be at the resurrection (19:26), seeing a full relationship with God was, he felt, impossible in this life (28:12,20); but he came to see that even in this life, with the joy of a good conscience, the principle is even now realizable. He exalted that now, his eye saw God. It wasn't all abstractly reserved for the Kingdom.

Job finally recognized that he had only heard of God "by the hearing of the ear". There had been no real spiritual vision of God, no real *personal understanding*- just hearing in the ear. Note how the Queen of Sheba alludes to Job's words- she had heard in the ear, but her spirit failed when she saw with her eyes. In the theological context in which Job was, the idea of seeing God for oneself was a huge paradigm jump. Centuries later, righteous Isaiah was sure he would die because he thought he had seen Yahweh (Is. 6:5). Job reached the same spiritual peak of ambition and closeness to the Almighty which Moses did when he asked to be shown God's glory, with the apparent implication that he wanted to see Yahweh's face (Ex. 33:18,20). This peak of ambition which characterized Job's maturity was partly due to the way in which God recounted His greatness before Job (e.g. ch. 38). And yet (as the above chart makes clear) an appreciation of the physical greatness of God was something which had consistently featured in Job's words. Yet he had to be taught that what he thought he knew and appreciated so well, in fact he didn't.

"The hearing of the ear" could mean that he had been merely taught theory about God by others- and the opinion of the elders has been a major issue for Job and the friends. But now, he sees with his own eye. The Hebrew is similar to the words of the Queen of Sheba, possibly from an area near to the land of Uz, when she says she had heard reports of Solomon's wisdom but now she had seen with her own eyes (1 Kings 10:1).

Job 42:6 Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes- "Abhor" is the word commonly used for spiritual rejection or condemnation, used in 1 Sam. 16:1 of how God "rejected" Saul. Job condemned himself; he recognized he as a sinful man of himself should be condemned. Perhaps God's imputed righteousness, whereby He counted Job as "perfect", had led Job over time to forget his own humanity and sin. And we who are justified in Christ can take a warning from this. Job had recognized that his flesh was 'abhorrent' (s.w. Job 7:5); but he had to stop making that an excuse for not perceiving that he himself was personally sinful. Whatever we view we take of our own nature, we must ever remember this.

We could translate: "I repent on dust and ashes", referring to how he, dust and ashes, was located on the dust and ashes of the village 'gehenna' / rubbish tip (Job 2:8). Earlier he had complained that God had unjustly made him as dust and ashes: "He has cast me into the mire. I have become like dust and ashes [LXX "my portion is in dust and ashes"]" (Job 30:19). Now he recognizes that this is just and right; all his sufferings, including the loss of his ten children, ending up in and on "dust and ashes", were all just. This is what sin leads to, no matter if it were previous sins of youth or what men would consider lesser sins. His arguments had come to a climax in Job 31 when he presented his case for his utter innocence, and therefore God's misjudgment. Earlier he had lamented his loss of honour, and we must remember that their society was built around shame and honour. To be shamed as Job was, with children and elders alike mocking him, was a fate worse than death. He desperately wanted his honour back, and so pitted himself against God in court- at least in his mind. And now he willingly takes the lowest shame. But even so, one would rather expect a greater statement of remorse. He has sought to resolve everything by his own innocence rather than God's grace. But we don't quite find him clearly stating that. After all, we have had chapter after chapter of his self justification; and now we have a few sentences agreeing with God, and a few words of repentance. The remorse factor seems somewhat lacking. But God eagerly accepts it as 'enough'. And even the words of repentance, "[I] repent in dust and ashes" fail to use the standard word for "repent" in a moral sense. The word Job uses occurs six times in Job, and is always rendered 'comfort'. It is found in :11, where his family "comfort" him. It can indeed mean to repent because of its core meaning of 'to sigh'. A comforter sighs alongside the comforted. But it is not as crisp a statement of repentance as we would ideally like to see. At best, Job is saying that he sighs in his dust and ashes because of his behaviour. LXX "I esteem myself dust and ashes", just as Abraham did, saying those words without any context of personal repentance (Gen. 18:27); Rashi "I reject my life". He does indeed declare God right, but no word for "sin" crosses his lips. There is no specific confession, no apology to God, unlike in the repentance of David. "I abhor myself" likewise is vague as to its intention; LXX "therefore I consider myself worthless and waste away". We could take this as Job accepting his condemnation, assuming he was going to be slain by God, and saying what he imagined would be his last words before death. You can hate yourself and accept death, without being specifically repentant of your sins. "Abhor" is the word used of despising God (Num. 11:20; 1 Sam. 8:7; 10:19 'rejecting' Yahweh as king; 1 Sam. 15:26 rejecting God's word; 2 Kings 17:15; Ps. 118:22; Is. 5:24; 30:12; Jer. 6:19). Job had despised God; but here he says he despises himself. There is no word of repentance for the horrible things he had said about God, chapter after chapter of them, when he had despised God. Job has earlier said that he hates / abhors his life and his suffering flesh (Job 7:5,16; 9:21 s.w.). And we could argue that he simply repeats that now at this point. What we look for in repentance is a specific statement of what has been done wrong, and a specific recanting of it, with remorse and begging for forgiveness. There is none of that here. But God took what Job said as repentance. God twice repeats that Job has spoken what was right about Him (:7,8). This gives the impression that He was thrilled with Job's few words. Likewise, just as God boasted about Job being His "servant" to the Satan (Job 1:8; 2:3), now in the prologue God again boasts to Eliphaz of Job as His "servant" (four times in two verses). God had presented Job to Himself as His servant, and He is thrilled to as it were have him back as His servant. The extravagant blessings of Job which conclude the book [making the wealthiest man twice as wealthy, a sudden, spectacular restoration] all appear to be likewise triggered

by these few words of not very high quality repentance. The unclarity of the Hebrew words used in the 'statement of repentance' is surely intentional; it reflects how the quality of that repentance was unclear.

The epilogue and prologue to Job are evidently related. Job begins sitting in dust and ashes and ends repenting in dust and ashes (Job 2:8; 42:6). The silence of the friends at the opening of the book is matched by the silence after God has finally spoken (Job 40:4). Job intercedes for his children (Job 1:5) and ends up interceding for his friends. Job begins with the description of being the Lord's servant; and the book concludes on the same note (Job 42:7,8). The question of course is: 'So what's the equivalent of the 'Satan' figure in the epilogue?'. The omission is intended and obvious. Ultimately the answer is the essence of the whole book: the 'Satan', the adversary, is none other than God Himself, in His love.

LXX "I have counted myself vile, and have fainted: and I esteem myself dust and ashes". This sounds as if Job now accepts in reality the truth of the mortality and frailty of man, whereas previously (and he has had much to say about it in his speeches) he was only mouthing the theory of it. If we go with the LXX, God's arguments were so powerful that it seems Job lost consciousness. We could translate "Therefore I recant, and change my mind regarding the human condition (dust and ashes)". Or we could make the obvious connection that Job has been sitting on the ash heap all this time since Job 2:8, complaining that he is there unfairly. This would be particularly evident if in fact the book of Job was intended as a drama production. Now he recognizes that he is in the right place, despite so many chapters protesting that he is unfairly there. The rabbis teach that a man should carry two stones in his pocket. On one should be inscribed, "I am but dust and ashes". On the other, "For my sake was the world created". And he should use each stone as he needs it.

"Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). Job fell into the trap of thinking that his terrible situation somehow allowed him to speak whatever words came into his head. Job felt he hadn't been 'fed' and so he was entitled to "bray" and "low" over his misfortune (Job 6:5). Because of the weight of his sufferings, he thereby justified the fact that "Therefore have my words been rash (Job 6:3). Likewise "Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit" (Job 7:11). "I will give free course to my complaint. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul" (Job 10:1 RV). Zophar criticizes Job being "full of talk" and speaking "the multitude of words", "for thou sayest, my doctrine is pure" (Job 11:1-4)- as if Job felt that because he held true doctrine he was justified in pouring out words as he did. "Why should I not be impatient?" (Job 21:4 RV). "Today is my complaint bitter. My stroke is heavier than my groaning" (Job 23:2)- i.e. his complaining was due to his sufferings. "If I hold my peace, I shall give up the spirit" (Job 13:19 RVmg.). Job felt that the situation he was in *forced* him to use the words he did, and certainly justified it [we may well have used this reasoning ourselves when justifying the use of bad language]. But in the end, Elihu on God's behalf rebuked him for his wrong words. And Job himself recognized: "I am vile. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth" in regret of his words (Job 40:4). "Wherefore I loathe my words and repent" (Job 42:6 RVmg.). He realized his mistake: he had thought that the situation justified his words. Now he hung his head and admitted that there was no justification for speaking in the way he had. Especially in the matter of the tongue, we can so easily justify ourselves; 'I only said / did it [or didn't do it] because…'. And it is all so child-like. Once we leave off *all* attempts at self-justification, we will face up to our sins.

But the quality of Job's repentance isn't great. The speeches about Behemoth and Leviathan have apparently elicited it. But he makes no specific statement of repentance nor specific retraction of his blasphemy, as we would imagine a verbose person like Job would've done. For he answers every word of the friends with almost two words from himself. It seems he is more persuaded and awed by God's undoubted greatness than he is by his moral smallness.

Job 42:7 It was so, that after Yahweh had spoken these words to Job, Yahweh said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against you, and against your two friends-

We would expect the text to say that after *Job* had spoken these words, God spoke to the friends. For it is Job not Yahweh who has been speaking in the last six verses. It's as if God skipped over Job's words. He hates to see man grovelling before Him in the way Job did- necessary as it was, and indeed it was the intended outcome of Yahweh's words. But He wanted eagerly to move on, and perhaps this is why there is this strange comment- as if He had skated on past the highly significant words of Job's repentance. Or we can say that "these words" highlights how short they were, in response to the greatness of the salvation and restoration God would now show. God as it were allows chapters of ranting against Him to be undone by just a brief few sentences. This points up how sensitive He is to humble repentance.

Job spoke far worse about God than did the friends. Much of what they said was right. He had not asked them to repent; but their silence is seen as a sin worthy of instant destruction, requiring Job's immediate intercession. Job's repentance was intended to elicit their repentance; when they didn't repent, they were held intensely guilty. We have a similar situation in Mt. 21:32 when the Lord condemns the Jewish leadership for not repenting after they had been set an example by the repentance of prostitutes and tax collectors: "John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him; and afterwards when you saw it, you still did not repent and believe him". If we see others convicted of sin and repenting, then we are held accountable if we refuse to repent of *our* sins. The Lord seems to use the repentance of the Ninevites likewise.

Job feels God's wrath kindled against him (Job 19:11). The innocent Job experienced the judgments of God's people, against whom God's wrath was kindled (Dt. 11:17; 2 Kings 23:26). Significantly, we find Elihu's wrath kindled against both Job and the friends (Job 32:2,3), but the wrath of God was kindled only against the friends (Job 42:7). Elihu is therefore not fully reflecting God's position about Job. I have repeatedly demonstrated that the innocent Job was suffering the judgment for the sins of God's people. In the end, this came to full term in the salvation of the friends on account of Job's intercession. God's wrath was not personally against Job, it was against the friends. But Job suffered God's wrath against him, because he was to be the saviour of the friends by offering sacrifice for them and praying for them. This looks forward to the work of the Lord Jesus, the suffering servant based upon Job; experiencing the judgment for our sins, and through the representative nature of His sacrifice, being able to save us. For other examples, see on Job 20:15,16; 24:9.

For you have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has- "Of Me" is literally "*to* Me". What is in view is the statement of repentance made by Job *to* God. Not the speeches or theological positions expressed in them. Getting your theology wrong is surely not a moral 'sin'. Job's words of repentance were words all

about himself; not about God. The quality of that repentance was not great, but God took it as expressing the ultimate truth about Himself. Repentance is to confess that God is right; the Greek word *homologeo* translated "confession" means "to say the same thing as" or "to agree with" God. David's repentance was a statement that God is justified in His words and blameless in His judgments (Ps. 51:4). Refusal to confess our sins is to make God a liar (1 Jn. 1:10); to confess sin is therefore to say that God is truthful. This is why those who repented are described as 'justifying God', declaring Him right or just (Lk. 7:29). Lam. 1:18 brings together the ideas: "Yahweh is righteous; for I have rebelled against His commandment". To repent is to submit to the rightness or 'righteousness' of God (Rom. 10:3). Pharaoah's brief repentance expressed this: "I have sinned; Yahweh is righteous, and I and my people are wicked" (Ex. 9:27). Repentance is therefore a declaration of God's glory, accepting that He indeed is true: "Achan, My son, please give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him" (Josh. 7:19).

LXX "You have sinned". There is reason to think that Eliphaz, the leader of the friends, may have been the specific individual referred to as 'satan' in the prologue. God singles him out for especial condemnation at the end. After one of Eliphaz's speeches, Job responds with what appears to be a comment upon him, rather than God: "He hath made me weary: thou hast made desolate all my company. And thou hast filled me with wrinkles... he teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me (surely Job speaks here about Eliphaz, not God): he gnasheth upon me... mine enemy (satan) sharpeneth his eyes upon me. They (the astonished friends?) have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me... they have gathered themselves together (as the friends did to Job) against me" (Job 16:9-11). Eliphaz was a Temanite, from where Job's afflicters came (Job 6:19). See on Job 1:6.

Eliphaz in Job 22:3 was propelled by his obsession against Job to say things about God which are wildly untrue, and is specifically rebuked above the other friends for doing this at the end (Job 42:7). I would surmise that his words of Job 22:3 are specifically in view: "Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that you are righteous? Or does it benefit Him, that you make your ways perfect?". For this is a complete denial of all that God reveals Himself to be. Job rightly understood that God as human creator has a tender desire to the work of His hands (see on Job 14:15). But Eliphaz speaks as if God has no interest nor feeling towards those who are righteous, so far above caring is He. And this could not be a more serious misrepresentation of the God who is thrilled by every move a man makes towards Him.

Job appeals for ‘witnesses’ (Job 9:33–35; 16:18–22; 19:20–27), an advocate in Heaven (Job 9:33), denies his guilt and demands a legal list of his sins (Job 13:19), he wishes for God to come to trial (Job 9:3), and thus Job is described as a man who has taken out a ‘case’ with God (Job 23:4; 40:2). Job 29–31 is effectively Job’s declaration of legal innocence and an appeal to God to hear his case more sympathetically (Job 31:35). And of course God pronounces a final legal verdict at the very end (Job 42:7), in response to Job’s earlier plea: “Sleeplessly I wait for His reply” (Job 16:22). It’s as if the whole experience of Job was [at least partly] in order to test out the Canaanite theories of ‘Satan’, suffering and evil in the court of Heaven; and also the various theories which arose to explain Judah's captivity in Babylon. The friends represent the traditional views of evil, and often make reference to the myths of their day about ‘Satan’ figures. They speak as if *they* are the final court – Eliphaz speaks of how the judges and elders of their day, the “holy ones”, had concluded Job was guilty, and that they, the friends, were right: “To which of the holy ones will you appeal [legal language]?... we have [legally] examined this, and it [Job’s guilt] is true”

(Job 5:1,27). This is of great comfort to those who feel misjudged by man – above them in Heaven the ultimate Heavenly court is considering our case, and that is all that matters.

Although Job did not speak wrongly about God (42:7;2:10) and kept patiently speaking the word of God despite the mockery it brought from the friends (James 5:10,11), this does not mean that Job or all that he said was blameless. The friends are not reprimanded for speaking wrongly about Job, but about God. Thus there was probably a fair degree of truth in their accusations concerning Job. Elihu also severely rebukes him, and unlike the three friends he is not rebuked for anything in the final analysis by God in Job 42; not to mention the accusation of 'darkening counsel without knowledge' (38:2) by the Lord Himself, backed up by four chapters of heavy reprimand of Job's reliance on human strength and wisdom. This led to Job retracting much of what he had said: "I am vile; what shall I answer Thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth... I will not answer... I will proceed no further... I uttered that I understood not... wherefore I abhor myself and repent" (Job 40:4,5; 42:3-6). This clearly establishes that much of Job's reasoning was faulty, although what he spoke before God was correct. Job was a prophet (Job 29:4 cp. Job 15:8;23:12; Prov.3:32; Amos 3:7; the secret of God being with him made Job a prophet) and it is in his role as such that he is commended in James 5:10,11- i.e. for the words concerning God which he spoke. The words for which God and Elihu rebuked him were therefore about other things. Elihu accused him of speaking "without knowledge" (Job 34:35), which Job admitted to doing (42:3).

The problem of reconciling the rebuke of Job's words with the statement that he has spoken what is right about God as opposed to the friends is the same as the frequent pronouncement that some kings of Judah walked blamelessly before God exactly as David did, when there is clear evidence in the record that this was not so. This may be because God imputes righteousness to a believer's whole life if his final acts are acceptable (cp. Ez.18:27,28). "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" may refer to the response of the friends and Job to the rebukes of Elihu and the manifestation of God's power in the thunderstorm which must have been witnessed by the friends as well as by Job. Maybe they made some unrecorded response about God which was not right, whereas Job's supreme recognition of God's righteousness and humbling of himself was speaking that which was right about God. It has to be admitted that it is hard to understand all that Job says in the book about God as being "right", and he is specifically rebuked by God for his words.

Consider how Job shook his fist at God through many of his speeches- so much so that Elihu, on God's behalf, had to rebuke him at the end. Finally, Yahweh asks Job to "declare thou unto me" (Job 40:7; 42:4): to make a declaration. And Job does, in a matchless humility: "…therefore have I uttered that I understood not…I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes". And Yahweh immediately comments to the unrepentant friends: "Ye have not spoken of ['unto'] me the thing that is right [Heb. 'prepared'], as my servant Job hath" (42:7). Evidently Job hadn't spoken "right" earlier; but it's as if God seizes upon this one recognition of failure and is so pleased with it. He was looking for repentance in Job, and triumphantly seizes upon it once it is stuttered out by him. And so with our preaching of the Gospel and in our seeking to win back brethren who go astray [and I do hope we all make some personal effort to do this…]: *seek* for response.

As an example of how Job had indeed spoken wrongly about God, consider Job 19:6: "know now that God has subverted me". "Subverted" translates a Hebrew word

which clearly means to be perverse or wicked with another person. Elihu sternly rebukes Job for this statement, saying that God will *not* "pervert judgment" (Job 34:12). Again we marvel at the grace of how God now says that Job has spoken what was right about Him (Job 42:7). Whilst that statement may refer simply to Job's expression of total repentance, we would still expect it to be qualified by some clause to the effect that "although earlier Job accused me of many awful things". There is no such clause in Job 42:7. The absence of it, bearing in mind Job's wrong statements about God which Elihu has reminded us of, is surely noticeable and intended to be noticed. We are left marvelling at the extent of grace and imputed righteousness, through faith by grace.

The words of God and Elihu brought Job to a shuddering spiritual climax. From his heart he cried: "I am vile... I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes... I am melted" (42:6 LXX). It was concerning this matchless confession that God could say that Job had "spoken of me the thing which is right(eousness)". God swept over the times when Job shook his fist at God, imputing righteousness to him on behalf of this confession. Thus the Spirit later speaks of the long-enduring patience of Job (James 5:11); God was able to look on his good side rather than the bad side, due to Job's confession of that bad side. To confess our sinfulness properly is to declare, by implication, righteous things about God.

LXX "Thou hast sinned, and thy two friends: for ye have not said anything true before me, as my servant Job". The speeches of Elihu and possibly God too were aimed at the friends as well as Job. And they had not said anything in response. Whereas Job did. Hence we can translate "You have not spoken *to* Me [LXX "before Me"] what is right, as My servant Job has". To speak *"to"* is how the Hebrew is consistently translated (Job 2:13; 4:2, 12; 13:3; 40:27; 42:9).

The satan had suggested Job would curse God. He did. He was rebuked for it and repented. What he spoke right about God was to repent. Speaking right about God is not theology. It is repentance. God fires many questions at Job, e.g. Have you created the sea? Did you place the stars in the sky? Do you provide for the needs of the lionesses and the raven? The answer to them all was "no", or, "no, I do not understand", and accepting that all Job had spoken about God [right or wrong] was "words without knowledge". And that is seen by God finally as speaking rightly about Him. The Hebrew behind "spoken of Me" is literally 'spoken toward Me'. The idea is is the *direction* of the speech and not necessarily the content. What God has in view is Job's confession of sin, spoken toward Him. LXX has "before Me". Satan had posited that Job would curse God to His face, i.e. before Him, in His presence. And God seems to be saying that only now, after Job's repentance, did Job speak right before God. All that Job had spoken wrong about God, he had taken back by placing his hand upon his mouth and admitting it was so wrong. For that is what placing the hand upon the mouth meant in a legal context. When God forgives, He removes the sin committed. What God saw was Job's words of repentance, and for God, they were words about Him. Spoken rightly. For to confess sin is to delcare God right, as we learn from the words of Achan and the repentance speeches of David in the Bathsheba psalms.

Four times here, God calls Job "My servant". It is another example of His absolute joy that Job has 'come through' even if we might consider his few words of penitence as being of low quality.

Job 42:8 Now therefore, take to yourselves seven bulls and seven rams-

"Therefore" is because of their sin of not speaking right about God as Job had (:7). Job's speaking rightly was in repentance, it has no reference to the words he spoke in the dialogues. I suggest therefore that the sin of the friends doesn't refer to anything they said in the dialogue. I cannot believe God would condemn people for false theology alone. Their theology was simply that God punishes sinners and blesses the obedient; and that was not altogether wrong. Job himself, both in the epilogue and prologue, was an example of how God did more or less work like that at the time, at least with His blessings. And in any case, the theology of the friends and of Job was pretty much identical. 'What you know, I know also', as Job commented to them. God and Elihu have in any case made the point that man cannot in fact write or draw a totally correct theology, because God's ways are so far above man's ways. So having laboured that point, God is hardly going to now commend Job got getting it right and condemn the friends for getting it wrong. It's not that God condemns the friends for a false theology but justifies Job for having a true theology. He says that the friends have not spoken to Him [not 'about Him'] what was right as Job has; and surely He refers not to their previous speeches, but to the fact they had spoken nothing, they had not spoken repentance to Him. I suggest therefore that their sin, which required atonement, was a sin of omission- omitting to repent. To repent of what? Not of wrong theology. But of the same sins Job had been convicted of- "sins of youth" and the "sins" they glossed over beneath the generic statement 'Of course, we're all sinners, only God is perfect'. Their silence and refusal to repent was their "folly".

These were numbers and offerings understood to be necessary when approaching God (Num. 23:1,29). But this is a very large sin offering. Seven bulls and seven rams is the offering required for the sins of all Israel in Ez. 45:23. This is the massive consequence of wrong theology leading people into major sin; and the danger of using 'it logically follows...' to destroy another man.

And go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept him, that I not deal with you according to your folly- LXX "And my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will only accept him: for but his sake, I would have destroyed you, for ye have not spoken the truth against my servant Job". Job's earlier appeals to the friends to hear and listen may not be simply asking them to hear his words; they may be an appeal to them to hear and repent (Job 13:6). This desire for their repentance and understanding builds up within Job as the speeches progress. And again, this is preparing him for the Lord's final request to him- to pray for the friends and bring about their salvation. We note that the intercession of a third party alone cannot save; the friends had to offer "for yourselves" an offering. And yet in the final equation, Job 42:8 implies that the forgiveness of Job's friends was only because he prayed for them. What stronger motivation could we have to pray earnestly for each other? I have pointed out several times that Job suffered the judgment for sins which he had not committed, but the friends (and later Israel) had done. The endurance of suffering is always helped by appreciating that there is an element to it which is for the benefit and salvation of others. Hence Paul reasons in 2 Cor. 1 that whatever we suffer is so that we may minister salvation and comfort to others; perhaps he had Job in mind, as a pattern for us all.

For you have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has- Job had not always spoken right of God; for He does not mock at the "sudden" suffering of His people, such as Job experienced in the sudden loss of all he had, as Job had wrongly claimed in Job 9:23. So we marvel the more at God's final statement that Job had spoken rightly about Him. This Divine comment may indeed simply be upon

Job's statement of repentance. But all the same, we would expect God to clarify that was what He intended, and to offer some note that Job had indeed falsely accused Him. But God doesn't. He doesn't need to. He has completely justified Job by faith, clothing him with imputed righteousness. And His demonstration of His ways has in any case made the required point, and Job recognized that. See on :7.

LXX "I would have destroyed you, for you have not spoken the truth against my servant Job". This could imply they needed to have criticized Job for his words, but they didn't. Their words were so important that God wanted to kill the friends for saying them. Words and thoughts and positions really matter to God.

There are copious connections between Job and the suffering servant of Isaiah:
Is. 49:7 – The servant is abhorred = Job 19:19 s.w.
Is. 50:4 – The servant has the tongue of a teacher and sustains the weary = Job 4:3, 29:21 – Job instructed many,
strengthened the weak, and counselled others.
Is. 50:6 – The servant gave the cheek to those who would pull out his beard = Job 16:10 – Job's tormentors struck him on the cheek (s.w.)
Is. 50:6 – The servant did not hide his face from insult and spitting- Job 30:10 – Job is abhorred and spat upon (s.w.) Is. 50:8,9 – The servant has a vindicator to vouch for him, and he is confident he will be justified- Job 19:25; 13:18 Job has a redeemer to help him, and he is confident he will be vindicated.
Is. 52:14 – Many were appalled at the servant, whose appearance was distorted- Job 17:8 (cf. 21:5); 2:12 – The upright were appalled at (s.w.) Job's circumstances, and his appearance was almost unrecognizable to his friends.
Is. 53:3 – The servant was despised by men- Job 19:18 Job was despised even by children.
Is. 53:3 – The servant was rejected by men- Job 19:14 – Job was rejected (s.w.) by his loved ones.
Is. 53:3 – The servant was a man of suffering- Job 2:13 – Job's suffering (s.w.) was very great.
Is. 53:3,4 – The servant bore the diseases of the people- Job 2:7; 7:5 – Job was afflicted with disease.
Is. 53:4 – The people accounted the servant touched by God- Job 19:21 – Job said that the hand of God had
touched (s.w.) him.
Is. 53:4 – The people accounted the servant struck by God- Job 16:10 – Job was struck (s.w.) on the cheek
Is. 53:6 – God afflicted the servant- Job 7:20 – Job felt he was the target of God's affliction (s.w.)
Is. 53:9 – The servant was not guilty of violence- Job 16:17 – Job claims there was no violence (s.w.) in his hands.
Is. 53:9 – There was no deceit in the mouth of the servant- Job 27:4; 31:5 – Job declares that his tongue will not utter deceit (s.w.), and his foot has not hurried to deceit (s.w.).
Is. 53:9 – The servant is innocent of wrongdoing- Job 1:8 Job is blameless.
Is. 53:10 – It was God's will to crush the servant- Job 6:9 Job's desire is that God would be willing to crush (s.w.) him. Is. 53:10 – After God crushed him, the servant would see his offspring and prolong his days- Job 42:13,16 After his suffering came to an end, Job had more children and lived to see four generations of his descendants.
Is. 53:12 – God reinstated the servant- Job 42:10 God restored Job's fortunes, giving him twice the riches he had before.

Is. 53:12 – The servant made intercession for transgressors- Job 42:8, 10 Job made intercession for his friends.

Job 42:9 So Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did what Yahweh commanded them, and Yahweh accepted Job- LXX "And he pardoned their sin for the sake of Job". We have another example of sin being forgiven for the sake of third parties in Mk. 2:5; and there is huge implication in this for our own prayers and concern for others. Literally, "Yahweh accepted the face of Job", as in :8. In Job 22:26 the friends had insisted that Job could not lift up his face to God. Perhaps the Lord had this in view when He commended the man who like Job would not lift up his face to God (Lk. 18:13). But now the friends are only saved because Job was allowed to lift up his face to God for them. This was all a powerful way of teaching the friends that they were being saved by absolute grace. The man Job, whose face they were sure God would not accept, saved them by lifting up his face to God. It was the exiles whose faces God would not accept (s.w. Mal. 1:8,9). Job was treated like them although he was not like them; he was bearing the punishment of their sins in order to save them, just as he did for the friends, whose faces were likewise unacceptable to God.

The conversion of Job is a poignant lesson in interceding for others motivated by our own forgiveness; he prays for his friends, he mediates for them, after gratefully realizing that his own search for mediation with God in order to obtain forgiveness had somehow been answered, by grace (Job 42:6,8).

"Accepted" is literally 'accepted the face' of Job. The friends had mocked that if he confessed his sins, God would accept his face (Job 11:15; 22:26). There was complete appropriacy that finally this came true, to their salvation. We also see here God's disagreement with Elihu, who had argued that God didn't accept the faces of any man (Job 34:19). God was likewise prepared to accept the faces of the exiles, but their behaviour precluded this (s.w. Mal. 1:8,9).

Job 42:10 Yahweh turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends-

God's answers to Job are effectively saying: 'You in fact are not at all the centre of the universe. You and your pain and your complaints are nothing in the bigger picture of things'. But God says it in such a way that the spiritual man is not offended, doesn't stomp off muttering about 'cold comfort', but actually 'gets it'. God brings "rain on a land where no one lives, on the desert, which is empty of human life" (Job 38:26)- to make the point that man does not in fact hold the central place in the universe which he imagines he does. Job is restored when he prays for his friends / enemies (Job 42:10)- the proof that he had now moved out of his self centredness.

The language of Job's captivity being 'turned' is the very term used about the restoration of Judah from Babylon (Jer. 29:14; Ps. 126:4). The idiom of turning the captivity is clearly used to connect with the exiles returning from captivity when they repented. That was the intention, anyway. And they were to pray for those who had abused and misunderstood them, and they too could be forgiven.

Perhaps the Lord alludes to Job favourably at this point; for He taught that instead of doing evil to our enemies, "I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you" (Mt. 5:44 = Job 31:30). And this is what Job did- his prayer for the friends, who apparently were his actual persecutors, bringing many of the trials upon him, was finally answered.

James 5:11 comments: "Behold, we call them blessed that endured. You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the result that the Lord intended, how the

Lord is full of pity and is merciful". Job was a prophet (Job 29:4), one of those referred to in the preceding James 5:10: "Brothers, take for an example the suffering and patience of the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord". "Full of pity" is very intense in Greek- elsewhere it is translated "bowels", "inward affection". Thus the position of Job touched the Lord's heart in a way few other human experiences are said to in the word. The tremendous pity which God showed for Job would also be shown to the friends if they fully fellowshipped his example by their patient endurance. *Perhaps the "pity" in view is God's pity to the friends rather than Job. James 5:13 "Is any among you suffering? Let him pray" uses* the same word translated "affliction" in James 5:10 concerning Job's hardships. *The idea is that we should* channel all our feelings and words through prayer, rather than indulge in the circular talking of Job and the friends which was the exact opposite of "Yes, yes... no, no". James 5:16 continues the Job allusions: "Therefore, confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other, so that you may be healed. The supplication of a righteous man avails much in its working". Job confessed his sins and prayed for his friends, and they were forgiven.

Yahweh gave Job twice as much as he had before- This is the historical basis for the restoration prophecy of Is. 61:7 "Instead of your shame you shall have double". The idea may simply be that they inherit double what they ought to, such is God's grace to them and desire to load them with double blessing (Is. 40:2; Zech. 9:12), just as He gave double to Job as representative of restored Israel (Job 42:10). The revival of Job's fortunes is surely behind the Lord's promise to each of us in LK. 18:10, that whoever loses house, brothers, wife or children shall receive them many times over in this life, and salvation in the age to come. This means that the Lord understood Job's path as that of every man.

Job 42:11 Then came there to him all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all those who had been of his acquaintance before, and ate bread with him in his house. They comforted him, and consoled him concerning all the evil that Yahweh had brought on him. Each one also gave him a piece of money, and each one a ring of gold- The apparently hopeless situation of being rejected by all his family in Job 19:13-16 was reversed at the end when all his relatives again came to him (Job 42:11). The way they give him a piece of money and an earing appears to be some kind of gratitude for his salvation of them. They thus recognized their guilt and expressed deep gratitude that although they had rejected him, his sufferings and their rejection of him had led to their salvation. For we can deduce from the gift of a piece of money that they feel they have sinned, and he has saved them. So again, his restoration was the restoration of others, the friends and his family who had rejected him. He had born the sufferings for their sins, and thus becomes a type of the Lord Jesus, who suffered the judgments for sin in order to save those who had rejected and abused him.

LXX "and each one gave him a lamb, and four drachms' weight of gold, even of unstamped gold". The gift of a lamb would perhaps hint at their need for forgiveness; and they gave him the lamb to offer it for them as the family priest. Again, the sufferings of Job, like those of the suffering servant, were finally towards the salvation of others.

Job 42:12 So Yahweh blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning- The word *barak* , "blessed", occurs seven times in Job, just as it does in the account of creation. Through all the drama and with all the unresolved questions, this has been

God's path to a new creation for Job out of the chaos and darkness. The friends had all spoken of the restoration of Job's prosperity at this "latter end", if he accepted their false accusations of him (Job 5:18,26; 8:20,21; 11:13-19). That restoration now came about, but not on their terms. But rather, according to God's pure grace. It is this "latter end" which may be in view when James speaks of God's tender pity at "the end of the Lord" (James 5:11). The end of the Lord was the "end of Job". God and His child were intimately bound up in their destinies. That became evident in the end of Job, and it was a parade example to God's child Israel.

The friends had insisted that Job had lost his blessings because of disobedience, but his "latter end" (s.w.) would "increase" if he repented. Hence Job 8:7 "Though your beginning was small, yet your latter end would greatly increase". Job's "latter end" did increase (s.w. Job 42:12) and Bildad lived to see it, and thereby realized how wrong his judgment had been. Bildad's words may be a recognition of how Job arose to wealth from small beginnings, implying that his "latter end" would only really increase if he were repentant and Godly (:5,6). The fact Job's latter end did increase was therefore evidence that God accepted him as Godly. The same word is used of the "latter end" of Israel, which will likewise be "increased" and blessed; and could have been so for the exiles had they followed the path of Job (Is. 41:22; 46:10; Jer. 29:11; 31:17).

He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand female donkeys- This may be intended to demonstrate that his wealth was exactly double what he had before. For someone living on the edge of the wilderness, from where whirlwinds could blow in and Bedouins invade, these were huge numbers. It would have to follow that he had a huge retinue of servants able to care for them all.

We note that whilst Job's position is restored, there is no mention of the restoration of his body, which bore the marks of his illnesses. Possibly we are to understand the marks remained- as with the Lord.

Job 42:13 He had also seven sons and three daughters- The connection is with Is. 49:20 "The children of your bereavement shall yet say in your ears", or LXX "For thy sons whom thou hast lost shall say in thine ears". The idea of receiving back children who had been once slain is clearly alluded to in Job's experience, who is set up as representative of the Jews in exile. The language of the LXX suggests their resurrection of lost children. The idea is obviously that Job's situation was restored. But the loss of children is not capable of restoration in any meaningful sense. One wonders therefore if his slain children were resurrected. All his sufferings were the innocent suffering the judgment for others' sins. And those others were his friends and family He was not just suffering for himself. He, the innocent, had born their sins in his own body, just as the Lord did. Earlier he had offered sacrifice for his children, but this was not enough; a representative sufferer was needed. If indeed his experience of representative suffering led to the resurrection and salvation of his sinful children, we would have an even more powerful and detailed prefigurement of the work of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate suffering servant. See on Job 21:12.

I discussed on Job 1:1, there are parts of the story which appear crafted, e.g. the way Job loses his children but then has new children to replace them and apparently the loss is thus easily compensated; and the way after each loss, one person survives and comes to tell him. As holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel observed, "Tragedies do not cancel each other out as they succeed one another". It is not fiction, but it is a poem

[men don't talk amongst themselves in poetry] and story only based on fact; it could be called 'faction'.

From the human viewpoint, there is no happy ending here. Because the tragic loss of all ten children cannot be counterbalanced by having more children. Wiesel is so right: "Tragedies do not cancel each other out as they succeed one another". Everything in us cries out in protest at this 'happy ending' of Job. It is unrealistic- from our viewpoint. But not from God's. And so we are returned to the essential issue in Job- God's ways and narratives are not human centred. But He is of tender mercy, in His final end, and shall eternally save us. Hence the LXX conclusion to Job, "And Job died, an old man and full of days: and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up" (Job 42:17). There are so many interpretations of Job that we can conclude that the message is ambiguous. I suggest it is not at all ambiguous. The Lord's final answer is that we only see a fraction of His ways, we have no right to question let alone rail against His ways. If we trust Him, we shall be saved. But that means submitting our sense of right and wrong, fair endings, justice etc. beneath the reality of Him.

Job 42:14 He called the name of the first, Jemimah- "Day of Yah", looking forward to how Job's restoration was a foretaste of the coming day of Yahweh at the restoration of Israel.

And the name of the second, Keziah- Possibly 'scraped or peeled by Yah', perhaps referring to the scraping off of leprosy (s.w. Lev. 14:41), as Job had scraped his skin.

And the name of the third, Keren Happuch- "Keren" is 'horn' or 'hill', recalling how Job's horn had been in the dust (s.w. Job 16:15), perhaps referring to his own reproductive organ, and thereby recalling his ultimate degradation (representing Israel's, Lam. 2:3) now so gloriously restored. "Happuch" is 'colours', looking ahead to the final restoration of Israel decked with "fair colours" (s.w. Is. 54:11).

Job 42:15 In all the land were no women found so beautiful as the daughters of Job- Perhaps they looked ahead to the revival of the daughters of Zion, which was to become the most beautiful place in the land (Ps. 48:2 s.w.).

Their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers- Job gave his daughters an equal inheritance with his sons- something which would have been unusual in those times. Through all his sufferings, Job came to see the value and meaning of persons before God, be they male or female; he overcame the background culture, the thinking of his surrounding society, and openly showed to all the immense value he had come to place upon each and every human being, regardless of their gender.

Job 42:16 After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, to four generations- Seeing his sons may be another hint they were resurrected. Seeing Job lived after the time of Abraham, this was a great lifespan for the times.

Job 42:17 So Job died, being old and full of days- The very language used of the death of the patriarchs, as if to show that although Job was not directly their seed, he was in spirit.

I have suggested that the sufferings of Job are framed in language which connects with the sufferings of Hezekiah and also Israel, whom he epitomized, at the time of the Assyrian invasion. Hezekiah and Israel are both types of Christ (note how so

many of the curses on Israel for their disobedience came upon Christ on the cross). The suffering servant of Isaiah often concerns all three of them. Thus Job's sufferings point forward, via Hezekiah and Israel, to Christ. His final vindication when he prays for his friends, lives many years, and sees his sons (Job 42:8,16) thus connects with the prophecy of Christ making "intercession for the transgressors" who persecuted him- i.e. the Jews- and seeing his seed, prolonging his days, after his crucifixion and resurrection (Is.53:10,12- note how Is.53 is a chronological account of the events of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension). The description of Job as the son of man and a worm uses identical language as that used about Christ on the cross in Ps. 22:6. Thus the friends for whom Job prayed are equated with the Jews who persecuted Christ, for whom Christ made intercession both on the cross and after his ascension.

LXX adds: "And then he died at a very great age. And Job died, an old man and full of days: and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up. This man is described in the Syriac book as living in the land of Ausis, on the borders of Idumea and Arabia: and his name before was Jobab; and having taken an Arabian wife, he begot a son whose name was Ennon. And he himself was the son of his father Zare, one of the sons of Esau, and of his mother Bosorrha, so that he was the fifth from Abraam. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, which country he also ruled over: first, Balac, the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dennaba: but after Balac, Jobab, who is called Job, and after him Asom, who was governor out of the country of Thaeman: and after him Adad, the son of Barad, who destroyed Madiam in the plain of Moab; and the name of his city was Gethaim. And his friends who came to him were Eliphaz, of the children of Esau, king of the Thaemanites, Baldad sovereign the Sauchaeans, Sophar king of the Minaeans".

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: PSALMS

PSALMS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

PSALMS CHAPTER 1

Psalm 1:1 Blessed is the man who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers- This Psalm can be understood as a general introduction to the Psalms, summing up the way of the Godly. We should note from this verse that the teaching is not that we should have nothing to do with sinners; but rather that we should not walk in their way nor share their judgments of situations. This is the art of being the light of the world- to be in the world, as the Lord Jesus was, to engage constantly with it, but to walk, stand and judge in God's way. It is the "way" of sinners which will perish (:6); our judgment is therefore according to our overall "way", rather than occasional actions of sin or righteousness. Ps. 1:1 seems to allude to Lot's progressive apostacy, speaking of the righteous man *not walking, standing* or *sitting* with the wicked- in other words, the righteous man will learn from Lot's mistakes.

We could argue that there is a progression from walking, to standing still in the way / path with sinners, and then sitting down with them. We are always either progressing or regressing in our journey. We start listening to the counsel / advice of the influencers who are wicked, then standing with them in the way and finally sitting with them scoffing. The scoffing is one of many connections with the next Psalm, where Yahweh mocks the wicked as they meditate / plan against Him- whereas His people meditate in His law day and night [s.w.].

Any serious reading of the Psalms raises repeated questions as to the original context of

each Psalm. Some were written by David, but only parts of them seem to apply to his life; some verses clearly apply to other historical contexts, especially the situation of the exiles in Babylon and the restoration. A verse here and there has clear relevance to the Lord Jesus, but the surrounding verses don't. Some verses are quoted in the New Testament but the surrounding contexts don't appear to fit the context in which the verse is used. I suggest the resolution of all this is to understand that the Psalms were written largely by David for use in the future temple, or in the sanctuary as it existed at his time; but under Divine inspiration, they were rewritten and reapplied to various later historical contexts. This explains why some verses in a Psalm are very relevant to e.g. the restoration from Babylon, but other verses aren't; they remain only clearly appropriate to David. This also helps explain why the Septuagint (which is the preferred version for quotation in the New Testament) is in places very different from the Hebrew (Masoretic) text. The points of major difference are likely a result of this process of rewriting.

The Inspired Re-Writing Of The Old Testament In Babylon

Briefly, here are corroborative reasons for thinking that perhaps the whole existing canon of Old Testament Scripture was [under inspiration] edited, re-written and codified during the exile in Babylon:

- According to Jewish tradition, Ezra edited and produced the Pentateuch in its present form in Babylon (Carl Kraeling, *The Synagogue* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956) pp. 232-235 reproduces plates from the synagogue wall at Dura-Europas showing Ezra doing this in Babylon). This would account for the record of Jacob in exile being so verbally similar to the allusions made to it in the restoration-from-Babylon prophecies in Isaiah. There was certainly great scribal activity in Babylon- 2 Macc. 2:13 speaks of Nehemiah founding a library of the Jewish scriptures there. This gives another perspective on the way Nehemiah's prayer in Neh. 1 is so full of references to Deuteronomy- if the latter had just been re-written and presented to the Jews in Babylon. The commands to build the tabernacle are repeated in Exodus, and there is the record of Israel's golden calf apostasy set in the middle of them. Ex. 25:1-31:18 give the tabernacle building commands, then there's the golden calf incident, and then the commands are repeated in Ex. 35-40. Surely this was edited in this manner to give encouragement to the exiles- the commands to rebuild the temple had been given in detail in Ez. 40-48, but the exiles failed- and yet, the implication runs, God was still willing to work again with His people in the building of His sanctuary despite their failure. There is good internal reason to think that the Pentateuch likewise was re-written in places to bring out the relevance of Israel's past to those in captivity. Consider the use of the word *pus*, 'scatter'. It was God's intention that mankind should scatter abroad in the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28); but it required the judgment of the tower

of Babel to actually make them 'scatter' (Gen. 11:4). Thus even in judgment, God worked out His positive ultimate intentions with humanity. And this word *pus* is the same word used with reference to Judah's 'scattering' from the land into Babylonian captivity (Ez. 11:17; 20:34,41; 28:25). The intention, surely, was to show the captives that they had been scattered as the people had at the judgment of Babel / Babylon, but even in this, God was working out His purpose with His people and giving them the opportunity to fulfill His original intentions for them.

- The Talmud claims that the majority of the prophetic books were re-written and edited into their present form during the captivity, under the guidance of a group of priests called "The Great Assembly" (M. Simon and I.W. Slotski, eds, *The Soncino Talmud: Babba Bathra* 14b - 15a (London: The Soncino Press, 1935) Vol. 1 pp. 70,71). There are many verbal points of contact between Chronicles and the returned exiles.

- Time and again we encounter the phrase "to this day" in the historical books of the Old Testament (e.g. "the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there to this day", 2 Kings 16:6)- and each time it appears the reference is to the time of the restoration, when presumably those books were edited and rewritten as relevant for the Jews, either those still in Babylon or those who had returned to the land. A good case can be made, for example, that the book of Judges was rewritten at that time in order to show that God's people don't need a King in order to be His people, but rather they can be ruled by Spirit-filled leaders (See W.J. Dumbrell, 'No King In Israel', *Journal For The Study Of The Old Testament* Vol. 25 (1983) pp. 23-33).

- The way Deuteronomy refers to cities East of Jordan as being "on this side Jordan" (e.g. Dt. 4:41,49) would suggest that the editor of the book was writing from a location East of Jordan- likely Babylon. The comment in Josh. 15:63 that "the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day" sounds very much as if it were written in the captivity, lamenting the way that the local tribes still lived in Zion. "The children of Judah" is very much a phrase used about the exiles. Thus books like Joshua were written up in the captivity in order to show Judah how they were repeating the sins of their forefathers, and appealing to them thereby to learn the lessons. It's even possible that the lament that "Geshur and Maacath dwell in the midst of Israel unto this day" (Josh. 13:13 RV) is a reference to "Geshem the Arabian" and Sanballat dwelling amongst Israel at the time of their return (Neh. 2:19 etc.).

- It has been observed that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings have certain similarities. For example, they all quote the Deuteronomy version of Israel's earlier history, leading to the suggestion that Deuteronomy was the first of the collection, a kind of introductory background history. The curses listed in Dt. 28 are all especially relevant to the situation in Judah before the Babylonian invasion, and a number of the curses are alluded to in Lamentations as being descriptive of the situation after the final destruction of Jerusalem. Some of the curses can have little

other application, e.g. Dt. 28:41 speaks of begetting children, "but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity". Other relevant passages are Dt. 28:36 (a king taken captive), 49,50,52. These "former prophets" (Deuteronomy - 2 Kings) appear to have been edited during the exile as history which spoke to the concerns and needs of the exiled people of God (The similarities of style, language and indications of common editing are explained in detail in Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); there is a good summary in Terrence Fretheim, *Deuteronomic History* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989). See too M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy And The Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972)). This combined history speaks mainly of the southern Kingdom, which was the group who went to captivity in Babylon; and it explains why this captivity was justified, as well as giving many examples of where repentance could bring about a restoration (1 Kings 8:46-53 is specific). This history addresses the questions which concerned the captives- does God abandon His people for ever? Are Israel entirely to blame for what happened? Is there hope of restoration after receiving Divine judgment and breaching His covenant? Can God have a relationship with His people without a temple? To what extent will God always honour the promises to Abraham and David? Should other gods also be worshipped? Reading these books from this perspective reveals how incident after incident was especially selected by the inspired editors in Babylon in order to guide God's people there. Take the story of Naaman's Hebrew "maid". Naaman had been the enemy of Israel, and that little child [Heb.] was one of the children of those taken captive. But she witnessed to her captor; he turned to Yahweh; and his skin became like that of "a little child" (2 Kings 5:14)- like her. The message was obvious. The children of the captivity were likewise to witness to their captors and bring them into covenant with Yahweh.

- A comparison of Psalms 14 and 53 illustrate this process of re-writing at Hezekiah's time. These Psalms are both "A Psalm of David", and are virtually identical apart from Ps. 53:5 adding: "There were they in great fear, where no fear was; For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them". This surely alludes to the Assyrian army encamped against Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:1), put into fear by the Angels, and returning "with shame of face to his own land" (2 Chron. 32:21). Yet both Psalms conclude with a verse which connects with the exiles in Babylonian captivity: "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad". So it would appear that the initial Psalm was indeed written by David; the version of Ps. 14 which is now Ps. 53 was added to and adapted in Hezekiah's time (Prov. 25:1), and both versions had a final verse added to them during the exile. A number of Psalms appear to have some verses relevant to the exile, and others relevant to earlier historical situations. It would seem that an inspired writer inserted the verses which spoke specifically to the exilic situation. Psalm 102 is an example. Ps. 102:2-12 and 24-25a appear to be the original lament; and the other verses

are relevant to the exile. Psalm 22 likewise appears to have had vv. 28-32 added with reference to the exiles; other examples in Psalms 9, 10; 59; 66; 68; 69:34; 85; 107; 108 and 118.

- There are evident similarities between the vocabulary and style of Zechariah, Job and the prophets of the restoration. Thus both Job and Zechariah refer to the ideas of the court of Heaven, "the satan" etc. My suggestion is that Job was rewritten during the exile, hence the many points of contact between Job and Isaiah's prophecies about the restoration. When we read that Job has suffered less than his iniquities deserve (Job 11:6), this is the very term used to describe Israel's sufferings in Babylon (Ezra 9:13). Job, "the servant of the Lord", is being set up as Israel, just as that same term is used about Israel in Babylon throughout the latter part of Isaiah. Job's mockery by the Arabian friends perhaps parallels the Samaritan and Babylonian mockery of Judah; his loss of children is very much the tragedy of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians which Lamentations focuses upon. And Job's final revival and restoration after repentance would therefore speak of the blessed situation which Judah could have had at their return to the land. Job's response to the words of God and Elihu would then speak of Judah's intended repentance as a result of God's word spoken to them by prophets like Haggai and Zechariah. There are many connections between Job and the latter parts of Isaiah which speak about the restoration.

Psa 1:2 but his delight is in Yahweh's law- David may have learnt this from Samuel's teaching that God doesn't delight in sacrifices but in obedience; and if God delights in obedience then our delight should be in the law / principles / commandments which are the basis of that obedience (s.w. 1 Sam. 15:22). David's "delight" was in the things of the future Kingdom of God (s.w. 2 Sam. 23:5); our "delight" in those things is reflected in our attitudes to God's word. And we shall be finally judged according to our 'delights', our dominant desires (s.w. Ecc. 3:17; 8:6). The Lord Jesus was devoted to sharing Yahweh's "delight" (Is. 53:10). We shall be judged according to what are our dominant desires.

On His law he meditates day and night- David makes several allusions to Joshua. He speaks of how the man who meditates in God's word day and night will prosper in his ways; and he uses the very same Hebrew words as found in Josh. 1:8 in recounting God's charge to Joshua. But David's point is that the man who does these things will not "walk in the counsel of the ungodly"- he won't give in to peer pressure. The fact that Joshua was wrongly influenced by his peers in later life would indicate that he didn't keep the charge given to him. David speaks of how he "meditates day and night" on God's law (Ps. 1:2), and also of how he meditates upon "God" at night (Ps. 63:6) and in the day (Ps. 71:24). "The word was God", and still is, in the sense that our devotions to God are to be according to His word; for in practice, what we see of God is largely through His hand and statements in history which we find in His word.

Psa 1:3 He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither; whatever he does shall prosper- The question is whether "He will be..." like this now or in the Kingdom. The answer is surely, both. The tree planted by the rivers with evergreen leaves is understood in Rev. 22 as the tree of life, also associated with waters in Eden, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Even now "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; he who is wise wins souls... A gentle tongue is a tree of life" (Prov. 11:30; 15:4). For we can now be a tree of life. If our fruit brings eternal blessing to others, then we will do so eternally.

Trees in Palestine had a hard time of it unless they were near a constant water source like a river. This becomes therefore a picture of spiritual growth- continually next to the river of water which is the Spirit.

Bringing forth fruit in season is the language of the blessings which could come upon Israel for obedience to the covenant (s.w. Lev. 25:9; 26:4; Zech. 8:12). But even if they weren't as a nation, the essence of these blessings was to be realized in the lives of individuals who were. Likewise had Judah been obedient and responsive to God's word, leaves which don't wither would have appeared around the restored temple system (s.w. Ez. 47:12). Their lack of spiritual fruit precluded those potential prophecies coming true. But these words are quoted in Rev. 22:2 concerning our holding out of life to the mortal population at the Lord's return. The conclusion? If we witness now we are living the Kingdom life now, and therefore we will be perpetuated in that time. The fact we teach others to do righteousness will therefore be a factor in our acceptance (Mt. 5:19); although not the only one. There is a connection between us 'freely giving' the Gospel now (Mt. 10:8), and being given 'freely given' salvation at the last day (Rom. 8:32; Rev. 21:6). The freeness of God's gift to us should be reflected in a free spirited giving out of the Gospel to others.

The fruit is brought forth regularly. This kind of consistency is part of the spiritual life. The leaves will not perish, whereas the way of the wicked perishes (:6). "Only one life, soon passed, only what's done for Christ will last". How profoundly true. What we spiritually do for others will last eternally, and it is the kind of thing we shall do eternally. Absolutely all else shall soon fade away, as all human history comes to be revealed as just a microsecond in the context of infinite time. It is the fruit we offer others which will "prosper". Material prosperity in this life is clearly not implied here, for other scriptures speak of how the way of some wicked people appears to "prosper" in this life. And the righteous often suffer lack of material prosperity.

Psa 1:4 The wicked are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away- This is the language of the future condemnation of the wicked, alluded to in Daniel's vision of the image being reduced to chaff and driven away. But the essence of judgment is now.

They *are* now like that, and this will be revealed in the future day of judgment (:5). The essence of judgment is ongoing now.

Psa 1:5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous- See on :4. The congregation of the righteous of today is connected to the crowd of justified ones at the day of future judgment; for they 'stand' in that they are made to stand, justified by grace. This is what Paul envisages in Rom. 14:4 in a judgment seat context: "Yes, he shall be made to stand up. For the Lord has power to make him stand". As Daniel experienced i his figurative death and resurrection, we will be made to stand by the Angels attendant at the judgment process. The wicked shall remain on the ground. "The congregation of the righteous" suggests that the final ecclesia / church / congregation will only be revealed at the day of judgment. The sheep as a group enter the Kingdom. Heb. 11:39,40 envisages how "they [previous believers] without us shall not be made perfect". The entire group are immortalized at the same time.

Psa 1:6 For Yahweh knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish- God 'knows' the way of all men. But the Hebrew sense of 'knowing' is not that of technical knowledge, but more of relationship. Our way of life in relationship with Him; whereas the wicked don't walk with that 'knowledge', and their way or path leads to eternal death. They will be rejected with the words "I never knew you", they had had no relationship with God. And that is the key ultimate decider in who shall be saved and who shall not be saved. It's quite possible many 'religious' folk will realize all too late that they never "knew" Him. "Many" shall protest they did many things in His Name... but they never knew Him. "The way of the wicked" forms an inclusio with the opening verse, speaking of the blessedness of the man who doesn't stand in the way of the wicked. For that way of life and thinking shall perish. But God gave His Son so that believers in Him should not perish but live for ever (Jn. 3:16). And that is achieved by us being shown a way to walk in that will not perish. Constantly, the division is between the righteous and the wicked. There is no third group, of 'nice people who are unbelievers'. We are righteous or wicked. Even when we have done all we can, we are unprofitable servants, and the unprofitable servant is sent into outter darkness; so the Lord teaches. Only by being counted righteous can we be righteous.

PSALMS CHAPTER 2

Psa 2:1 Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot a vain thing?- The question "Why?" may be purely rhetorical, as if to say that their raging is in vain because they are fighting against God and His anointed. But the Psalm later concludes with an appeal for

them to repent, so that the judgments described here need not come about. "Why...?" is the abiding question; why go down this path of suffering Divine condemnation and personal suffering, why not just repent. "Plot a vain thing" could be rendered "mutter a vain thing". Again we see how God focuses upon the internal thoughts of men when judging them.

As noted on :2, this Psalm has multiple later applications; but the primary application may have been to David as the Lord's anointed (:2) feeling under threat of Gentile invasion, but calming himself with the realization that he as Yahweh's faithful anointed would be preserved. He had learnt that in his wilderness years, surrounded by Saul's forces; and as in our lives, the lessons are repeated in different contexts in our later years. The Psalm may have originated in David's taking of Zion from the Jebusites and facing opposition from the surrounding tribes afterwards. And possibly developed when he felt surrounded by his enemies at the time of Absalom's rebellion or at some other time. Possibly also that of 2 Sam. 5:17 when all the Philistines gathered against David after he was first declared king and immediately after he had captured Zion. For the Anointed of Yahweh was initially David.

Consider how many different applications the NT gives to Psalms 2 and 110. There is a tendency amongst some personality types to turn every disagreement over interpretation of Scripture into a right : wrong, truth : error scenario. Matters relating to basic doctrine are capable of being dealt with like this. But to turn the interpretation of every Bible verse into a conflict area is a recipe for ecclesial disaster. So often the debate becomes personal, with a brother sure that *he* is right and the other wrong, and the other must be shown to be wrong. This leads inevitably to pride, and there is the possibility that the other party is degraded and feels abused by the other. We simply have to accept that much of Scripture is open to various levels of interpretation, which if placed side by side would appear to be contradictory.

Psa 2:2 The kings of the earth take a stand- In the sense of military confrontation (s.w. 1 Chron. 11:14). The picture of Jerusalem surrounded by armies with the Christ within it has specific reference to the last days. But the exact chronology of latter day events is impossible to work out ahead of time, for the purpose of Bible prophecy is not to provide world history in advance. Rather, when these things come to pass, then we shall know. The same scene is found in Revelation when Gog and Magog surround the Lord Jesus in Jerusalem and are destroyed; I have argued in commentary on Revelation that this refers to events around the Lord's return and not later.

And the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against His Anointed saying- See on :1. The Greek word “Christ” means ‘anointed’. This Psalm is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Scripture. It’s applied in various contexts- e.g. to the Roman and Jewish rulers trying to destroy Christ at His death (Acts 4:26); to the resurrection of Christ (2:7 = Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5); to the opposition to Christ’s people

as they preached the Gospel (Acts 4:25) and to the situation soon after His return, when the rebellious nations will seek to overthrow Christ's rule (2:9 = Rev. 2:27). What this shows is that Old Testament scripture can have multiple interpretations, in the same way as different people at different times can find the same Scripture speaking personally to them; and as we can find a single Bible passage amazingly relevant to us in different contexts and various times of our lives.

Just as the words about ruling the nations with a rod of iron are applied to those "in Christ", so these words of Ps. 2:2 were applied by the early believers to themselves in Acts 4:25,26. Likewise these words are applied to the Lord Jesus and His people with Him, when His enemies shall come against Him in the last day: "And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse *and against His army*" (Rev. 19:19). All that is true of the Lord Jesus is true of us; if we are baptized into the singular seed of Abraham, then all that is true of Him becomes true of us (Gal. 3:27-29). This means that our salvation is achieved not by substitution, but by our willful and faithful participation in the Lord Jesus as our representative.

Psa 2:3 Let's break their bonds apart, and cast their cords from us- The primary application would be to peoples once under David's domination desiring to rebel and even attack Jerusalem. But David may have in view the rulers of the earth / land gathering together against him at the time of Absalom's rebellion. David considered that his return to Zion as king (:6) was therefore his justification by God. Although the subsequent rebellions of Sheba an Adonijah showed this wasn't in fact the case. David lost his focus on the future Son who was to reign eternally, and liked to apply those promises to himself. The Lord surely had this verse in mind when He constructed His parable of the Jews within the vineyard speaking just like these Gentiles: "We will not have this man to reign over us". Man's instinctive sense is to cast off the ties that bind- but by doing so, man ends up a prisoner needing release from those ties. The only path to ultimate freedom is through swapping masters, from sin to righteousness, exemplified in the act of baptism (Rom. 6).

Psa 2:4 He who sits in the heavens will laugh. The Lord will have them in derision- One application of this Psalm was to Hezekiah being surrounded by the Assyrians in Jerusalem. God's view was that the faithful daughter of Zion had laughed at and derided the Assyrians (Is. 37:22). But here we read that this was true of God. The faithful remnant, the daughter of Zion, were scared of the Assyrians at the time, and hardly seemed confident. But God imputed *His* confidence and attitudes, His Spirit, to that of His weak but faithful people.

Psa 2:5 Then He will speak to them in His anger, and terrify them in His wrath- Connecting this with :12, this appears to be a conditional statement. God's anger could have been turned away had they reverenced His Son. But we must never re-negotiate nor water down the absolute fury of Yahweh against sin and sinners. Truly "we are saved from wrath through Him". Only those who get that will be inspired to live lives of humble gratitude.

Psa 2:6 Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion- If the idea were simply of 'seating' then an appropriate word would have been used. But the Hebrew used here for "set" is usually translated 'to pour', 'sacrifice' (s.w. Ps. 16:4) or 'cover'. Clearly there is a suggestion of the sacrifice of God's Son on a hill near Zion. From this point, the speaker becomes His Son (:7). The 'pouring out' could also be an allusion to anointing. All the same, as discussed on :7, the enthronement of God's Son as both King and priest is of itself a demand for submission to Him.

Psa 2:7 I will tell of the decree- The same phrase used of declaring the covenant (Ps. 50:16). The new covenant was declared in the death (:6) and resurrection of the Son of God; and here we have Him as it were proclaiming that new covenant.

Yahweh said to me, You are My son. Today I have become your father- This is given various applications in the New Testament, especially to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Acts 13:33 cp. Rom. 1:4). This would be appropriate to the allusion to the Lord's death noted on :6. Heb. 1:5 quotes this along with the promise to David in 2 Sam. 7:14 about the birth of his Messianic Son: "For to which of the angels said He at any time: You are my Son, this day have I begotten you? And again: I will be to him a Father and he shall be to me a Son?". We wonder if David was therefore wrong in appropriating the promise about his Messianic Son to himself, reigning in Zion. His line didn't continue reigning there, as Psalm 2 implies they would. But the words are clearly appropriated in the New Testament to both the birth, resurrection and enthronement in glory of the Lord Jesus. Heb. 5:5 quotes these words together with Ps. 110:1 as if they apply to the Lord beginning His priestly work in Heaven: "So Christ also did not glorify himself to become a high priest, but He that spoke to him: You are my Son. This day have I begotten you. As also He said elsewhere: You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek". The anointing of Ps. 2 is therefore understood as both that of a king and of a priest. For both kings and priests were inaugurated by anointing. Ps. 110:2 states that from His enthronement and start of His priestly work, the rod of His strength would go forth from Zion. Psalm 2 could be read as a typical coronation Psalm. The Lord Jesus is now king and ruling, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9), but "only" over those who submit their hearts to His kingly dominion [kingdom]. At the last day, this will be as it were

enforced upon all men. But we face the same choice now- to submit, or suffer His wrath. The need to "kiss the son" in loyalty, lest His wrath fall upon us, is therefore a call for submission to Him and His rod which began at His Heavenly enthronement at His ascension.

But the application to Hezekiah in Jerusalem continues; the same words are used for how Hezekiah felt that "this day" (s.w. "today"), the children are come to the birth, but there is no strength to bring them forth" (Is. 37:3, s.w. "become your father"). Yahweh *was* strong enough. The righteous remnant, the primary fulfilment of the "suffering servant" prophecies, could have been brought forth after the enemies surrounding Jerusalem were destroyed. But they were not, and instead of 'inheriting' the Gentiles (:8), Hezekiah didn't "ask of Me" for that, and rather made covenants with them involving accepting their gods. The great potential possible wasn't realized, and so the Psalm was reapplied to the things of the Lord Jesus.

There is no recorded moment when God said these words to the Lord Jesus, although He surely did (Heb. 1:5). Presumably we have here a unique insight into the words spoken by the Father to the Son on the resurrection morning; it is perhaps appropriate that they aren't recorded historically. The moment was too intimate.

On the level of David, I would suggest that he is here misapplying the promises of 2 Sam. 7 about his future Messianic Son to himself. He considered that his reigning in Zion was a sign that he was the chosen son. But he wasn't. His focus upon the future Lord Jesus wandered, and came back to self focus.

Psa 2:8 Ask of Me, and I will give the nations for your inheritance, the uttermost ends of the earth for your possession- The initial reference would have been to David enthroned on mount Zion, having been promised victory over all the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham: "I have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name like unto the name of the great ones that are in the earth / land" (2 Sam. 7:9). And so "All the Edomites became servants to David... And the Syrians became servants to David" (2 Sam. 8:6); and thus "the fame of David went out into all the lands, and the Lord brought the fear of him upon all the nations" (1 Chron. 19:17).

See on :7 for the potential reference to Hezekiah. God promised Abraham a very specific "inheritance... possession" in Canaan (Gen. 17:8; Dt. 4:21; 32:49). And yet this promise seems to be interpreted in later Scripture as referring to the *world-wide* Kingdom which will be established at the second coming (e.g. Rom. 4:13 speaks of how Abraham was promised that he would inherit the world; Ps. 72 and other familiar prophecies speak of a world-wide Messianic Kingdom, based on the promises to Abraham). One possible explanation is found in Psalm 2, where the Father seems to encourage the Son to ask of Him "the *heathen* [i.e., not just the Jews] for thine

inheritance, and the *uttermost parts of the earth* [not just the land of promise] for thy possession" (Ps. 2:8). Could it be that due to the Lord's spiritual ambition, the inheritance was extended from the Jewish people to *all* nations, and from literal Canaan to all the earth? This is not to say, of course, that *fundamentally* the promises to Abraham have been changed. No. The promise of eternal inheritance of Canaan still stands as the basis of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Gal. 3:8), but that promise has been considerably extended, thanks to the Lord's spiritual ambition.

I suggested on :7 that we have here a prophecy of a conversation between the Father and Son at the resurrection. "Ask of me… and I can give you anything you ask for" was the typical boast of ancient rulers, and we recall the experience of Esther and the daughter of Herodias. But in God's case it was true. He has been "given" the nations, but in the sense that they were to submit to His Son (:10). And this is the spirit in which we go forth and obey the great commission.

Psa 2:9 You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel-

In Is. 11:4, the Lord strikes the wicked with the "rod of his mouth". But that same rod in Messiah's hand is what He uses to lead His people, and His rod and staff are their comfort (Mic. 7:14; Ps. 23:4). The rod is Messiah's scepter in Gen. 49:10. We are to respond to the rod of His word now, and find it our comfort. Those who do not shall be broken by it.

These words are quoted about the Lord Jesus and those in Him, in Rev. 2:27. As He will rule the world with a rod of iron (Ps. 2:9) and brake the nations to powder at His return (Dan. 2:44), so will each of those in Him (Rev. 2:27). And notice how Ps. 2:1,2, a prophecy about opposition to Jesus personally, is appropriated to those who preach Him, because they are in Him (Acts 4:25,26). The breaking as a potter's vessel recalls the imagery of Jeremiah, where this is only done because the clay has not responded as required. The nations this is done to have therefore had a chance to respond to the Divine hand, and have chosen not to. In the last days, this would imply that the Gospel must first go to all nations who are then going to be judged for refusing to respond to it. And the Lord specifically stated this (Mk. 13:10).

Psa 2:10 Now therefore be wise, you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth- The judgment upon the nations of :9 doesn't have to happen; if they are wise and are "instructed". True wisdom is to repent; knowledge in the Hebraic sense refers to relationship with God, rather than technical knowledge of information. In fact the first sin was to partake of the fruit which would apparently make men "wise" (Gen. 3:6). It was a short cut to 'wisdom' in the sense of relationship. And too often the same mistake

is made today, whereby knowledge is confused with the wisdom and instruction of repentant relationship with God.

Psa 2:11 Serve Yahweh with respect and rejoice with trembling- That trembling, joy and respect is what arises from realizing that they should have been condemned (:9), but the outcome had been changed because they had the wisdom to repent. This mixture of joy, humility and certainty in His grace is very persuasive in our witness; when it is evidenced within the very fibers of the being of those saved by grace through faith. The essence of powerful personal witness is contained, I suggest, in the mixture of these two elements within the personality of the preacher. It's the paradox of Ps. 2:11: "Rejoice with trembling / contrition". The sense that 'we have the truth... yes, by God's grace I will truly be there, and so can you be'; and yet the awful, worrying sense of our own inadequacy as women and men, which should grip and haunt every sensitive spiritual soul.

Psa 2:12 Give sincere homage to the Son, lest he be angry and you perish in the way, for His wrath will soon be kindled. Blessed are all those who take refuge in Him- As explained on :10, the judgment upon the nations of :9 doesn't have to happen; if they are wise and are "instructed" in repentance. The urgency of the appeal is because "soon" the wrath of the Son is to be poured out. This appears therefore to be effectively the text of our latter day appeal, as we take the great commission to the nations which have been given to Him (see on :8). The implication is that none will survive the judgments to come unless they repent. But I suggested on :9 that the people in view are those who have already had a chance to respond to the Gospel, and not the ignorant world.

PSALMS CHAPTER 3

Psa 3:1 A Psalm by David, when he fled from Absalom his son- A fair case can be made that the titles of the Psalms are in fact just as inspired as the verses which follow them. Indeed on at least one occasion they are quoted or alluded to in the New Testament. The LXX treats them as part of the first verse of the Psalms following, although J.W. Thirtle made a fair case that at times the title of a Psalm ought to be attached to the previous Psalm, and it is a title of the previous Psalm appended at the bottom of it.

I suggest that this Psalm was composed in David's mind at the point of 2 Sam. 16:12 "It may be that the LORD will look on my distress, and the LORD will repay me with good for this cursing of me today".

Yahweh, how my adversaries have increased! Many are those who rise up against me- The historical reference is to how the support for Absalom appeared to mushroom once Ahithophel betrayed David and joined it: "The conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom" (2 Sam. 15:12). They considered that God wouldn't now help David (Ps. 3:2); there was a spiritual argument used against David, no matter how wrong it was. We have here a classic example of a collapse mentality, whereby a feeding frenzy begins against an innocent man, and quasi spiritual arguments are brought in to support it. "Many" in Ps. 3:1,2 is the same word used for how the people "increased" with Absalom. "Rise up" in Ps. 3:1 is the word used of Ahithophel wishing to 'rise up" and pursue David (2 Sam. 17:1; 18:31). In response to the rising up of others against him, David asks God to 'rise up' (Ps. 3:7 s.w.). David's prayer in Psalm 3 was answered, and Ahithophel 'rose up' and committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23).

Psa 3:2 Many there are who say of my soul, There is no help for him in God! Selah- "Many" is a tacit recognition of how popularly supported was Absalom's uprising (2 Sam. 15:12). But the "selah", the pause for meditation, is an invitation to reflect that masses of human strength is nothing compared to God. This appears to be the first use of "selah" by David in his psalms. The drama of Absalom's rebellion led him to reflection.

Psa 3:3 But You, Yahweh, are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head-

David fled from Absalom with his head covered (2 Sam. 15:30) but now he tells himself that Yahweh will lift up his head (Ps. 3:3). The Psalm now changes to the positive, with hope instead of lament. This is what happens in prayer. There can be a change of mood whilst we are praying, and what begins as pouring out grief turns into positive hope and better understanding. Many of the Psalms feature this.

The "selah" of :2 may also reflect David's pause for introspection, as to whether in fact God had really indeed cast him off because of his sins. But he concludes with the triumph of :3, that God now lifted up his head and would be a shield to him- appealing to the promises to Abraham, that God would be a shield to Abraham and his true seed (Gen. 15:1). Such appeal to the promises which form the basis for the new covenant is common in the Psalms, and can just as legitimately be made by us.

The *magan* translated "shield" is specifically the small round shield held close to the body to defend the heart. This was how David saw God in the flood of emotions and doubts assailing his heart. And so his "head", his thoughts, were lifted up by God.

Psa 3:4 I cry to Yahweh with my voice, and He answers me out of His holy hill- David had fled Jerusalem and the "holy hill" of the temple mount, which was now under Absalom's control. But he believes Yahweh is still there, present as it were in the temple, and answering his prayer. He perhaps alludes to the promises that if Israel sinned and were exiled, they could always pray to God and hope for regathering to His holy hill (Dt. 30:1-4; Neh. 1:9). Solomon develops these thoughts further, in teaching that Israel in their dispersion were to pray to God toward Jerusalem, His "holy hill" of Zion (1 Kings 8:48,49). We see therefore how Solomon would have reflected upon his father David's experience; David had prayed towards God's "holy hill" when in exile from it, and had been heard. Solomon may well have been in

David's retinue at the time, and would have experienced the wonder of return to Zion because of his father's prayer towards God in Zion.

David believed God was still present in Zion because the ark was there. On one hand, this was commendable but it still betrays a falling away from David's earlier sense [when fleeing from Saul] that God was just as present with him there in the desert as in the sanctuary. Indeed he felt he lived beneath the cherubic wings of the ark. On one hand he now doesn't need the ark with him, but still he has the sense that God's presence is more in Zion than with him personally. And a restoration to relationship with God meant a restoration to Jerusalem literally.

David's prayer was considered and answered by a decree passed in the court of Heaven; see on 2 Sam. 17:14 "Yahweh had ordained to defeat [s.w. 'turn to foolishness'] the good counsel of Ahithophel". The answer to David's prayer began immediately- 2 Sam. 15:32 says that having prayed this and worshipped God, despite not having any answers, Hushai appears. The decree to answer David's prayer took immediate effect, although it took time to work out as with Daniel's prayer of Dan. 10. Hushai is going to be the answer and the means of subverting Ahithophel's counsel. The same path is seen in answers to our own prayers. It is surely to this that Ps. 3:4 alludes: "I cry to Yahweh with my voice, and He answers me out of His holy hill". This Psalm is titled "A Psalm by David, when he fled from Absalom his son". The "holy hill" is surely the mount of Olives where David was when he prayed (2 Sam. 15:30). Psalm 3 appears to be a flow of consciousness psalm, recording David's thoughts at that moment. In this case, he believed his prayer was answered. He believed the decree had gone forth- and that faith was rewarded. Hushai appeared... and a process was set in motion that would save David from Ahithophel's counsel.

Psa 3:5 I laid myself down and slept; I awoke, because Yahweh sustains me- At his very nadir, with the insurrection apparently gaining momentum on every hand, David was able to lay down in peace and sleep, probably near the roadside somewhere on the way. As he awoke, he reflected that Yahweh had sustained him, and would ultimately 'awake' him to salvation. We likewise marvel how Peter could sleep soundly in prison the night before his planned execution. This is the peace which comes from true faith. And let us too not fail to be impressed by God's grace in awaking us each morning. Let our first thoughts on awakening be of Him, in prayer. God will keep us in "perfect peace" if our mind is "stayed" or 'sustained' upon Him (s.w. Is. 26:3). If we allow our mind to be sustained upon Him, He will sustain us. So often the Psalms reflect the mutuality possible between a man and his God. See on Ps. 4:4.

Psa 3:6 I will not be afraid of tens of thousands of people who have set themselves against me on every side- These thousands of people were those in the "strong" conspiracy of Absalom which at that time appeared to be gathering momentum by the hour (2 Sam. 15:12).

Psa 3:7 Arise, Yahweh! Save me, my God! For You have struck all of my enemies on the cheek bone. You have broken the teeth of the wicked- "Cheek bone" is literally "the jaw bone", and is the same word used about Samson's victory with a jaw bone when his own people had betrayed him (s.w. Jud. 15:16). The Hebrew could as well be an invitation for God to strike his enemies *with* the jaw bone. We then go on to observe that Psalm 3 is full of reference to Samson's fight at Lehi. It was also written at a time when David was betrayed by his own people: "Many are saying of me, 'God

will not deliver him'" - the thoughts of the Israelites as they delivered the bound Samson to the Philistines. "But you are a shield around me"- how it must have seemed to a spectator. "To the Lord I cry aloud"- as Samson did. "I will not fear the tens of thousands drawn up against me"- huge armies against one solitary man is a clear reference to Samson at Lehi. But as with the judgment of Saul, when these words were fulfilled in Absalom's death [he was killed by being 'struck' just as David here requests], David was distraught.

Psa 3:8 Salvation belongs to Yahweh. Your blessing be on Your people. Selah- David wanted salvation from Absalom's rebellion so that God's blessing would be upon His people. He had a far wider ranging motivation than mere personal salvation. David acts here as the High Priest pronouncing the priestly blessing of the people (Num. 6:24); just as he acted several times as a priest. See on Ps. 4:6. The contrast is with how the people thought there was no salvation for David in God any more (:2). But he believed in Yah's salvation, His Yehoshua / Jesus.

PSALMS CHAPTER 4

Psa 4:1 For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm by David- This Psalm is clearly related to Psalm 3, concerning David's prayer at the time of Absalom's rebellion. It has been observed: "In its metrical structure it very much resembles Ps. 3:1-8; being composed, like that, of a short strophe (verses 1,2), a short anti-strophe (Ps. 3:3,4), and a longer epode (Ps. 3:5-8). The divisions are marked, as in Ps. 3:1-8; by the introduction of the word selah, perhaps meaning "pause," or "rest"". I suggest that Psalm 3 is as it were the raw prayer of David in the heat of the moment; and Psalm 4 is now a more formal arrangement for "stringed instruments".

Answer me when I call, God of my righteousness. Give me relief from my distress. Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer- The request for mercy may appear to clash with the statement about "God of my righteousness". David may simply mean that he is 'right' in the controversy with Absalom. But Absalom's rebellion was after his sin with Bathsheba, when he had learned the wonder of imputed righteousness. And perhaps it is to this which he alludes. See on :3,5.

Psa 4:2 You sons of men, how long shall my glory be turned into dishonour? Will you love vanity, and go seeking after falsehood?- Vanity and falsehood are terms often associated with idolatry. And this was never far from the surface amongst Old Testament Israel. It could be that he laments that Absalom's new ruling junta was devoted to idolatry rather than to Yahweh. David's "glory" was in his God, and Yahweh was being dishonoured by this idolatry.

Psa 4:3 But know that Yahweh has set apart for Himself him who is Godly: Yahweh will hear when I call to Him- I suggested on :1 that David has in mind the righteousness imputed to him after his sin regarding Bathsheba. "Him who is Godly" is a term he has used about himself in his marvel at God's grace to him at that time, believing that his trust in God's grace and justification by that grace was to be the pattern for all who afterward would be "Godly" (Ps. 32:6). If God had heard his calling upon God's grace at the time of his sin with Bathsheba, He surely would do so now that he was facing the consequences of that sin. We see here how in His grace, God is willing to save sinners like David even from the consequences of their sins.

Psa 4:4 Be angry, and don't sin. Search your own heart on your bed, and be still- I suggest this, as often in the Psalms, is a soliloquy- David talking to himself. He was naturally angry with Absalom and those who had betrayed him, but he urges himself not to sin in that anger. He accepts that anger is of itself not sinful, but that it can easily lead to sin. I noted on :1 the connection with Ps. 3, here to Ps. 3:5, where he recalls how whilst on the run from Absalom he had laid down to sleep and awoken assured of God's ultimate salvation. But before he had laid down to sleep that night, he had searched his own heart. It was that good conscience with God which was the basis for his peaceful sleep. Paul quotes this verse as relevant to us all (Eph. 4:26).

The prophets were up against the same passionless spirit that pervades our societies today. The Jews came to discount the existence of God as a person, and condemned any form of anger or passion: "God loves him who never gets angry" (*Pesahim* 113b); "He who gets angry is regarded as if he would worship an idol" (Maimonides, *Mishne Torah*, Deoth, Vol. 2, 3). "Do not get angry and you will not sin" *(Berachoth* 29b). By contrast, consider Ps. 4:4 (quoted in Eph. 4:26 and exemplified in the anger of the Lord Jesus): "Be angry and sin not". The Rabbinic commentaries changed this to "Tremble before God, and you will not sin".

Psa 4:5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, put your trust in Yahweh- This is again David talking to himself (:4). He was exiled from Jerusalem. The sacrifices he has in view were therefore those he had been driven to make in his heart at the time of his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 51:17)- those of a broken heart. At this point of Absalom's rebellion, he was aware that he was suffering the consequences of that sin, and as noted on :1,3,5, is alluding to the lessons he had learned then.

Psa 4:6 Many say, Who will show us any good? Yahweh, let the light of Your face shine on us- These "many" are the many who had joined Absalom's rebellion (Ps. 3:2,6; 2 Sam. 15:12). But they wonder "who will show *us* any good". Perhaps amongst those faithful to

David there was the idea that nobody, not even God, would show them any "good" or grace now. But David asks for the light of God's face to shine, the sign of His acceptance. And that is what is so critically important when we are rejected by men. As noted on Ps. 3:8, David alludes to the high priestly blessing (Num. 6:24).

Psa 4:7 You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and their new wine are increased- The allusion is to how Absalom was feasting in celebration now that he had apparently taken the throne (as happened at the rebellion of 1 Kings 1:19,25). But the gladness of a good conscience with God meant far more to David than such rejoicing and secular feasting. We note that God can operate directly upon the human heart, the outcome of His Spirit working upon the human spirit or heart. And He can do so today just as much.

Psa 4:8 In peace I will both lay myself down and sleep, for You, Yahweh alone, make me live in safety- This connects with Ps. 3:5. At his very nadir, with the insurrection apparently gaining momentum on every hand, David was able to lay down in peace and sleep, probably near the roadside somewhere on the way. As he awoke, he reflected that Yahweh had sustained him, and would ultimately 'awake' him to salvation. We likewise marvel how Peter could sleep soundly in prison the night before his planned execution. This is the peace which comes from true faith. And let us too not fail to be impressed by God's grace in awaking us each morning. Let our first thoughts on awakening be of Him, in prayer. God will keep us in "perfect peace" if our mind is "stayed" or 'sustained' upon Him (s.w. Is. 26:3). If we allow our mind to be sustained upon Him, He will sustain us. So often the Psalms reflect the mutuality possible between a man and his God. See on Ps. 4:4.

PSALMS CHAPTER 5

Psa 5:1 For the Chief Musician, with the flutes. A Psalm by David.
Give ear to my words, Yahweh. Consider my meditation- Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer" , although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the

point.

Psa 5:2 Listen to the voice of my cry, my King and my God; for to You do I pray- The surrounding culture assumed that the louder one cried, the more likely God was to hear. We think of the prophets of Baal on Carmel. But David broke that paradigm; he knew that his internal "meditation" (:1) was seen by God as his "cry". David the king repeatedly calls God his "king". His exaltation didn't lead him to pride, as he was always under the deep impression that he was not the ultimate king (Ps. 5:2; 10:16; 29:10; 44:4; 47:6).

Psa 5:3 Yahweh, in the morning You shall hear my voice; in the morning I will lay my requests before You- Ps. 5 has similarities with Psalms 3 and 4, both of which I have shown were relevant to Absalom's rebellion. Here the connection is to how David laid down in peace and slept as he fled from Absalom, so confident of his good conscience with God and that God would ultimately save him (see on Ps. 3:5; 4:4). David's first waking moments were naturally of prayer to God. And this is our pattern. He often mentions his habit of regular prayer morning and evening (Ps. 5:3; 55:17; 59:16; 88:3; 119:147). This should not have to be enforced upon us, but rather the natural outcome of a life lived in constant connection with God. David perceived that the Mosaic ritual of morning and evening sacrifice taught the sacrifice of prayer should be made in daily life, even though at the time of many of the Psalms, David was exiled from the sanctuary. This exile from organized religion led him to make this connection, as it can for us too.

And will watch expectantly- We must be careful what we pray for. Because we will likely receive it in some form. If indeed the context of this Psalm is that of Absalom's rebellion, then we have to note that this same word for 'watching expectantly' is used repeatedly of the expectant watching for news of the battle with Absalom (2 Sam. 18:24-27); and the news was not what David wanted to hear. Absalom had been slain. But he had asked God to save him from Absalom's rebellion, and promised to "watch expectantly" for the answer.

Psa 5:4 For You are not a God who has pleasure in wickedness, evil can't live with You- Although this Psalm has relevance to Absalom's rebellion, it is a reworking of David's feelings when persecuted by Saul and likewise on the run from him. For circumstances repeat in our lives, and it would be natural for David to reconsider Psalms written at the time of one exile and apply them to another, just as these Psalms were also used for others in their times of exile. "Wickedness" is the word used about Saul's persecution in 1 Sam. 24:13.

Psa 5:5 The arrogant shall not stand in Your sight; you hate all workers of iniquity- To stand in God's sight means at times to be His representative. David is saying that the

wicked like Saul or Absalom cannot continue as kings, ultimately. The essential problem with them David perceived, was their pride.

Psa 5:6 You will destroy those who speak lies- "Lies" is the word used in Ps. 4:2 about the men in Absalom's conspiracy. David saw the telling of lies as the epitome of sin (Ps. 58:3 s.w.).

Yahweh abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man- But this is not to say there can be no salvation for such a person; for Jacob and his sons were "deceitful" (s.w. Gen. 27:35; 34:13) but were patiently led to better ways. If as suggested this Psalm originated at the time of Absalom's rebellion, then we can note that Shimei at that time had called David a "bloodthirsty man" (2 Sam. 16:7,8 s.w.). And the same words are used by God about David (1 Chron. 28:3). So we can wonder whether David was too quick here to assume that the 'man of blood' was hated by God and was of course not him. If he has Absalom in view, then his imprecation against Absalom was answered, and he then regretted it. Just as Jeremiah in Lamentations laments the very things which he had prophesied against his own people. We really have to be careful what we pray for, for in essence we shall usually receive it.

Psa 5:7 But as for me, in the abundance of Your grace I will come into Your house. I will bow toward Your holy temple in reverence of You- David had fled Jerusalem and the "holy hill" of the temple mount (Ps. 3:4), which was now under Absalom's control. But he believes Yahweh is still there, present as it were in the temple, and answering his prayer; he prayed toward the sanctuary which he believed he would return to, by grace. He perhaps alludes to the promises that if Israel sinned and were exiled, they could always pray to God and hope for regathering to His holy hill (Dt. 30:1-4; Neh. 1:9). Solomon develops these thoughts further, in teaching that Israel in their dispersion were to pray to God toward Jerusalem, His "holy hill" of Zion (1 Kings 8:48,49). We see therefore how Solomon would have reflected upon his father David's experience; David had prayed towards God's "holy hill" when in exile from it, and had been heard. Solomon may well have been in David's retinue at the time, and would have experienced the wonder of return to Zion because of his father's prayer towards God in Zion. We note the usage of "holy temple", which didn't exist in David's time. This is a typical example of how the Psalms were rewritten under Divine inspiration. David's faith and hope that he would return to the sanctuary was reapplied to the exiles, who were likewise to believe that they would be regathered to the temple.

Psa 5:8 Lead me, Yahweh, in Your righteousness because of my enemies. Make Your

way straight before my face- David was fleeing from Absalom, not clear where exactly he was going. And he asks to be led, in a straight way; and to realize which way he should take. And whatever the path, he wishes it to be that of righteousness. The "straight" path recalls the language used in Ezekiel about the way of the cherubim (Ez. 1:7), who were to regather Judah to their land and the temple (:7)- if they wished to follow them. David's feelings and faith as he was in exile as a consequence for his sins were to be those of the exiles, in a similar position.

Psa 5:9 For there is no faithfulness in their mouth. Their heart is destruction. Their throat is an open tomb. They flatter with their tongue- We may well enquire how David thought he knew the state of heart [AV "inward part"] of his enemies (Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11; 62:4; 64:6). Perhaps it was a result of his reflection upon how he had only had a right spirit or heart given by God "within" him as a result of his repentance (Ps. 51:10 s.w.). His enemies were impenitent, and so perhaps on that basis he knew what was in their hearts. But perhaps David was too hasty to judge. For these words are quoted in Rom. 3:13 about all humanity, including the believers who are saved by grace alone. It's as if the Spirit through Paul is somewhat correcting David's idea that only some 'very wicked' people are like this.

Psa 5:10 Hold them guilty, God. Let them fall by their own advice; thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions, for they have rebelled against You- The rebellion of Absalom was against David, but he rightly perceives it as being essentially against God. Perhaps Ahithophel is particularly in view; he fell by his own advice (2 Sam. 17:23). Whilst his suicide was completely his decision, it was also an answer to David's prayer at this point.

Psa 5:11 But let all those who take refuge in You rejoice, let them always shout for joy, because You defend them. Let them also who love Your name be joyful in You- David has in mind the loyal ones who remained faithful to him at the time of Absalom's rebellion. Eternal or "always" shouting for joy is the phrase only used elsewhere about the returned exiles (Is. 61:7). Again we see how David's joy upon returning to Zion from exile was intended to be that of the restored exiles- if they followed David's path of penitence.

Psa 5:12 For You will bless the righteous. Yahweh, You will surround him with favour as with a shield- As in Ps. 3:3, clearly written at the time of Absalom's rebellion (Ps. 3:1). David is appealing to the promises to Abraham, that God would be a shield to Abraham and his true seed (Gen. 15:1). Such appeal to the promises which form the basis for the new covenant is common in the Psalms, and can just as legitimately be made by us.

PSALMS CHAPTER 6

Psa 6:1 For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments, upon the eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm by David.
Yahweh, don't rebuke me in Your anger, neither discipline me in Your wrath- This sounds like a reflection on his feelings after the sin with Bathsheba. He was so delighted at God's response that David wanted it to be sung by others. The words are very similar to those in Ps. 38:1, also a Bathsheba Psalm, which is titled "to bring to remembrance"; as if David wanted his past sin and forgiveness to be remembered, so that he might fulfil his desire to teach other sinners of God's grace (Ps. 51:13). And he used music to do this. See on Ps. 50:8. David had been open to Nathan's "rebuke" (Ps. 141:5), which was not given in God's anger so much as in His appeal for David to accept His grace. The chastening or "discipline" is the word used for David's experiences after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 38:1; 39:11).

Psa 6:2 Have mercy on me, Yahweh, for I am faint. Yahweh, heal me, for my bones are troubled- This would refer to David's pain and illness after his sin with Bathsheba, of which we read in many of the Bathsheba Psalms. His bone pain looked ahead to that experienced by the Lord upon the cross, where He is presented as suffering as David did for sin- whilst personally innocent, He was totally our representative there.

Psa 6:3 My soul is also in great anguish. But You, Yahweh--how long?- "In great anguish" is a phrase used only here and in :10, and about Saul the night before he died (1 Sam. 28:21). David is wishing his enemies felt like he did (:10), which may be considered a basic psychological reaction to suffering at the hands of others, and yet all the same appears to fall far short of Christian principles. And yet God responded to this- for perhaps this Psalm was originally written earlier in David's life, and it was answered in Saul's sufferings as David had. And then David reused the Psalm with reference to his anguish at the time of his sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 6:4 Return, Yahweh. Deliver my soul, and save me for Your grace' sake- The "return" of Yahweh suggests he felt the absence of God's presence, and it is this "return" of Yahweh that he pleads "how long?" in :3. David realized "grace" at the time of his sin with Bathsheba; his salvation could be by grace alone, and not, as he has pleaded in earlier Psalms, because of the pureness of his own hands.

Psa 6:5 For in death there is no memory of You. In Sheol, who shall give You thanks?- Clear enough evidence that death is unconsciousness. David recognized that his life was indeed a giving of thanks to God, and such praise is in fact the purpose of our lives.

Psa 6:6 I am weary with my groaning; each night I flood my bed, I drench my couch with my tears- This sounds like an emotional breakdown, regardless of the state of his physical health. Perhaps the groaning and tears were in prayer to God; for most references to David's activity "each night" are to his prayers.

Psa 6:7 My eye wastes away because of grief, it grows old because of all my adversaries- "Grief" is the word used for the wrath of God (Ps. 85:4), but could also refer to the anger of others- perhaps the family of Bathsheba, or the followers of Saul, was originally in view. A sense of fading vision would be appropriate to both his physical and emotional state. In the Bathsheba context it would seem that during his illness, there arose "adversaries" against him. But as noted on :3,10, the Psalm may have originated whilst under persecution by Saul.

Psa 6:8 Depart from me, all you workers of iniquity- This is the word for how God had departed from Saul, and maybe this was initially behind David's desire that Saul leave him alone. But it is also the word used for how violence would never depart from David because of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:10). David prayed for this to "depart" but it never did. David was open to the possibility that through prayer, God can remove the consequences of sin in this life; but such prayer is not always answered.

For Yahweh has heard the voice of my weeping- Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer" , although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point.

Psa 6:9 Yahweh has heard my supplication, Yahweh accepts my prayer- There is no evidence that suddenly David got better and his enemies disappeared. Rather does the reality dawn upon David whilst still in prayer- that his prayer has indeed been accepted. Perhaps there was some visible sign of this, such as a manifestation of Divine glory. But

more likely he experienced as we do, a deep sense of reality- that his words had been heard and accepted by God in heaven.

Psa 6:10 May all my enemies be ashamed and dismayed. They shall turn back, they shall be disgraced suddenly- As explained on :3, this had initial reference to the destruction of Saul; "dismayed" is s.w. "great anguish" in :3. And yet when this actually happened, David lamented over Saul; perhaps all the more because he realized his prayers against Saul had been answered, and he recognized he ought to have been more charitable to his enemies.

PSALMS CHAPTER 7

Psa 7:1 A meditation by David, which he sang to Yahweh, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite- Cush may be another name for Shimei; or perhaps "the black one of Benjamin" may be another term for Saul. But much in the Psalm is so appropriate to Shimei's cursing of David as he fled from Absalom. But it could equally refer to some supporter of Saul the Benjamite during David's wilderness years. Most likely it could be that a Psalm composed in the wilderness years was later rewritten by David with reference to Shimei's abuse of him.

However it was the Cushite who informed David of the death of Absalom. Quite possibly these are his maturer reflections upon Absalom's death once he got over his initial breakdown. The reference to the bringing down of the head of the enemy would be relevant to the manner of Absalom's death with his head caught in a tree. In this case we view with concern the references here to David's innocence- when the Absalom rebellion was in fact clear punishment for his sins with Bathsheba.

However on balance I take this to initially refer to Shimei, whom David calls the 'black one from Benjamin'. Because Shimei's words deeply hurt David- even though in essence they were not far wrong, and David himself accepts that Shimei's cursing was because Yahweh had told him to curse. Again we see David struggling with accepting the consequences for his sins.

Yahweh my God, I take refuge in You. Save me from all those who pursue me and deliver me- The idea is that God was David's city of refuge. These cities were for those who needed to flee when being chased by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:26). The imagery is very appropriate to David when fleeing from Saul and Absalom. David's constant meditation upon God's law would have included the sections about the cities of refuge;

he realized that actually no such city was available for him, but the spirit of the law led him to reflect that Yahweh was his refuge, wherever he was. David tends to open wilderness Psalms with this reflection, just as we may tend to begin prayers with the same opening phrase and thoughts (Ps. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1).

Psa 7:2 lest they tear apart my soul like a lion, ripping it in pieces while there is none to deliver- The tenses appear to be saying that this was ongoing. In this case, we see the power of words (:1); the same lesson as taught in the agony Job suffered because of the words of his friends. The image of a lion "ripping to pieces" is the language used of Judah's sufferings at the hands of their enemies (s.w. Ez. 19:12; Zech. 11:16). This Psalm of David was likely used in that context, as it can be by all of us when being ripped apart by others.

Psa 7:3 Yahweh, my God, if I have done this, if there is iniquity in my hands- David has said these words in a different context, addressed to Jonathan, in 1 Sam. 20:8. This is one of those powerful incidental proofs that the scriptures are accurate and inspired; it is circumstantially credible that a man would use the same turn of phrase both to God and to his close friend. Perhaps this total denial of iniquity was something which, in the bigger picture, the Bathsheba incident was used by God to correct. When we are under patently false accusation, we can easily assume we are in fact innocent totally of any sin at any time in our lives. Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals that frequent and intense self-examination was a leading characteristic of David:, especially while on the run from Saul; as if he began to pick up false guilt from how he was being treated, wondering if it was all in fact justified (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

"If I have done this" would refer to Shimei's claim that David has the blood of the house of Saul upon him. David didn't, but, he himself is called a "man of blood" by God when it is explained why he couldn't build a temple. He shed blood freely, especially of Uriah and the other soldiers. David failed to see that he was indeed guilty in essence of what Shimei accused him of. His denial that there is iniquity in his hands is inappropriate, given that he was clearly suffering for his iniquities at this time. This is the spirit of David's protestations of innocence about trying to murder Saul in 1 Sam. 24:11 “Know and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in my hand” and 1 Sam. 26:18, “What have I done? or what evil is in my hand?”. Perhaps seeing David was ostensibly on the Philistine side when Saul was killed, he was falsely accused of having slain Saul.

Psa 7:4 if I have rewarded evil to him who was at peace with me (yes, if I have delivered him who without cause was my adversary)- David sounds like Job at this point, in Job's

great clearing of himself. But he like David (see on :3) had to be brought to realize that he had protested too much against the patent false accusations made against him. See on :10. Again David is protesting against Shimei's claim that he was guilty of the blood of Saul and his supporters. He alludes to how twice he spared Saul's life.

Psa 7:5 let the enemy pursue my soul, and overtake it; yes, let him tread my life down to the earth, and lay my glory in the dust- This again recalls the speeches of Job; see on :4. David felt as if he had been trodden down into the dust; his argument was that this should only have happened if he had done bad things. Whilst he had not done what he was accused of, he had yet to realize that he was all the same a sinner, saved by grace alone. The reference to "dust" connects with Shimei throwing dust at David. David says he will only accept he should be in the dust of death if he has indeed sinned. He is totally ungrateful for having been spared the death penalty for what he had done to Uriah and Bathsheba.

Psa 7:6 Arise, Yahweh, in Your anger; lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries. Awake for me; You have commanded judgment- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. David lifts himself up to God (Ps. 25:1; 28:2; 86:4), and asks God to lift up Himself in response (Ps. 7:6; 10:12; 94:2). David has no doubt that God's judgment is ongoing and that He had "commanded judgment" against Saul; which he knew anyway from the fact Samuel had prophetically condemned Saul on God's behalf. But he impatiently yearned for that Divine word to be activated. The truth was, and is, that in the gap between the Divine judgment and the realization of it- there is an opportunity for repentance, so that the word of judgment may not have to be fulfilled. We all live in that gap.

The request for God to "arise" is an invitation for Him to go into battle and scatter His enemies (Num. 10:35,36). When God does this against Absalom, David mourns. On one level David wanted this, on another he didn't. Such multi level feeling, even in spiritual matters, is actually typical of us all. David was not some special case; we just have a deep insight into a typical man's deepest spirituality. In the same way, David asks God to awaken, but on another level he knew that Israel’s watchman neither slumbered nor slept (Ps. 121:3,4). Likewise on one level he accepts his sin and that Shimei curses in God's behalf, but on another he indignantly denies this.

Psa 7:7 Let the congregation of the peoples surround You. Rule over them on high- David's conception of the judgment seat was of all nations being judged there, along with Saul and the responsible within Israel. David clearly has in view not merely

salvation from Saul and his judgment, but the visible involvement of God to judge all peoples- the picture of the Kingdom of God established upon earth. And then His Kingdom or rulership over all would be established.

Psa 7:8 Yahweh administers judgment to the peoples. Judge me, Yahweh, according to my righteousness, and to my integrity that is in me- To God, slanderers and false teachers within the ecclesia already are given their condemnation (Rom. 3:8). "The Lord shall judge the people... God judgeth (present tense) the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day... he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows" (Ps. 7:8,11-13 AV). God is now judging men, and preparing their final reward. For the wicked, the arrow is prepared in the bow, the sword is sharpened- all waiting for the final day in which the present judgments will be executed. David is appealing for God to judge him with the whole world assembled, and find him innocent. He is so indignant. And being indigant comes from hurt pride. We marvel at how David could protest his integrity (also in :10) when at this point he is suffering for his sins, and accepts Shimei's stoning and cursing of him is in fact from Yahweh. He understood that on one level, but the Psalms reflect his deeper thoughts. And yet God says later that overall David did walk before Him with integrity of heart (1 Kings 9:4). We can only conclude that like every man, David had a spiritual heart and also part of his heart that just 'didn't get it'. We likewise surely all know otherwise fine Christian folk who have a sector or two in their lives that are just not surrendered to God; they justify their alcoholism, sexual immorality, unforgiveness or whatever. All of which things on one hand will preclude from salvation. And yet otherwise they have a very spiritual heart, with integrity. David was like this. And God looked upon his good side. This is not to say that his behaviour was acceptable, nor that we can shrug off God's demands on every part of human thought and living. We should not. We are to be as the whole burnt offering, every part of the animal sacrificed to God. But who achieves that? We find here not only comfort in our own weaknesses, but strength to endure the patent, self justified weaknesses of other believers. We are not to write them off as non-Christian because of those unsurrendered sectors of their lives.

However we wonder whether David is alluding to his understanding that he was counted righteous after his sin with Bathsheba; and God later spoke of him as a man with integrity of heart (1 Kings 9:4). Perhaps this is left intentionally unclear- for we too face this dilemna. On one hand, we can forget the fact we are desperately unrighteous. On the other, we need to live and feel our awareness of the fact we are counted righteous and not take any wrong guilt over the fact we sinned in the past.

Psa 7:9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish the

righteous; their minds and hearts are searched by the righteous God- The future day of global judgment which was in view (see on :7) would essentially be of minds and hearts; David saw through the persecution of Saul to the essential issue, which was that his heart was not right with God. His desire for the "wicked [to] come to an end" speaks of his desire for the death of Saul, and for the establishment of his own kingdom. He saw himself as "the righteous". We wonder if he would have been better to be somewhat more self critical at this point. For he was only "righteous" relative to the sin of Saul, and was not ultimately "righteous" before God, as he later comes to perceive.

Psa 7:10 My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart- As noted on :9, David might have been a bit more self critical at this point. For he sees himself as "the upright in heart", when there is not a man on earth who sins not- apart from the Lord Jesus. I noted on :4,5,14 that David is seeing himself as Job, and he here continues that connection, seeing that Job is described likewise as "upright in heart" (Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 53:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

Psa 7:11 God is a righteous judge, yes, a God who has indignation every day- Although David wants the day of future judgment to come (see on :7), he recognizes that God has not suspended judgment until that last day; He is actively judging now, although He will not fully articulate that judgment until the day of judgment.

Psa 7:12 If a man doesn't relent, He will sharpen His sword; He has bent and strung His bow- There is a gap between God's pronouncement of judgment and carrying it out. During that gap there can be repentance, and the threatened judgments won't come. We all live within that gap. Even for the likes of Saul and his Benjamite supporters (:1), there was this opportunity for repentance.

Psa 7:13 He has also Himself prepared the instruments of death, He makes ready His burning arrows- David appears to see God as having prepared torture instruments which will be used to bring about the destruction and death of the wicked at the last day. But we wonder whether David was giving due weight to the fact that God has no

pleasure in the death of the wicked; His passion is rather for their repentance in this life (Ez. 33:11). But that desire to see Saul or other abusers repenting... is not much seen in David.

Psa 7:14 Behold, he travails with iniquity. Yes, he has conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood- The idea is that Shimei's cursing was the outcome of a long process of wrongly conceiving. David appears ignorant of the way he had wrongly made Bathsheba conceive. David contrasts the behaviour of the wicked with the activity of God in preparing judgment for them (:13). This juxtaposition is true only on one level; the essence of the matter is that God is far more interested in the repentance of the wicked than in destroying them, necessary as that may finally be (Ez. 33:11). He is quoting here from Job 15:35; see on :4,5,10. But David is correct to perceive that sin begins in the human heart, and brings forth sin and then death through a process internal to the human mind (as in James 1:13-15).

Psa 7:15 He has dug a hole, and has fallen into the pit which he made- This again is true, but we note David's apparent lack of desire to offer repentance to his abusers; for the way of God is to save those who are in the holes dug by themselves. For we are all in that position.

Psa 7:16 The trouble he causes shall return upon his own head, his violence shall come down on the crown of his own head- In the context of Shimei, whose cursing was the initial context of this Psalm (see on :1), David sought himself to bring this about. He told Solomon to ensure that Shimei's head and grey hairs should be brought down with blood to the grave by him (1 Kings 2:8,9). "On the crown of his own head" is literally "on his skull" and is clearly what David has in view when he asks Solomon to bring Shimei's white hair down to the grave with blood on it- from a blow that cracked his skull. This unspiritual attitude of David was rooted in the way that at the earlier point, here in Ps. 7:16, David rejoiced in the thought that Shimei would be condemned by God; and sets about to bring that condemnation about himself. This surely was a case of taking Divine judgment into his own hand in a way he should not have done, and quite overlooking the Divine desire for repentance. Shimei at this time was part of the Absalom rebellion; and we recall how the crown of Absalom's head is mentioned, and it was his head and famous hair that led to his death. And when it did, David mourns that this prayer has been answered...

Psa 7:17 I will give thanks to Yahweh according to His righteousness, and will sing praise to the name of Yahweh Most High- This praise appears to be at the prospect of God condemning Shimei; when in fact God is far more interested in the repentance of the wicked than in destroying them, necessary as that may finally be (Ez. 33:11).

PSALMS CHAPTER 8

Psa 8:1 For the Chief Musician; on an instrument of Gath. A Psalm by David- Psalm 9 is apparently titled "On the death of the champion", i.e. Goliath. J.W. Thirtle gave evidence to suggest that the titles of the Psalms have sometimes become muddled, with the titles of some Psalms intended to be relevant to the preceding Psalm, in this case Psalm 8. This would lend weight to the suggestion that Psalm 8 is David's reflections after the death of Goliath. The reference here in Ps. 8:1 to Gath would also refer to Goliath, who was from Gath.

Yahweh, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, You who has set Your glory above the heavens!- It was David's name which was much set by (1 Sam. 18:30); but David's desire was it should be Yahweh's Name which was now made majestic after the defeat of Goliath, and not his name. I suggest this Psalm was composed by David after the victory over Goliath. He had made clear that the conflict was all about Yahweh's Name. He was surely conscious, as women sung of how he had slain his ten thousands, that this could all become about him. And he didn't want that. It was all about Yahweh's Name being declared in all the earth, as he had made clear before killing Goliath. David's commitment to humility in success is commendable. Without doubt we should translate "Set Your glory above the heavens" as this is an imperative in Hebrew. David was intensely aware of all the glory he would be given for killing Goliath, but he urgently wants God to ensure He is glorified. That desire is in effect a desire for the coming of the Kingdom. Likewise :2 is an appeal for even babies to glorify God, and I will suggest this is an allusion to David's youth compared to Goliath. Human achievment is celebrated and glorified; in life and in obituary. But David gives us the perspective of the spiritual man. It is all nothing at all, even victory over a Goliath, beneath the glory of God, with which this Psalm opens and ends. It is His glory and not man's which should be sought and praised.

The language of "majesty" and "glory" is kingly language. Kings have majesty and glory and dominion over all. But David, already anointed as the next king of Israel, is strongly

aware that in fact Yahweh is Israel's King, and in fact He is king of the cosmos. He perceives, correctly, that his victory sets him up to fulfil the prophecy of Samuel's anointing, and eventually become king. But he is keenly aware of Yahweh's kingly majesty. Whatever exaltation David, man, even "the Son of Man" achieves… is all to "the glory of God the Father". Paul's hymn in Phil. 2 about the exaltation of the Lord Jesus comes to this same climactic conclusion- that it is all to the glory of God the Father. This is saying the same as what David is probing here- that his exaltation, man's exaltation from nothing and extreme weakness and vulnerability, is from start (:1) to end (:10) overshadowed by it all being to God's glory.

"How magnificent is Your Name" can as well be translated "what is the magnificent one of Your Name?". The answer given by the Psalm is "man", the man who glorifies God's Name. That man was initially David, who slew Goliath in order to glorify God's Name; it is also all men who are devoted to this; and specifically the Lord Jesus, who achieved the manifestation of the Father's Name to its ultimate term.

Psa 8:2 From the lips of babes and infants You have established strength, because of Your adversaries- This may be an intensive plural, referring to David himself, who was considered a youth, and in his humility as he reflected upon his victory, he considered that before God he was but a baby. The Lord quotes this from the LXX, as if the babes and infants were praising Him, the Lord Jesus (Mt. 21:16). The original context clearly speaks of David praising God for His victory over Goliath. But the Lord understood the entire incident as prophetic of His victory over the Goliath of sin; achieved at Golgotha, 'the skull of Goliath'. The entire incident opens up as a prophecy of the Lord's victory over sin (see on 1 Sam. 17). Eliab, Saul and Goliath had all mocked David for his youth. This is the context of David's praising Yahweh as if he were the greatest baby or infant there ever was- not just a young man, but a tiny baby. Again he shows how age and experience are nothing; he fought Goliath according to the paradigm of faith. Babies and sucklings are the most feeble of all humanity. And that is how David felt. His desire to be humble after the victory is so impressive. The Lord likens weak and humble believers to babies in Mt. 11:25, where he thanks God that He has revealed His truths to the disciples, babies, and not the humanly wise and prudent. See on :8.

That You might silence the enemy and the avenger- The initial reference was to the great, blaspheming voice of Goliath being silenced. The words were likely also used about the destruction of Haman (s.w. Esther 8:13). But David's humility is again revealed by calling Goliath "the avenger"; for the Philistines were used by God to revenge the disobedience of the Israelites.

The booming voice of Goliath is as it were silenced by the inatriculate gurgling and muttering of young children and sucking infants. One feeble sound cancels out another far mightier sound. David felt less than a young man, he felt as a powerless and

vulnerable baby. But their inarticulate voice [cp. "we know not how to pray as we ought"] is for God far mightier than Goliath's, it is "perfect praise" (LXX), it is the basis upon which He "ordains strength".

Psa 8:3 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained- It seems the night David killed Goliath, he looked up at the stars, in line with Abraham his spiritual father. "Ordained" is the word used of the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel, the symbolic heavens, under David (1 Sam. 13:13 cp. 2 Sam. 5:12). He perhaps later tweaked his composition, under inspiration, to reflect how this was all pointing forward to the establishment of the Kingdom under himself. But perhaps he also looked further, to how the Kingdom of God in Israel was to be established (s.w. "ordained") ultimately under the hand of his Messianic seed (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:12,13,16).

Therefore, taking this interpretation further, Psalm 8 is quoted in Hebrews 2 to prove the Lord Jesus Christ's superiority over the Angels; as if the triumphant David at this point was representative of the Lord Jesus. Verses 3-5 therefore show His marvel at how a human like Himself should be considered worthy to have such great Angelic attention; based upon David's feelings after the victory. Such was His respect of them: "When I consider Thy Heavens, the work of Thy fingers (the Heavens were created by the Angels; the Law was given by the Angelic finger of God writing on the stones), the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of Him? ('why should You think so much about mere Me?') and the son of man (Jesus) that Thou visitest (Angelic language) Him? For Thou hast made Him a little lower than the Angels… Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands (the Hand of the Lord is Angelic language; they were used to create all things); Thou hast put all things (including the Angels) under His feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field…"- i. e. the things of the natural creation made and controlled by the Angels.

David makes no mention of the sun- because I suggest these were his thoughts at night, the night after he slew Goliath. The success of a slinger depends upon clever manipulation of the fingers as the sling shot is aimed and the stone is released. And so David after killing Goliath marvels at the work of God's fingers. He is humbled in his success, as few men ever are. The LXX has David willing himself to think now of the work of God's fingers: "For I will regard the heavens, the work of thy fingers".

Psa 8:4 what is man, that You are mindful of him, and the son of man, that You care for him?- "Mindful" is the word usually used of covenant relationship with God. "Care for" can have the sense of "appoint". David is marvelling at the grace shown by God to man

in inviting him into covenant relationship with Him. And His grace to David and to man in general, in appointing him, an insignificant and vulnerable human, as lord of His creation and [in David's case] king of Israel.

These were David's thoughts as he marvelled at how he had been used to achieve the victory over Goliath. But as explained on :3, he becomes a symbol of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "son of man". David is here alluding to the earlier words of Job. Probably the only extant scripture at David's time was the book of Job and the Pentateuch, which explains why he so often alludes to the book of Job. Job came to deeply marvel at the fact that despite God's highness, He tests us and meditates upon us every moment of our lives: "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?... that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job 7:17,18). These words became the basis of the thoughts of the Lord Jesus as prophesied in Ps. 8:4: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?". Like Job, the Lord learnt from the depth of His own inner struggles about the moral greatness of the Father. So even God's own Son, peerless and spotless lamb of God that He was even in mortal nature, recognized that such was God's moral splendour that He was surprised that during His mortality, God was so intensely interested in Him.

As God was "mindful" of David and thereby all men in Israel through the victory granted over Goliath, so David urged that in response, they should be "mindful" of God (s.w. 1 Chron. 16:12,15). But "mindful" implies 'to remember', and is a term used for answer to prayer (Jud. 16:28 "Yahweh, remember me please, and strengthen me please, just this once oh God, that I may with one blow be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes"; 1 Sam. 1:11 "if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your handmaid and remember me and not forget Your handmaid, but will give to Your handmaid a boy" and often). David is acknowledging that he had prayed for victory, and been granted it- but felt unworthy to have received such an answer.

Psa 8:5 For You have made him a little lower than the Angels, and crowned him with glory and honour- The application to the Lord Jesus is made clear in Heb. 2:7,9. where the midrash / interpretation is added that the Lord Jesus had to be lower than the Angels so that He might experience death; and "a little lower" is interpreted as meaning 'lower for a little / short time'. For Angels cannot die (Lk. 20:35,36), which again supports the view that Angels are spoken of as one category, not good ones and wicked ones; and "Angels" can't die, therefore they can't sin (Rom. 6:23). Belief in sinful Angels roaming the planet is not taught in the Bible. The making of man (or the Lord Jesus) for a short time lower than the Angels is no evidence of His pre-existence or Divine incarnation in Him; for the words in their original context apply to the man David and to "man" generally. The idea is that man, and the Lord Jesus, is made for a little while / period lower than the Angels, and Paul takes this as implying that both the Lord Jesus and

ourselves shall be exalted higher than the Angels, seeing we are only for a short period made lower than them.

David had been anointed future king of Israel at this point. He perceives, correctly, that his victory will set him up to be desired as king by all Israel. And so he feels that the crown has already been placed upon him, effectively, by the victory. Hence "You have... crowned him with glory and honour". Glory and honour were poured out on David because of the victory; although this Psalm begins and ends by saying that all glory and majesty is God's. We are crowned only with God's glory. Although "made a little lower than the Angels / elohim" is applied by Paul to literal Angels, in the first context, David may be expressing how he was the one lower than the elohim, the mighty ones of Israel (elohim is used of the leaders of Israel in Ps. 82:6)- Saul, Jonathan, Eliab. He had been "made lower" by his short size, his red hair, his mother having "in sin conceived me", his banishment to care for the poor family's few sheep in the wilderness. But through killing Goliath he had suddenly been crowned with glory and honour.

So I suggest that 'elohim' here has various layers of meaning. David was lower than the 'mighty ones' of Israel at the time. The Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, was lower than Angels. But on another level, man himself, if he believes, is only a "little" lower than God and not in fact so far off as our pathetic weakness might make it seem. "Man" here is used firstly of David personally, but also of all men; and of the supreme "Son of Man", the Lord Jesus. He along with David show us the potential that there is within man, to be lord of all he surveys in God's creation. But all this is enveloped by the glory of the Father; and so the Psalm opens and finishes with this statement of God's glory as the bookends to the entire wonderful story of what it is to be "man". Our lowliness and vulnerability is for a short time- the LXX is confirmed by the quotation in Heb. 2, man was made "for a little time lower than elohim". A few thousand years of smallness... is a little time, in the spectrum of infinity. Putting the Hebrew and LXX together, the sense is that man was made a little lower than God, and only for a little / short time. This temporal perspective [for a little time] also gives perspective upon man. We are not hopelessly low. All our weakness and vulnerability is in fact only for a short time compared to man's eternal destiny; if indeed we are men as God calls us to be. And as in fact we are called to be by the very fact of being human.

"You made him lower" [s.w. to decrease, abate] can suggest a reference to the fall. Man was created higher than the Angels, but was made lower than them as a result of his sin. And yet man's hope is to be made higher than Angels.

Psa 8:6 You make him ruler over the works of Your hands. You have put all things under his feet- David perhaps later reflected how the victory over Goliath set him up to be ruler or king over God's people. But the longer term application is to the Lord Jesus; through

His victory at Golgotha, the skull of Goliath, His final kingship over literally all things was assured (1 Cor. 15:25).

The slant taken on this in the Hebrews 2 quotation is that this makes the Lord Jesus greater than Angels, in contrast to the Jewish worship of Angels as being greater than even Messiah. In the same way as the Angels are so closely associated with their charges that they are identified with them, so the Angels are described as the things in the natural world which they have created. Ps. 8:5,6 is quoted in Heb. 2:7 to prove Christ's superiority over the Angels: "Thou hast made him a little lower than the Angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands (an Angelic phrase); Thou hast put all things under his feet". "All things" often includes Angels in its context in New Testament usage. The works of God's Angel-hands in the natural creation have been put under Christ's feet, but the purpose of the quotation in Heb. 2 is to show that the Angels have been put under Christ's feet. Heb. 2:11 takes the point further by saying that as the Angels are identified so exactly with that they have created, so Christ was identified with His new creation, even to the extent of having an identical nature to them.

David isn't saying that all things have been put under man's feet. The allusion is to how man was created to have the animals under his feet (Gen. 1:26,28). But he let the serpent dominate him. Paul quotes this and comments that now we see not yet all things out under the feet of the Son of Man; He has to reign until God puts all things under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25). So David's marvel was in what God has called man to in the Kingdom age. And in his immediate context he surely has in mind how all Israel, the creation of God, was soon to be put under his feet when he became king. Although in one sense "[God] has put all things under his [the Lord Jesus'] feet" (Eph. 1:22), "who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him" (1 Pet. 3:22), in another sense not all is under Him. "For in that He subjected all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we do not see all things subjected to him. But we behold him who has been made a little lower than the angels- Jesus- crowned with glory and honour because of his suffering of death, whereby, by the grace of God, he tasted death for every person. For it became Him for whom are all things and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Heb. 2:8-10). The argument of Heb. 2 is that the Lord Jesus had human nature, was one of us [and not an Angel], and His path to glory can be ours. We also shall have all things put under His feet- because His representative death and resurrection was in order to "bring many sons to glory", many sons of men were to follow the path of the Son of Man (Heb. 2:10; hence "many "sons""). All in potential is under His feet, as it is under ours- but even for the Lord, it's a case of now but not yet. The promise of 'all things under His feet' refers to the future, as Heb. 2:5 states: "For not to angels did He subject the world to come". "The world to come" is the time of 'all things under His feet'. Attempts to twist this passage to

mean we are now gardians of the planet and have it 'under our feet' are therefore at variance with the clear context.

Psa 8:7 all sheep and cattle, yes, and the animals of the field- In Ps. 18:39 (2 Sam. 22:40), David reflects how his victory in battle by God's strength meant that all was subdued under him. The victory in battle which he had in view was supremely that over Goliath, his most major and applauded victory. To a far greater extent, the victory of the Lord Jesus meant not simply the subjugation of Israel beneath Him, but of all creation, including the natural creation.

David stood over the dead Goliath; he had as it were all things under his feet. Goliath was likened to a wild animal: "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them" (1 Sam. 17:36). Goliath complains that David is treating him like a dog, by coming to him with a stick (1 Sam. 17:43). The stick David carried played no part in David's military plan. Perhaps he consciously was treating Goliath as a wild animal, and now this Psalm celebrates this.

The idea is that both tamed and untamed beasts, along with those in the sky and sea beyond man's reach to tame, will be subdued beneath man. We can take comfort that those things we do not tame yet potentially could, and those we cannot get to… shall be finally under us.

Psa 8:8 the birds of the sky, the fish of the sea, and whatever passes through the paths of the seas- The subjection of the animal creation beneath the Lord Jesus suggests an allusion to the way that Adam failed to subject the natural creation beneath him (for he let the serpent dominate *him*); whereas the Lord Jesus as the second Adam did achieve total mastery over literally all things (cp. Gen. 1:28).

David foresees that his unlikely exaltation is going to be that of every man; becoming lord of all he surveys in creation, of everything in sky, on earth and in the seas. His path is that of every man, ultimately; and it is epitomized in the path of the Lord Jesus, to whom Paul applies this Psalm. This calling of man to be lord of creation is in stark contrast to the worldview of the contemporary religions. "This is in contrast to the ancient cosmogonies in the ancient Near East where humans are created to be the slaves of the gods – maintaining the universe for them and seeing to their food, clothing and honour". Instead of remaining awed by man's smallness, David sees the huge potential that there is in being man- to be lord of all creation. Just as he had been exalted through his faith that he could conquer Goliath, so could all men be, if they are men as God intended. And as Paul shows, this has already been exemplified in the glorification of the Lord Jesus. We are not therefore to wallow in the smallness of humanity but to glory in our potential. We who are "babies and sucklings", so weak and

vulnerable, gurgling and muttering incoherently, can utter perfect praise (LXX) or 'be ordained strong' (MT); and be lords of heavens, sea and earth. The Son of Man has shown us the path to that glory, having been one of us, of our nature. And yet as the Psalm makes clear, all this exaltation of man, "the Son of Man", is all under God- whose glory is over and through it all. Just as David realized that although he would be crowned king as a result of his victory, Yahweh was still the true king. This all shows us what it is and what it can be to be human, and for all time shows the potential within man. This is the answer to the question "What is man?". This is not so much a lament of man's smallness, weakness and vulnerability, although on one level it is that; rather is it a rhetorical question, the answer showing us what great potential there is for man who believes as David did. Likewise "What [or 'who'] is... the Son of Man...?" is answered in the achievment and person of the Lord Jesus. "What is the Son of Man?" leads to the answer: "The son of God". David's question is in fact a reply to Job's depressed statements about man in Job 7:16,17: "I loathe my life. I don't want to live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath. What is man, that You should magnify him, that You should set Your mind on him". David is showing that man is so much more than Job's view, in depression, that man is nothing and better off dead than alive.

This 'higher' view of human nature, of what it is to be human, affects how we see ourselves and how we treat others. The surrounding religious systems had a generally low view of man; the gods were all powerful and man was merely their slave. This view is being deconstructed here. Protestant missionaries tended to encourage their colonial powers to be more respectful towards conquered peoples, because they were human. Whereas Catholic and other missionaries with a lower view of human nature apparently saw no reason to discourage inhumane treatment of the conquered.

Psa 8:9 Yahweh our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!- It was David's name which was much set by (1 Sam. 18:30); but David's desire was it should be Yahweh's Name which was now made majestic after the defeat of Goliath, and not his name. The record of Goliath's defeat in 1 Sam. 17 has much to say about the glorification of Yahweh's Name. Goliath cursed David by his gods, but David instead talks about the Name of Yahweh and doesn't curse Goliath's gods. Yahweh repeatedly forbad His people to mention the name of other gods (Ex. 23:13; Dt. 18:20; Josh. 23:7). In the Ancient Near East, all conflict between peoples and nations was seen as conflict between gods. The role of prophets or priests on either side was to bring curses upon the other gods. And so they repeated the names of the other gods in incantations supposed to bring curses upon those gods. This however is forbidden to God's people. They instead were to focus upon the Name of their God Yahweh. And we see in this a pattern for ourselves; to focus upon the ultimate truth and truths of the one true God, and not be caught up in wishing cursing upon those who believe otherwise. To focus

upon the positive, which is the source of all victory, rather than going on the defensive against other views by cursing them.

PSALMS CHAPTER 9

Psa 9:1 For the Chief Musician. Set to The Death of the Son- Or, "the death of the champion". J.W. Thirtle gave evidence to suggest that the titles of the Psalms have sometimes become muddled, with the titles of some Psalms intended to be relevant to the preceding Psalm, in this case Psalm 8. This would lend weight to the suggestion that Psalm 8 is David's reflections after the death of Goliath. However there are elements of Psalm 9 which are also clearly appropriate to the victory over Goliath, although the ideas have been developed, under inspiration, relevant to other situations.

A Psalm by David. I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart. I will tell others of all Your marvellous works- Wonder leads to worship, to that flame of praise which is the worship "in spirit and in truth" which the Father seeks. But wonder adds awe and reverence to that worship. And we have to ask how much of that there is in much popular worship today, be it in starchy hymns or rock music. 1 Chron. 16:9 makes the connection between wonder and worship quite plain: "Sing unto him, sing praises unto him; talk of all his wonders". Likewise Ps. 9:1: "I will praise you O Lord; I will show forth all your wonders".

Psa 9:2 I will be glad and rejoice in You, I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High- The four lines in :1,2 each begin with Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; a reminder we are reading Hebrew poetry set to music, for easy memorization by illiterate people. The singing of praise, however, was to be from the "whole heart" (:1), rather than the external appearance of praise which was common in religious thought at the time (cp. Is. 29:13).

Psa 9:3 When my enemies turn back, they stumble and perish in Your presence- David therefore felt God's presence with him in his victories. "Presence" is literally "face", and the idea seems to be that the rout of the Egyptians in Ex. 14:24 was repeatedly seen in David's experience of victories- a turning and fleeing at the revelation of God's face / presence.

Psa 9:4 For You have maintained my just cause- Again we get the impression that David veers towards self righteousness, attributing his victories to his own rightness rather than God's grace / undeserved favour.

You sit on the throne judging righteously- Continually David expresses his understanding that judgment is ongoing right now, although there will come a future day when those judgments are articulated more visibly.

Psa 9:5 You have rebuked the nations, You have destroyed the wicked, You have blotted out their name forever and ever- This appears to be a prophetic perfect, David looking forward to the time when all nations would be gathered and judged (see on Ps. 7:7,8). For the name of the wicked had not been blotted out eternally in David's time, and he later complains as to the continuing prosperity of the wicked in his own time.

Psa 9:6 The enemy is overtaken by endless ruin. The very memory of the cities which You have overthrown has perished- As discussed on :5, the "endless ruin" of the wicked had not then occurred, and looks to the future. The overthrowing of cities alludes to that of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:25,29; Jer. 20:16; 50:40). David understood the day of judgment to be a visible, clear, miraculous Divine intervention- which didn't occur in his time.

Psa 9:7 But Yahweh reigns forever, He has prepared His throne for judgment- As explained on :5,6, David is not saying that the judgment has already come; God is actively judging right now (:4), but that is preparation for the future day of judgment. Appreciating this means that we live our lives before the judgment presence of God.

Psa 9:8 He will judge the world in righteousness, He will administer judgment to the peoples in uprightness- This is quoted in Acts 17:31 concerning the final day of judgment at the Lord's return. David feels God's judgment is ongoing now (Ps. 9:4), but that is preparation for the future day of judgment. Appreciating this means that we live our lives before the judgment presence of God.

Psa 9:9 Yahweh will also be a high tower for the oppressed; a high tower in times of trouble- David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of

future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Psa 9:10 Those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, Yahweh, have not forsaken those who seek You- Faith or trust in God is inspired by knowing or experiencing ['knowing' in the Hebraic sense] the Name of Yahweh. This doesn't mean that knowing the spelling or pronunciation of that Name gives faith; rather, our experience of the characteristics of God's Name, His personality, inspires faith. And Biblical history, as well as our own personal history, is a knowing / experience of that Name.

Psa 9:11 Sing praises to Yahweh who dwells in Zion, and declare among the people what He has done- The Psalms are full of reference to David's evangelical zeal to take the message of Yahweh, the God whose sanctuary was in Zion, to the Gentile nations. Israel were intended to be a missionary nation, bringing others around them to Zion and relationship with Yahweh. But David was one of the very few who grasped this.

Psa 9:12 For He who avenges blood remembers them. He doesn't forget the cry of the afflicted- This sounds as if it may have been added, under inspiration, in the context of the exiles. For David had not personally been slain by Saul, nor, so far as we know, had his immediate family members. Perhaps the murder of Abiathar's family was initially in view (1 Sam. 22:22).

Psa 9:13 Have mercy on me, Yahweh. See my affliction by those who hate me- The same words are used when David thanks God for saving him from "those who hate me" (Ps. 18:17; 2 Sam. 22:18). That thanksgiving was because he had prayed for salvation from "those who hate me" in Ps. 9:13 (s.w.). We have here a direct example of gratitude for answered prayer.

And lift me up from the gates of death- David so often expresses the feeling that he is really about to die. Perhaps he struggled with some medical condition which made him often feel as if he were about to die from it. Or perhaps this is how close Saul got to slaying him, multiple times. Again this is an allusion to Job's feelings (Job 38:17).

Psa 9:14 that I may show forth all Your praise. In the gates of the daughter of Zion I will

rejoice in Your salvation- Morally disgraced in the eyes of all Israel and even the surrounding nations, not to mention his own family, David didn't have a leg to stand on when it came to telling other people how to live their lives. A lesser man than David would have resigned all connection with any kind of preaching. But throughout the Bathsheba psalms there is constant reference to David's desire to go and share the grace of God which he had experienced with others (Ps. 32 title; 51:13). He titles them 'maschil'- for instruction / teaching. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord…*that* I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates" (Ps. 9:13,14).

Psa 9:15 The nations have sunk down in the pit that they made. In the net which they hid, their own foot is taken- This again is true, but we note David's apparent lack of desire to offer repentance to his abusers; for the way of God is to save those who are in the holes dug by themselves. For we are all in that position. We wonder what nations David has in view; perhaps his words are purely prophetic.

Psa 9:16 Yahweh has made Himself known; He has executed judgment. The wicked is snared by the work of his own hands. Meditation. Selah- As suggested on :15, this appears to be the prophetic perfect. But it could be that David has himself in view. For he feels that the snares of death were around him (Ps. 18:5). Divine judgment is a making of Himself known; they articulate who He essentially is. People learn the knowledge of Him, His righteousness, through His judgments being in the earth (Is. 26:9).

Psa 9:17 The wicked shall be turned back to Sheol, even all the nations that forget God- "Turned *back"* sounds like "the second death" (Rev. 20:4). All die and go to *Sheol*, but those resurrected and condemned at the final judgment will be sent back there again. "The wicked" in David's experience are parallel with "the nations".

Psa 9:18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever- The implication is that the final judgment will be when the poor receive their hope, an the needy are never again be forgotten. So this confirms that the situation here is that at the Lord's return.

Psa 9:19 Arise, Yahweh! Don't let man prevail. Let the nations be judged in Your sight- This is a clear desire for the latter day of judgment. The sight or presence of God would be through the return of His Son the Lord Jesus.

Psa 9:20 Put them in fear, Yahweh, and let the nations know that they are only men.

Selah- The intention of judgment day is to reveal to men that they are only men. This was what Job had to learn through suffering when relatively innocent; he had to recognize his own humanity. The implication is that human sin is all about playing God and considering ourselves more than men, i.e. effectively playing God. This was the essence of Adam's sin, according to how it is interpreted in Phil. 2- a grasping at equality with God, in a way in which even His Son refused to do.

PSALMS CHAPTER 10

Psa 10:1 Why do You stand far off, Yahweh? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?- David starts off feeling like this, but by the end of the Psalm he is taking comfort in the fact that God is going to come near in judgment (:17,18). This doesn't have to mean that half way through the prayer, an answer came. Rather is this absolutely true to the experience of prayerful men. We begin prayer in desperation, but in the course of that prayer we are persuaded of God's action, and conclude the prayer in grateful peace with Him. The Psalm was perhaps reapplied to the feelings of the exiles, who along with Job, complained that God was apparently standing far off from them (Is. 45:15; Job 23:9).

Psa 10:2 In arrogance the wicked hunt down the weak. They are caught up in the schemes that they devise- The language of hunting down suggests this Psalm was originally composed during Saul's wilderness persecution of David; see on :15. David continually accuses Saul of "arrogance" in the Psalms he wrote reflecting upon Saul's persecution of him; whereas Saul begins as an apparently humble man who doesn't feel worthy to be king, hiding himself to avoid being king (1 Sam. 10:22), and restraining himself when some mocked him as an inappropriate leader (1 Sam. 10:27). Saul's descent into apostasy was therefore primarily a descent into pride. Being called to do something for God so often makes men pride, when the invitation is intended to humble us; just as David's psalm of humility in Psalm 8 after killing of Goliath was a protestation of humility. "Who am I, to do this work for You?" ought to be our sense. However we will note on Ps. 10:10 that Saul had a false humility; so perhaps his initial humility was not genuine.

Psa 10:3 For the wicked boasts of his heart's cravings; he blesses the greedy, and condemns Yahweh- Saul's boasts are not recorded really in the historical records; but the Psalms are full of reference to them (see on :2). It's unlikely that Saul actually

'condemned Yahweh' in so many words. But we have an example here of how God reads human words and actions for what they in fact imply; see on :11. Saul's blessing of the greedy may refer to his blessing of the Ziphites for betraying David to him (1 Sam. 23:21). They were "greedy" in that they did so in hope of reward from Saul.

Psa 10:4 The wicked, in the pride of his face, has no room in his thoughts for God- All basic Bible doctrines are meshed together, not only by logic and theory and exposition, but by the fact that one aspect of the spiritual life which they elicit leads into another. The existence of God means that there will be a judgment, and therefore our lives must reflect the fact that we believe that we live under judgment. The wicked think: "He will not require it. All [their] thoughts are, There is no God" (Ps. 10:4 RV). They admit there is a God insofar that they think God will not "require" an account of their lives; and thus effectively they act as if they are atheists. Their inward self-talk is that "There is no God". Thus they say: “God has forgotten… He will never see.” Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, “You will not require an account” (Ps. 10:11,13). Note the parallel between their thinking "There is no God" (:4), and thinking that God will not "require" our thoughts and actions of us one day. To believe in God is to believe in His ultimate judgment of us. And thus it would be true that if there were no God, anything would be possible for us.

Psa 10:5 His ways are prosperous at all times- LXX better reflects the ambiguous Hebrew: "His ways are profane at all times".

He is proud, and Your laws are far from his sight. As for all his adversaries, he sneers at them- Again, Saul is accused of pride in that he considered himself above Divine law, thereby condemning God (:3).

Psa 10:6 He says in his heart, I shall not be shaken. For generations I shall have no trouble- It was Saul's intention to found a dynasty, hence his anger with Jonathan for not wanting to be part of it, and instead supporting David as the next king. The civil war which followed Saul's death reflected his attempts to found a ruling dynasty.

Psa 10:7 His mouth is full of cursing, deceit, and oppression; beneath his tongue is mischief and iniquity- David is very critical of all his enemies, especially Saul. He sets up a contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous. But his attitude changed somewhat after his sin with Bathsheba, in connection with which he did much of what he accused Saul of, not least willfully exposing Uriah to an ambush so he would be murdered. Therefore Rom. 3:14 quotes this verse (from the LXX) and applies it to all

men, the righteous included; leading to the conclusion that we are only made righteous by grace through faith.

Psa 10:8 He lies in wait near the villages. From ambushes, he murders the innocent, his eyes are secretly set against the helpless- Robbers did not usually murder; so we are to imagine that David has specifically in view Saul's desire to ambush and murder David. "The innocent... the helpless" is how David often describes himself in the Psalms. For "ambushes", see on :7.

Psa 10:9 He lurks in secret as a lion in his ambush. He lies in wait to catch the helpless. He catches the helpless, when he draws him in his net- AV has "the poor" for "helpless". As explained on :7, David's hard judgments against his enemies came home against him; for it was he who arranged the ambush and murder of "the poor" Uriah (2 Sam. 12:1). Therefore Rom. 3:14 quotes :7 LXX and alludes to this whole section- and applies it to all men, the righteous included; leading to the conclusion that we are only made righteous by grace through faith.

Psa 10:10 The helpless are crushed. They collapse. They fall under his strength- AV "He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall". The allusion is to a lion crouching before pouncing (:9). But the language used is that of crouching in humility; the idea is that a false humility was used to destroy others. I discussed on :2 the apparent humility of Saul when he began his reign; but this was perhaps the pride which apes humility. For we see such fake humility all around us.

Psa 10:11 He says in his heart, God has forgotten. He hides His face. He will never see it- It's unlikely that Saul actually 'condemned Yahweh' in so many words. But we have an example here of how God reads human words and actions for what they in fact imply; see on :3.

Psa 10:12 Arise, Yahweh! God, lift up Your hand! Don't forget the helpless- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. David lifts himself up to God (Ps. 25:1; 28:2; 86:4), and asks God to lift up Himself in response (Ps. 7:6; 10:12; 94:2).

Psa 10:13 Why does the wicked person condemn God and say in his heart, God won't call me into account?- The implication may be 'Why does the wicked do this and get

away with it?'. And the answer of course was that he will not get away with it finally, because judgment day will come. See on :3,11. Like Job, during the course of his reflections, David leads himself to recognizing that judgment day will come, but it must be yet future. And he the more longs for that final "day of the Lord" when men like Saul shall be called to account for their internal mental attitudes, and will answer for what they have said in their hearts.

Psa 10:14 But You do see trouble and grief. You consider it to take it into Your hand to deal with. You help the victim and the fatherless- As discussed on :1, David in the course of this prayer persuades himself of the final truth- that there will indeed be a future day of judgment, and God is right now 'considering' or gathering evidence, seeing all the trouble and grief; and finally He will save the victims.

Psa 10:15 Break the arm of the wicked, as for the evil man, seek out his wickedness until You find none- Whatever the primary reference of this Psalm, it is a reworking of David's feelings when persecuted by Saul and likewise on the run from him. For circumstances repeat in our lives, and it would be natural for David to reconsider Psalms written at the time of one exile and apply them to another, just as these Psalms were also used for others in their times of exile. "Wickedness" is the word used about Saul's persecution in 1 Sam. 24:13. As Saul had 'sought out' David in persecuting him, so David asks God to seek out Saul. See on :2. Sin must be dealt with, and only in eternal death will it finally be sought for and not found- unless it is dealt with now by repentance and Divine covering. This is a powerful argument that the wages of sin is indeed death (Rom. 6:23), rather than anything else, such as eternal punishment.

Psa 10:16 Yahweh is King forever and ever! The nations will perish out of His land- David the king repeatedly calls God his "king". His exaltation didn't lead him to pride, as he was always under the deep impression that he was not the ultimate king (Ps. 5:2; 10:16; 29:10; 44:4; 47:6).

Psa 10:17 Yahweh, You have heard the desire of the humble. You will prepare their heart. You will cause Your ear to hear- Often, “desire” is seen by God as prayer (Ps. 10:17; 21:2; 27:4; 59:10; 92:11; 140:8; 145:19; Mt. 18:32; Rom. 10:1; 1 Jn. 5:15). God interprets that inner desire as prayer, even if it is not articulated in specific requests. And His response is to "prepare their heart". This is evidence enough that God works directly upon the human heart and psychology, which He does today through the work of His Spirit upon the human spirit. For it is men who must prepare their heart in prayer and relationship toward God (s.w. 2 Chron. 12:14; Job 11:13; Ps. 7:9). But God can also do this for the humble. Hence David later asks God to create in him a 'prepared' heart (s.w.

Ps. 51:10). And God heard; for the same phrase is used of how God 'prepared' or (AV) "fixed" his heart (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7). In allusion to this, Solomon was to later reflect that God can direct or 'prepare' (s.w.) the heart of man, even if he is thinking to direct his steps elsewhere (Prov. 16:9).

Psa 10:18 to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that man who is of the dust may terrify no more- In God's judgment of men it will be made apparent that it was so inappropriate for man who is made of dust to oppress his fellows (Ps. 10:18 RV). Respect of others is sorely lacking in our selfish natures. But the more we reflect upon our own insignificance, as creatures of dust, the more we will see that abuse of others in any form is inappropriate. And we don't have to wait till judgment day to perceive this- for we know the mortality and constitution of man from basic Bible teaching. This link between our mortality and humility is brought out in Paul's description of our present state as being "the body of our humiliation" (Phil. 3:21 RV). Believing we are mortal ought to be a humbling thing.

PSALMS CHAPTER 11

Psa 11:1 For the Chief Musician. By David.
In Yahweh I take refuge- The idea is that God was David's city of refuge. These cities were for those who needed to flee when being chased by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:26). The imagery is very appropriate to David when fleeing from Saul and Absalom. David's constant meditation upon God's law would have included the sections about the cities of refuge; he realized that actually no such city was available for him, but the spirit of the law led him to reflect that Yahweh was his refuge, wherever he was. David tends to open wilderness Psalms with this reflection, just as we may tend to begin prayers with the same opening phrase and thoughts (Ps. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1).

How can you say to my soul, Flee as a bird to Your mountain!- David likens himself to a bird whose only option is to flee (1 Sam. 26:20), and such birds lived in the mountains / hill country where David was driven (1 Sam. 23:14; 26:1). David was indeed going to flee- but to God, and not simply acting like a scared man who has to flee someplace else.

Psa 11:2 For, behold, the wicked bend their bows and set their arrows on the strings, that they may shoot in darkness at the upright in heart- David is seeing himself and the righteous as Job, and he here continues that connection, seeing that Job is described

likewise as "upright in heart" (Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

Psa 11:3 If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?- The GNB understands :1-3 as a quotation from the words said to David: "How foolish of you to say to me, "Fly away like a bird to the mountains, because the wicked have drawn their bows and aimed their arrows to shoot from the shadows at good people. There is nothing a good person can do when everything falls apart"". "Foundations" is literally 'what has been appointed or set'. David's enemies had been set under his feet (s.w. Ps. 8:6; 110:1 and often in the Psalms). What God had appointed had not been destroyed, and could not be. So David was not going to respond to his distress in a secular way, but to flee to God, trusting He would maintain His own foundation purpose for David and the righteous.

Psa 11:4 Yahweh is in His holy temple. Yahweh is on His throne in heaven- In many verses in the Psalms, David expresses his understanding that God's temple is in Heaven (e.g. Ps. 11:4); both David and Solomon recognized that God cannot be confined to a physical house, seeing that even the heavens cannot contain Him (2 Chron. 6:18). But David seems to depart from this understanding in his final obsession for building God a physical temple.

His eyes observe, His eyes examine the children of men- The idea is of squinting. This is how closely God was watching the entire situation between Saul and David, and therefore David didn't need to accept the secular advice of :1-3. See on :5.

Psa 11:5 Yahweh examines the righteous, but the wicked and him who loves violence His soul hates- Ps. 11:4,5 describes the scene in the court of Heaven: "The Lord's throne is in Heaven (mirrored by the Mighty Angel of Israel being enthroned over the Mercy Seat in the temple): His eyes (Angels) behold, His eyelids try, the children of men. The Lord trieth the righteous (who are in His presence by their Angel), but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul hateth" (AV).

Psa 11:6 On the wicked He will rain blazing coals; fire, sulphur, and scorching wind shall

be the portion of their cup- This is the language of the judgment of Sodom. David expected a day to come when God would openly intervene in human affairs after the pattern of how He had done at the time of Sodom; and the wicked amongst Israel would be destroyed at the same time as the world generally is judged. This would imply their resurrection to face that judgment. We note that the cup is used as a symbol of judgment; and thus the cup of blessing which we bless at the breaking of bread is a double symbol. We drink it either to our blessing, or to our condemnation. There is no middle path.

Psa 11:7 For Yahweh is righteous, He loves righteousness. The upright shall see His face- Again David takes comfort in the fact that although he must flee his enemies (see on :1), there will come a day of final judgment. And at that time, David would see God's face. He perhaps learned this from Job's conclusions in Job 19:27- remember that Job and the Pentateuch were likely the only extant scriptures at David's time. His idea of salvation was to see God's face; God again is presented as having literal, personal existence. The idea of seeing God's face is what Job and David fell back upon in times of despair. This is the ultimate light at the end of life's dark tunnel, and in Revelation the Bible concludes with this same picture.

PSALMS CHAPTER 12

Psa 12:1 For the Chief Musician; upon an eight-stringed lyre. A Psalm of David. Help, Yahweh; for the Godly man is fading away, the faithful fail from among the children of men- "Him who is Godly" is a term he has used about himself in his marvel at God's grace to him at the time of the sin with Bathsheba, believing that his trust in God's grace and justification by that grace was to be the pattern for all who afterward would be "Godly" (Ps. 32:6). Here he seems to lament that few were following in that path. It has perhaps always been a sense of the righteous that they are in a decreasing minority; the same words are found on Micah's lips (Mic. 7:2). And yet as noted on :2, these words are quoted in Romans 3 and applied to all men. That is God's answer to those who complain that fewer and fewer righteous remain- they too are not righteous and are saved by grace. We note from the connection with Ps. 32:6 that being "Godly" was not the same as being spotlessly pious in a religious sense. The Hebrew "chasiyd" translated "Godly" is related to "chesed", the word for grace. It is the word used in Ps. 18:25 "With the merciful / gracious You will show Yourself gracious". Tragically the word was hijacked by religious Jews and came to refer to the religious pious and hypocritical 'Hasidim'. But the original idea was one who was characterized by grace, having experienced Divine grace.

But "the faithful" can be understood as 'the truthful', and the next verses go on to lament how untruth is so endemic in human society. As children we naively think we are being told the truth by everyone, that things are as they look… and in fact this assumption continues throughout human life. It is only those born of the Spirit who perceive that in fact everyone is a liar (:2).

Psa 12:2 Everyone lies to his neighbour, they speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart- Untruth is related to flattery. People are dishonest and hypocritical because they want to flatter others and thereby make themselves look better. And these verses are quoted in Rom. 3 about every man. We need to humbly accept every man does this or has done it, and that includes us. David asks for "help" (:1) from this situation, using the word *yasha*, salvation, related to Yahoshua- Jesus. In the end, only He can save us from our own miserable situation and society. David is very critical of all his enemies, especially Saul. He sets up a contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous. But his attitude changed somewhat after his sin with Bathsheba, in connection with which he did much of what he accused Saul of, not least willfully exposing Uriah to an ambush so he would be murdered. Therefore Rom. 3:10-14 alludes to Ps. 12 (from the LXX) and applies it to all men, the righteous included; leading to the conclusion that we are only made righteous by grace through faith.

Psa 12:3 May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks great things- These "flattering lips" may have been of false prophets, for the phrase is used in this connection elsewhere (Is. 30:10). Probably Saul had false prophets who assured him that he was in fact doing the right things. For kings of those times usually had their entourage of such prophets. See on :8. Note the parallel between flattery and "great things", AV "proud things". Flattery appeals to the latent tendency to pride in the recipient of the flattery. We can thus safely deduce that humility preserves us from the danger of being flattered.

Psa 12:4 who have said, With our tongue we will prevail. Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?- This great confidence in their words may be because they were false prophets, claiming they were inspired by God; see on :3. One unusual, indeed unique, claim of Yahweh upon men was that their words and thoughts were culpable. Other gods focused upon external behaviours and ritualism. Just as the false gods of our age do likewise. Hos. 14:2 speaks of our lips being offered as calves of sacrifice to our God. Our words are so critically important, and they will influence our eternal destiny (Mt. 12:37). "Who is lord over us?" reflects man's vain desire for freedom, to be without any overlord or moral restraint. "The glorious liberty of God's dear children" will only come if now we change masters, becoming slaves of God rather than slaves of self. For now, we change masters.

Psa 12:5 Because of the oppression of the weak and because of the groaning of the needy, I will now arise, says Yahweh; I will set him in safety from those who malign him- David's prayer of :1-4 now appears to be interrupted by God's word directly to him, assuring David that He is going to arise in judgment. Or we can understand "I will now arise" as meaning that when the groaning of the weak and needy is as it were loud enough, when they are oppressed enough, God will then "now" arise and save them. God's arising is surely ultimately a reference to the Lord's second coming. The implication is therefore that there will be intense oppression of the weak and needy, and they will cry to Him so strongly that He 'arises'. And yet we are also to see that God will arise 'simply' because of the words of others who "malign" and thereby so hurt His people. "Malign" is Heb. 'to puff at', 'to blow air at', alluding to how words are merely air. But they cause "groaning", and God feels the pain of words upon His people and will "arise", visibly intervene, because of this.

Psa 12:6 The words of Yahweh are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times- I suggested on :5 that David has been praying in :1-4 and then in :5 God speaks directly to him, giving him a prophetic word assuring him of vindication. And now in the rest of the prayer (:6-8), David rejoices in those words of :5, although his comment upon the nature of God's words is also globally true. "Flawless" is the usual word for "pure". Yahweh's words are being contrasted with the impure words of the wicked, which have been the burden of David's complaint so far. Indeed, his complaint has specifically been about the untruthfulness of human words that pervades society. And her perceives the utter contrast with God's words of ultimate truth. This is why continued reading of God's words and living in an environment of them is so helpful- it in turn leads us into an environment of truth telling and realism.

We ask, however, how God's true words can be refined or purged / tested seven times. If God's word is true from the beginning, how can it be purged or demonstrated genuine through a furnace? The idea may be that the utter truth of God's word is proven true to us by our experience of them in the furnace of our affliction. Which would fit the context of David's original experience in this Psalm. It is not that there were originally impurities in God's word that had to be purified. Rather is the idea surely that as we pass through the fire of affliction, the purity of God's word of promise becomes the more intensely apparent to us. For it is man who is tried as silver is tried (Ps. 66:10 "You have tried us, as silver is tried"). "The word of the Lord is tried / tested / proved right" in our experience (Ps. 18:30).

Psa 12:7 You will keep them, Yahweh. You will preserve them from this generation forever- David appears to see the righteous in Israel at his time as a minority, persecuted

by "this generation", society as a whole at the time. It may seem at times impossible to be uninfluenced by society; but although the wicked walk everywhere glorifying what is vile (:8), yet God will keep us from this generation. "Forever" could mean that this promise is true in every generation. We are often told to make our own effort to keep / preserve God's law, to "keep your tongue from evil" (Ps. 34:13), "I will keep my mouth with a bridle" (Ps. 39:1). But the same word is used of God's 'keeping' of man spiritually; if we keep our tongue from evil, then God will "keep the door of my lips" (Ps. 141:3). Our conscious attempts to keep His way will be matched by His keeping of us in that way. "Keep your heart" (Prov. 4:23) and God will keep our heart through the work of His Spirit. For He keeps and waters His vineyard "every moment… night and day" (Is. 27:3), "keeping" us as the apple of His eye if we "keep" His covenant (Dt. 32:10; 33:9).

Psa 12:8 The wicked walk on every side, when what is vile is exalted among the sons of men- "Vile" is a word usually associated with idolatry, the pervasive weakness of Israel in every generation. It would seem that the false prophets of Saul (see on :3) were also associated with idolatry, and this was behind their persecution of Samuel and David. See on Ps. 16:4.

PSALMS CHAPTER 13

Psa 13:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.
How long, Yahweh? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?- By the end of the Psalm, David is rejoicing (:5,6). This doesn't have to mean that half way through the prayer, an answer came. Rather is this absolutely true to the experience of prayerful men. We begin prayer in desperation, but in the course of that prayer we are persuaded of God's action, and conclude the prayer in grateful peace with Him. "How long?" is the cry of the exiles, so the Psalm was likely reused in their context.

Psa 13:2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart every day? How long shall my enemy triumph over me?-

'Taking counsel in our own soul' is typical depressive human response (Ps. 13:2). We think our best and only counsellor is ourselves, in our self talk, we ask ourselves the questions and get often wrong answers. The spiritual mind takes counsel in God; David speaks in Ps. 119:24 of God's words being his counsellor, and describes God's words as His "counsel". If those words are in our hearts, then that will be the response we get. Otherwise we are mired within ourselves, bogged down with endless self talk and introspection which leads to no good answer, and often to very contorted and wrong self

advice. "There are many advices [Heb.] in a man's heart; but the counsel of Yahweh shall stand" (Prov. 19:21). Job 18:7 says that a man's "own counsel [s.w.] shall cast him down". God's comment on Job is that he had "darkened [God's] counsel by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). Job did this by doing what David is here tempted to do, taking counsel in his own soul. Job had refused the "counsel" of the friends, which was wrong; but had turned into himself for counsel and thus had "darkened" or obscured the light of God's counsel. Job agrees with this when he confesses that indeed he has hidden, or hidden himself, from [God's] counsel, and he was without knowledge. That is my paraphrase of the difficult Hebrew of Job 42:3: "Who is / how is he that hides counsel without knowledge. Therefore have I uttered that I understood not".

We must factor in Ps. 16:7 "I will bless Yahweh, who has given me counsel. Yes, my heart instructs me in the night seasons". In Ps. 13:2, David took counsel with his own soul and ended up depressed, because he had not listened to God's counsels in His word. In Ps. 16:7, David seems to have matured. For now he feels that the self talk of the spiritually minded person becomes effectively God advising them.

"My enemy" is clearly Saul (1 Sam. 18:29; 19:17). The David who had once triumphed over his enemy Goliath now felt that Saul was triumphing over him. This, in the bigger Divine picture, may have been to keep David from pride at the amazing victory and triumph. David was indeed to triumph / be exalted over Saul (Ps. 18:48), but he saw it as God triumphing / being exalted (Ps. 18:46). His praise Psalms are full of this word and idea- of the exaltation of God (Ps. 57:5,11) and not himself.

Psa 13:3 Look, and answer me, Yahweh my God. Give light to my eyes, lest I sleep in death- David was persuaded that he would one day be slain by Saul (1 Sam. 27:1), yet here in Ps. 13:3 and often in the Psalms he persuades himself, in the course of the same prayer, that in fact God will save him and keep His promise to make him king in Saul's place. By the end of the prayer, David is in quite another mood. But there is no record of any revelation to him during the prayer. He has asked that God "look" upon him… and surely as his prayer progressed, he realized that of course God sees and knows all things, and was indeed looking at him.

Psa 13:4 lest my enemy say, I have prevailed against him; lest my adversaries rejoice when I fall- Typical of the shame-based mentality in which he lived, David seems to fear more than death the thought that his enemies would rejoice over his dead body. Saul sought to "prevail against him" (Ps. 13:4), but Saul used the same word in telling David (in a rare moment of reality and humility) that he knew that David would prevail against *him* (1 Sam. 26:25). Those flash moments of reality and humility which Saul had are to be our warning. The Psalms condemn him as generally proud. We must live life in a spirit of humility, rather than just experiencing a few flash moments of it.

Psa 13:5 But I trust in Your grace. My heart rejoices in Your salvation- As explained on :1, David rallies himself to the joy which comes from faith in grace. Perhaps there was a significant gap in his prayer between verses 4 and 5. He may have in view final salvation. For he didn't ultimately know whether God was going to save him out of his immediate crisis; but he was assured that God would finally save him eternally. And it is that which gave him perspective and peace. He grasped the link between grace and salvation, in an almost Pauline sense. I testify to the same experiences, praying to God as every man does when facing extreme danger, and during the prayer becoming convinced that I shall live eternally, I shall be saved. And that puts into context the immediate crisis. This is what David was experiencing here.

Psa 13:6 I will sing to Yahweh, because He has been good to me- Like us, our faith that God will finally come through for us *in the future* should give us joy *now*. This faith in God finally 'being good' to David led him to be the same to Saul- the word is used of how David was 'good' rather than evil to Saul, not slaying him when he had the opportunity (1 Sam. 24:17). Although quite possibly David was also looking back in his life to all the times God had historically been good to him, and took them as an encouragement that He would again be good to him and save him.

PSALMS CHAPTER 14

Psa 14:1 For the Chief Musician. By David- A comparison of Psalms 14 and 53 illustrate the process of re-writing at Hezekiah's time. These Psalms are both "A Psalm of David", and are virtually identical apart from Ps. 53:5 adding: "There were they in great fear, where no fear was; For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: Thou hast put them to shame, because God hath rejected them". This surely alludes to the Assyrian army encamped against Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:1), put into fear by the Angels, and returning "with shame of face to his own land" (2 Chron. 32:21). Yet both Psalms conclude with a verse which connects with the exiles in Babylonian captivity: "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad". So it would appear that the initial Psalm was indeed written by David; the version of Ps. 14 which is now Ps. 53 was added to and adapted in Hezekiah's time (Prov. 25:1), and both versions had a final verse added to them during the exile.

The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt. They have done

abominable works. There is none who does good- It should be noted that Rom. 3:13-18 are quoting from the Septuagint of Psalm 14- but those verses aren't found in the Hebrew text. Time and again the inspired New Testament writers quote from the LXX rather than the Hebrew Masoretic text, often preferring the LXX over the MT, and in this case accepting the LXX addition of verses which the MT omits. It's hard to gauge the wider significance of this. The LXX versions of the genealogies in Genesis would, e.g., not support the contention that the Genesis 1 creation occurred 4000 years before the birth of Christ. The quotation in Rom. 3:10 from Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3 is about the fools who say in their heart that there is no God. Yet Paul applies this to every one of us, himself included. What he's doing here is similar to what he does at the end of Romans 1- he speaks of the grossest sins such as homosexual perversion and reasons that we are all in essence guilty and condemned as serious sinners before God. Here he quotes passages which speak of effective atheism and applies them to us all, himself included- even though atheism was abhorrent to the Jews, and Paul may have seemed the last person to be an atheist. But the 'atheism' of Ps. 14:1 occurs within the psychological thought processes of the human mind- the fool says in his heart that there is no God. In the context of Romans, Paul is arguing that we call God a liar when we disbelieve His offer of justification and salvation. To deny this is to effectively say in our hearts that there is no God. If God is, then He is a Saviour God. To deny that He will save me is effectively to say He doesn't exist; for a God who won't save me may as well not exist. Far too many people claim some level of belief in God's existence, but in their hearts deny Him, in that they personally doubt whether His promised salvation is really true for me.

The denial of God need not refer to atheism as we understand it; for atheism was almost unheard of in David's time. Rather does it refer to the inner mentality which acts as if there is no God. The same phrase is used in Ps. 14:1, and the Targum on that verse is 'There is no government of God in the earth'. God may exist theoretically, but is not a factor in human life. And we too can be effective atheists in this sense. "There is" has been added by the translators. The fool says "no God" in his heart. But that is how God interprets man's self talk; for those two words aren't said consciously by men. We marvel that the God who knows every human thought in advance also knows and perceives the effective implication of those thoughts. This is an example of where God reads our thoughts and actions for what they effectively mean to Him. "The wicked has no room in his thoughts for God" (Ps. 10:4). "They say, how does God know?" (Ps. 73:11). "They say in their heart, Yahweh will not do good neither will He do evil" (Zeph. 1:12). "They have denied Yahweh and said, It is not He" (Jer. 5:12). "They refused to have God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28).

Psa 14:2 Yahweh looked down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there were

any who understood, who sought after God- David felt that no one else understood (Ps. 14:2, a wilderness psalm) or was really seeking towards God as he was doing (Ps. 27:4,8). The Hebrew for "understand" here is that translated "wise" concerning David in 1 Sam. 18. But there appears an allusion to God's coming down to view Sodom and investigate, as it were, whether they had done according to the cry which came to Him. David was expecting God's intervention in judgment to be similar to that of His judgment upon Sodom- through direct, supernatural involvement. Effectively, David was looking ahead to the day of final judgment at the Lord's return.

David clearly assumed that although this was generally the case, he and the righteous did understand and seek after God. But as noted on :1, Paul sees David as being overly generous to himself, and "concludes all under sin", including the righteous. We note that understanding God is paralleled with seeking after Him. Nobody arrives at 100% understanding of God; the true understanding is to have a heart which seeks to understand Him. The extent of God's knowledge is amazing. He sees every man's downsitting and uprising, and sees the thoughts of every man before he has them (Ps. 139). He "sees all the sons of men... He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth" (Ps. 33:13,14). Our genuine interest in Him must be a bright light in the gross darkness of what He sees. On one hand we can read these verses as God's opinion of literally every human being. But :4 speaks of these sinful masses eating up "My people", as if in fact the generalized statements concern the unbelieving world. But Paul interprets these words further, applying them to literally all of us.

Psa 14:3 They have all gone aside. They have together become corrupt. There is none who does good, no, not one- David is very critical of all his enemies, especially Saul. He sets up a contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous. But his attitude changed somewhat after his sin with Bathsheba, in connection with which he did much of what he accused Saul of, not least willfully exposing Uriah to an ambush so he would be murdered. Therefore Rom. 3:10-14 alludes to Ps. 14 (from the LXX) and applies it to all men, the righteous included; leading to the conclusion that we are only made righteous by grace through faith.

David often describes himself as "upright in heart" just as Job was (s.w. Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). But he sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

Psa 14:4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and don't call on Yahweh?- "Knowledge" is used here in the Hebraic sense of relationship. The sinners had no relationship with God; the idea is not so much that they had the wrong theological knowledge of God, but rather that they lacked relationship with Him, what the New Testament would simply call "the Spirit". The eating up of "my people", Israel, could refer to the eating up / devouring of the men of Saul during the civil war (2 Sam. 18:8). Yet David is mature enough to see Saul's men as all the same "my people", members of the same people of God.

Psa 14:5 There they were in great fear because God is in the generation of the righteous- The Hebrew is difficult, and may be David looking ahead to the final day of justice: "But then they will be terrified, for God is with those who obey him" (GNB).

Psa 14:6 You frustrate the plan of the poor, because Yahweh is his refuge- Or, "but the LORD is their protection" (GNB). In this case we see that we "the poor" do have our plans frustrated by bullies and those more powerful than us, in whatever sense. But Yahweh is our refuge, not unaware of the situations, and we shall be finally justified and saved by grace.

Psa 14:7 Oh that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When Yahweh restores the fortunes of His people, then Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad- Many NT passages mix a number of OT passages in one 'quotation'; e.g. "The deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom. 11:26) is a conflated quotation of Ps. 14:7; 53:6 and Is. 59:20. And Heb. 13:5 combines quotes from Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5 and Dt. 31:16. Heb. 13:5 doesn't quote any of them exactly, but mixes them together. This Psalm which was clearly David's originally is now reapplied, under inspiration, to the desire for the exiles' fortunes to be revived.

PSALMS CHAPTER 15

Psa 15:1 A Psalm by David.
Yahweh, who shall dwell in Your sanctuary? Who shall live on Your holy hill?- Perhaps this was written before David took the hill of Zion from the Jebusites. He felt they shouldn't be living there because of how they lived so immorally; and was eager to make it his own inheritance by conquest. And it seems from Ps. 16:5,6 that David considered Zion his personal inheritance where he was to live (see on Ps. 17:14). The priests didn't

live in the sanctuary, indeed the High Priest could only enter the most holy place briefly once / year. David seems to have had insight into the fact that ultimately that most holy place would be opened and the "blameless" (:2) would be able to not only enter it but live there permanently. These are the very ideas developed in Hebrews, developing the implications of how the Lord had torn down the veil through His death- that we might enter in and dwell there in God's presence and fellowship.

Literally, "Who shall dwell in Your tent?", as if worshippers are invited to God's home to stay as guests, but they end up permanently dwelling there. Hence Ps. 61:4 "I will dwell in Your tent forever". The tendency was for the people of Jerusalem to think that God lived amongst them (Mic. 3:11; Is. 48:2). But in fact, the essence of abiding with God is that we dwell in His home. It has been suggested that this Psalm was used as the worshippers came before Yahweh at the feasts, specifically to the sanctuary on Mount Zion. But the question posed is not who can attend the feasts, but who shall go further and dwell permanently in the tent of meeting with God. Those who came to the feasts at best three times a year and just for a few days, were to see this as looking forward to actually settling and dwelling on Mount Zion and permanently living in God's tent- even more intimately than the priests or even the High Priest on the day of Atonement. What was possible for the priests for a few moments or hours was to be the permanent experience of all believers. Just as we may reflect that the intense feelings of spirituality and fellowship experienced at church gatherings are but a foretaste of the eternal felicity and spirituality of God's Kingdom.

Psa 15:2 He who walks blamelessly, does what is right-

This Psalm states that only those who do the right things and don't do wrong things can dwell in Yahweh's tent and hill. David on one hand is to be commended for seeing that behaviour and the state of the heart is the qualification for coming close to God- rather than performing entrance rituals or ancestry, i.e. being a Levite. But the truth is that it is God who causes people to approach unto Him, and that 'causing' is all of His grace: "Their prince shall be of themselves, and their ruler shall proceed from their midst; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach to Me: for who is he who has had boldness to approach to Me? says Yahweh" (Jer. 30:21). "Even him whom He shall choose, He will cause to come unto Him" (Num. 16:5). Israel had earlier felt that God's moral requirements for coming near Him were too high for any man: "Everyone who comes near to the tent of Yahweh dies! Will we all perish?" (Num. 17:13). Putting these passages together, it is indeed the case that the moral requirements for approaching Yahweh are too great. No man of himself has that "boldness to approach to Me". But He does *cause* men to approach Him. And He brings them close, by grace. David is still at the point of thinking that steel willed obedience to God's ways is the sole requirement for drawing near to God. Heb. 10:19-22 takes the idea further- only through the Lord's blood can the human conscience be purged of sin, and thus we can not only approach

but approach boldly into the most holy place: "boldness to enter into the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water". The implication is that seeing all men are sinners, in fact no man can approach God, let alone boldly, let alone dwell permanently in His presence, as David suggests we can. Only those covered by forgiveness and grace- and for us, the Lord's blood- can do so. David's idea is far less mature- he thinks that by doing good deeds and avoiding sin we can achieve this. In reality nobody ever achieved it by following David's stipulations here. The argument of Hebrews is that only now, in Christ, is man able to confidently enter the Holy Place. It is quite possible that this is the Spirit's answer to David's immature position in Psalms 15 and 24. Ps. 24 contains similar ideas: "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Ps. 24:4). Hebrews is saying that clean hands and heart are only possible through the cleansing work of the Lord's blood. Psalm 24 continues: "He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation" (Ps. 24:5). Paul is clear that the blessing of righteousness can only come by grace through faith in the Lord's work. Not by having a supposedly pure heart. Is. 33:14-17 has the same style of asking the double question 'Who can enter / fellowship with God?', conditions given similar to those in Psalms 15 and 24, and then blessings of fellowship with God pronounced: "Who among us can live with the devouring fire? Who among us can live with everlasting burning [referring to the shekinah glory of God burning in the sanctuary]? He who walks righteously, and speaks blamelessly; he who despises the gain of oppressions, who gestures with his hands, refusing to take a bribe, who stops his ears from hearing of blood, and shuts his eyes from looking at evil- he will dwell on high… Your eyes will see the king in His beauty, they will see the land that is distant". So if, as some claim, these psalms were used as an entrance liturgy for entry into the temple- then David was in a sense misleading subsequent generations by predicating dwelling with God upon personal righteousness and blameless thinking and living. They would have led to the well attested practice of priests standing at the temple gates and assessing the worthiness of worshippers by posing questions to those seeking entrance. Possibly this is alluded to in Am. 5:10: "They hate him who reproves in the gate and they abhor him who speaks truthfully / honestly [an allusion to Ps. 15:2 "he who speaks truth"]". And possibly this was what Eli was doing as he interviewed Hannah at the entrance to the sanctuary. It is also attested that the worshippers stood outside the temple gates and had to ask: “Who is worthy to enter the temple?”. The priests, from within, then responded to them by reciting Psalms 15 and 24, as conditions of entrance. The ten entry requirements of Ps. 15 were recited, using the ten fingers of the human hands. And who in all honesty could have said "Yes"

to having a clean heart and pure hands, "he whose walk is blameless" (Ps. 15:2), without faith in the Lord's blood? At best this bred hypocrisy.

David at this stage had a far too simplistic view of spirituality, dividing men into the sinners and the perfect. He speaks of "those whose ways are blameless… he who walks blamelessly" (Ps. 119:1; 15:2). He considered that he was "blameless": "I was also blameless before Him… I will be careful to live a blameless life… he who walks in a perfect way will serve me" (Ps. 18:23; 101:2,6), whereas in his more honest moments in Ps. 119 he recognizes he had gone astray from God even in his younger life. Yet he confidently asks God to judge him according to his [supposed] integrity (Ps. 7:8; 26:1,11). Paul shows a far greater realism and maturity in Romans 7. David often states that the righteous will never be moved. This was part of his too simplistic division of men into super righteous or super evil, cowboys or Indians. He himself was "moved" by the events surrounding his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). In the bigger picture, this was God's attempt to get him to a greater maturity and realism.

We wonder at David's possible arrogance in assuming that he or any man can walk blamelessly. Only the Lord Jesus fits this. And yet this is the phrase used in God's command to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:1). It was only possible for Abraham to do so by his faith in imputed righteousness, by grace through faith. But it's questionable as to whether David at this point realized that; he had to learn it through reflection upon the wonder of how God had counted him righteous after the sin with Bathsheba.

And speaks truth in his heart- David is to be commended for so often perceiving the importance of internal spiritual mindedness, at a time when religion was perceived merely as ritualism and externalities. It is part of being human that we speak to ourselves, and often our self talk can be fantasy / imagination about things which are not true. But this will lead to doing what is not right, David reasons. To speak the truth in our hearts all the time is perhaps the litmus test of our spiritual mindedness. See on Ps. 16:2.

Speaking truthfully in our heart leads directly on to not slandering with our tongue (:3). In reality, this is how slander begins: the slanderer nurses untruthful narratives about a person and keeps speaking them in their self talk. And those narratives expand. And out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Those internal false narratives about another are then spoken out as words of slander.

Psa 15:3 he who doesn't slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his friend, nor casts slurs against his fellow man- This offers commentary upon gossip in relation to our "neighbour": "He that… speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor receiveth / endureth a reproach against his neighbour" (Ps. 15:2,3 AVmg.). To gossip / backbite is paralleled with receiving gossip. To

listen to it and accept it is as bad as to create it in the first place. The antidote is to have a mind that thinks of those things which “are true… lovely… of good report”. We live in a world of conscious untruth and half truth. In our unshareable self, our inner thoughts and musings, let us seek to have only that which is *true* passing through our meditations. And then we will not want to receive a gossip against our brother, indeed by implication we will not ‘endure’ it, we will tell the gossiper to cease, and certainly not act upon it. AV "nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour" is a fair translation. In which case the idea is that we are not to 'take up' gossip with our neighbour, but treat it as gossip.

Psa 15:4 in whose eyes a vile man is despised, but who respects those who fear Yahweh-

The psalm is a chiasm, and this verse is actually the centre of it. As if he [wrongly?] sees the despising of those whom God refuses as the apex of spirituality. As discussed on :2, David is far too judgmental. He divides men into those who are "reprobate" ["vile"] and those who fear Yahweh. He is speaking within the context of Israel, who were all God's people. The reality is that man is on a journey, and at times acts in "reprobate" way and at times fears God. And the heart position of man may be one way, but his external behaviour another way. David here assumes that he can decide who is "reprobate" and who fears Yahweh. But that decision is only ultimately made by God, and will be made on the basis of a man's fully lived life. Only in the Kingdom age will "the vile no longer be called liberal" (Is. 32:5). "Reprobate silver shall men call them, because Yahweh has rejected them" (Jer. 6:30). Only if God rejects someone can we call them "reprobate". And that will only be after judgment day. This is why there will be a public element to judgment- so that we enter eternity understanding each other. We cannot come to that understanding by our own unaided judgment. David was judging men whilst they were still alive, unaware of how they might later change. He offers few appeals for repentance to men; his Psalms tend to simply categorize men as they are right now, in his opinion.

However the word translated "vile" is that rendered "rejected" about God's rejection of David's older brother and also Saul (1 Sam. 15:23,26; 16:1,7). David speaks of "*a* vile / rejected man" rather than *the* vile / rejected man, so he has talking in general terms. But surely he has Saul specifically in mind. And he urges men to do as he does, and 'despise' him. We wonder therefore to what degree his lament over Saul was political and theatrical, if in fact he so despised Saul. But with Saul, it was not over until it was over. While there's life there's hope, spiritually. We may despise those whom God has finally rejected- but only after they are dead, and if we know from God's word that they are indeed rejected. God "rejected" [s.w. "[made] vile"] all the seed of Israel (2 Kings 17:20; 23:27; Ps. 78:59) but still loves them with an everlasting love, and surely doesn't despise those He rejects; and He goes on to say that this 'rejection' had only been

temporary (s.w. Is. 41:9 "I have chosen you and not cast you away / despised", also Jer. 31:37; 33:24,26). David claims that God "despises" people (Ps. 53:5). But God doesn't despise any (Job 36:5). Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "despised" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

He who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and doesn't change- Ps. 15:4, in evident allusion to Jephthah, describes those who will attain the Kingdom as fearing Yahweh, and swearing to their own hurt and changing not. Some may swear and change and attain the Kingdom; but we are invited to follow Jephthah to the highest level. The principle of Jephthah's vow is seen in many other Bible characters.

Psa 15:5 he who doesn't lend out his money for usury, nor take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be shaken- This appears to be commentary upon the state of affairs under Saul's kingship; and therefore his kingdom and dynasty was "shaken" and removed. Bribing judges and lending money for interest were only possible for the wealthy. This leads us to think, as discussed on :4, that although David speaks in general terms of the man who will be accepted by God, he seems to have an agenda of proving that therefore some specific wealthy, powerful individuals like Saul will not therefore be accepted by God. This is an inappropriate pre-judgment of men. And yet, on the other side of his character, David did have great love and grace toward Saul. In this he presents as so realistic. We have the possibility to show love and hate, grace and condemnation, to the same person at pretty much the same time.

At this point, David prides himself for not doing sins which actually he had little chance to commit anyway. For David whilst on the run from Saul was poor, so he had no opportunity to bribe judges nor lend money for interest. He states that he who refrains

from doing these things "shall never be shaken". But he later admits that he had wrongly said "I shall never be shaken" (Ps. 30:6), and at the time of his sin with Bathsheba he openly admits that he was "shaken" (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). So to never slip / be shaken is unrealistic, just as is the attainment of the requirements for this.

PSALMS CHAPTER 16

Psa 16:1 A Poem by David.
Preserve me, God, for in You do I take refuge- The idea is that God was David's city of refuge. These cities were for those who needed to flee when being chased by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:26). The imagery is very appropriate to David when fleeing from Saul and Absalom. David's constant meditation upon God's law would have included the sections about the cities of refuge; he realized that actually no such city was available for him, but the spirit of the law led him to reflect that Yahweh was his refuge, wherever he was. David tends to open wilderness Psalms with this reflection, just as we may tend to begin prayers with the same opening phrase and thoughts (Ps. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1).

Psa 16:2 My soul, you have said to Yahweh, You are my Lord. Apart from You I have no good thing- David's addressing of his own "soul" or person is what we might call self talk. David is to be commended for so often perceiving the importance of internal spiritual mindedness, at a time when religion was perceived merely as ritualism and externalities. It is part of being human that we speak to ourselves, and often our self talk can be fantasy / imagination about things which are not true. But this will lead to doing what is not right, David reasons in Ps. 15:2. To speak the truth in our hearts all the time is perhaps the litmus test of our spiritual mindedness. See on :7; Ps. 15:2. The truth in David's heart was that God alone was his Lord, and he had nothing apart from Him.

"Apart from You I have no good thing" could be translated as LXX "You have no need of my goodness". Again we would then see David having a Pauline sense of salvation by grace.

Psa 16:3 As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight- David on the run from Saul was aware that there were others in the earth / land who were faithful, and Samuel was obviously one of them. "Excellent ones" is the usual term for nobles or rulers. And so it happened; those who took David's side in the wilderness years were the ones exalted to office in David's kingdom.

We should consider the NET translation of these verses: "As for God's chosen people who are in the land, and the leading officials I admired so much- their troubles multiply; they desire other gods. I will not pour out drink offerings of blood to their gods...".

Psa 16:4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied who give gifts to another god- This is further evidence that idolatry was being practiced at David's time (see on Ps. 12:8; 18:31). "Sorrows" is literally 'grief'. Sin doesn't bring joy but grief. Paul likewise speaks of those who wish to be wealthy piercing themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:10). And yet human sin grieves God, just as it grieves the sinner. The same word is used of how Israel "grieved Him in the desert" (Ps. 78:40), when they "vexed [s.w. grieved] His Holy Spirit" (Is. 63:10).

"Give gifts" is literally 'to haste after', as AV. Whenever Yahweh appeared not to have come through for them, they went running after other gods. This attitude is totally cut down once we accept that truly there is only one God, Yahweh, and everything else is fake.

Their drink offerings of blood I will not offer, nor take their names on my lips- David knew God well enough to act like the High Priest even when he was not a Levite (2 Sam.6:13-20; and 2 Sam.19:21 = Ex.22:28), he came to understand that God did not require sacrifices, he came to see that the Law was only a means to an end. David's sons, although not Levites, were "priests" (2 Sam. 8:18 RV). He could say that the Lord was his inheritance [a reference to how he as the youngest son had lost his?], and how he refuses to offer the sacrifices of wicked men for them (Ps. 16:4,5; 119:57)- speaking as if he was a Levite, a priest, when he was not

Psa 16:5 Yahweh assigned my portion and my cup, you made my inheritance secure- The allusion is to the promise to Aaron and the Levites: "I am thy part ["portion"] and thine inheritance among the children of Israel" (Num. 18:20). It follow straight on from David's reference (noted on :4) to how he acted as a priest, although from Judah. David is presenting himself as a king-priest, after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4). This is developed in the New Testament, presenting him as a type of the Lord Jesus in this respect. And the following verses in this Psalm are therefore applied to the Lord in the New Testament.

Psa 16:6 The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; truly I have a good inheritance- I noted on Ps. 15:1 that "Yahweh, who shall dwell in Your sanctuary? Who shall live on Your holy hill?" was written before David took the hill of Zion from the Jebusites. He felt they shouldn't be living there because of how they lived so immorally, and was eager to

make it his own inheritance by conquest; and it seems from Ps. 16:5,6 that David considered Zion his personal inheritance where he was to live. "The lines" refer to inheritance markers, and he considered Zion his great joy (Ps. 137:6), the ultimately pleasant place (Ps. 48:2).

There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other.

The word for "pleasant" is not very common, but is found again in :11, for the eternal "pleasures" David awaits at God's right hand. The pleasant place is therefore defined in :11 as being in God's presence, at God's right hand. It was eternal relationship with God which David saw as his inheritance, rather than anything material- although he did also have a strong liking of Zion, which he clearly considered his personal material inheritance.

Psa 16:7 I will bless Yahweh, who has given me counsel. Yes, my heart instructs me in the night seasons- The parallelism seems to suggest that David's heart and Yahweh's counsel were the same thing. Perhaps the idea is that the self talk of the spiritually minded person becomes effectively God advising them. See on :2. In Ps. 13:2, David took counsel with his own soul and ended up depressed, because he had not listened to God's counsels in His word. In Ps. 16:7, David seems to have matured. For now he feels that the self talk of the spiritually minded person becomes effectively God advising them.

Psa 16:8 I have set Yahweh always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved- The context is of David's desire to take the hill of Zion from the Jebusites, and for it to become his by conquest. He was confident he could do this in God's strength, and by saying "*I* shall not be moved" he identifies himself with Zion which "shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5). And indeed God came through for David. Because he put Yahweh "always before me", he was given mount Zion and established his kingdom there. This verse is then quoted about the Lord Jesus- who likewise shall establish His Kingdom upon David's throne in Zion (Lk. 1:34,35) because of His trust in Yahweh.

The Lord Jesus so struggled against sin, He so groaned beneath the mental weight of our sins, that it was *as if* He had been through everything David went through emotionally and spiritually. The main reason why there is so much deep personal detail about David is because we are intended to come to know him as a person, to enter into His mind- so that we can have a clearer picture of the mind and personality of the Lord Jesus. Likewise the book of Genesis covers about 2000 years of history, but almost a quarter of

the narrative concerns Joseph; surely because we are intended to enter into Joseph, and thereby into the mind of Christ. This is why the thoughts of David in Ps. 16:8-11 are quoted as being the very thoughts of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:27). David's ultimate success in taking the hill of Zion and establishing his Kingdom there was because God foresaw His own work through the Lord Jesus. And so Peter suggests that David appreciated this, and that his trust in Yahweh was in fact his trust in the future Messianic figure who would one day rule upon his throne, and be the basis of his salvation. And so Peter says that so Christ-centered was David's mind that he "foresaw (not "saw" - disproof of the pre-existence) the Lord (Jesus) always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved" (Acts 2:25). David was obsessed, mentally dominated, by his imagination of Christ, so much so that his imagination of his future descendant gave him practical strength in the trials of daily life. Small wonder we are bidden know and enter into David's mind.

We can also read the quotation of Psalm 16 in Acts 2:25-28 as David prophesying about the Lord Jesus. When he says "I have set Yahweh always before me...", Peter would be saying that David was prophesying the feelings and thoughts of the Lord Jesus. And yet clearly enough these are David's thoughts about himself. His 'prophesying' may have been totally unconscious; or it could be that he said, wrote and felt these things about himself, knowing he was experiencing the feelings which would be experienced in the future by his great descendant, the Lord Jesus. Or we may simply have here an example of the way the New Testament writers, like the rabbis in their commentaries, take Old Testament words apparently out of context and apply them in another.

David here protests that he shall not be moved, just as he does in many Psalms. But after his sin with Bathsheba, he looks back and reflects how "in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved" (Ps. 30:6), when in fact he did 'move' or slip. His foot slipped at the time of the Bathsheba sins, and his enemies rejoiced at the fact: "When my foot slips, they magnify themselves against me" (Ps. 38:16). He realized it was only by God's grace that he was now not slipping / being moved: "When I said, My foot slips; Your mercy / grace, O Yahweh, held me up" (Ps. 94:18).

Psa 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices. My body shall also lay to rest in hope- David was singing this Psalm ["my tongue rejoices"] because he believed that even if he didn't permanently inherit Zion in his lifetime, he would be resurrected to receive it, and to see his Davidic throne eternally established there; see on :5,6. It is therefore absolutely appropriate that these words are applied to the Lord Jesus. But as noted on :6, he also reflected that his ultimate inheritance and joy was at the future resurrection, eternally enjoying God's presence.

Psa 16:10 For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, neither will You allow Your holy one to

see corruption- The Greek word translated "leave" or "forsaken" occurs in Acts 2:27, where Peter quotes from Psalm 16 concerning how Christ was always aware of His own righteousness, and therefore confidently knew that God would not "*leave* (forsake) his soul in hell". In Ps. 22:1, our Lord was doubting these previous thoughts, as expressed here in Ps. 16:10. He then feared that God had forsaken / left Him, when previously He had been full of confidence that God would not do so, on account of His perfect character. Because Christ felt such identification with us, He carried our sins deeply, and perhaps for a moment He even doubted if He really was the Messiah. This is how deeply our Lord was our representative, this is how thoroughly He bare our own sins in His own body on the tree, this is how deeply He came to know us, to be able to exactly empathize with us in our spiritual weakness; this was how He became able to have a fellow feeling with those who are out of the way, who have lost the faith, "for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2).

Psa 16:11 You will show me the path of life. In Your presence is fullness of joy, in Your right hand there are pleasures forevermore- "For the joy that was set before him" Christ endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). "Set before" can imply a vision, as if Christ saw something in front of Him as He hung on the cross. The spirit of Christ in Ps. 16:11 describes Christ looking forward to fullness of joy in God's Heavenly presence, because "at Your right hand are pleasures for evermore". Christ is now at God's right hand interceding for us. Therefore one aspect of the joy set before Christ in vision as He hung on the cross was the joy of His future mediation for our sins, as we repent of them and confess them in prayer.

PSALMS CHAPTER 17

Psa 17:1 A Prayer by David.
Hear, Yahweh, my righteous plea; give ear to my prayer, that doesn't go out of deceitful lips- David has elsewhere lamented the deceitful lips of his opponents, and he comes over as being convinced of his own righteousness, often comparing himself with them, even when he is in God's presence. The mention of "lips" suggests David prayed out loud. And prayer out loud, even if the words are only whispered, is important in prayer. If we only and always pray in our minds, our mind tends to race too fast and the ideas become mixed- and so easily the mind wanders. Prayer out loud slows us down in a way appropriate to those in God's presence. We note too the corresponding reference to the words of God's lips in :4. Here is the mutuality possible between God and man. The words of our lips find answers as He speaks to us through His word- which although apparently just printed words, is effectively the words of His lips. Such is the power of

an inspired Bible.

Psa 17:2 Let my sentence come forth from Your presence, let Your eyes look on integrity- David imagines the heavenly throne room sitting right now in judgment upon him, and a favourable sentence coming forth in response to his prayer (as in Ps. 9:4,7 and often). He therefore saw prayer as a foretaste of judgment to come. The New Testament does likewise, speaking of our "boldness" in prayer now (Heb. 4:16; 10:19) and also our boldness in the day of judgment (1 Jn. 4:17). The request for the sentence to come forth suggests David hadn't yet received the answer to his prayer, but was very confident of receiving it (:6).

Psa 17:3 You have proved my heart. You have visited me in the night. You have tried me, and found nothing. I have resolved that my mouth shall not disobey- The sensitivity of God to sin is far higher than we would think. He even notices "the *eye* that mocks at his father" (Prov. 30:17); even body language is analyzed by Him, as are our unconscious thoughts as we sleep (Ps. 17:3). But David seems rather over confident of his total purity, for no human heart can be tested by God and 'nothing found' wrong. It was a case of false accusation leading David to assume his total perfection, the same mistake Job made. The Bathsheba experience was used by God to help David quit this attitude. But we can also note that the Saul experience led David to self examination. Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals that frequent and intense self-examination was a leading characteristic of David:, especially while on the run from Saul; as if he began to pick up false guilt from how he was being treated, wondering if it was all in fact justified (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

Psa 17:4 As for the works of men, by the word of Your lips I have kept myself from the ways of the violent- This could be a reference to how the sons of Zeruiah urged David to slay Saul when he had the chance. But he refused, because he believed Samuel's prophetic word that he would finally be king as being words which dropped from God's lips. This was how deeply he understood Divine inspiration, and it motivated him to obedience.

Psa 17:5 My steps have held fast to Your paths, my feet have not slipped- David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the

Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Psa 17:6 I have called on You, for You will answer me, God. Turn Your ear to me, hear my words- As noted on :2, David hadn't yet received the answer to his prayer; but he is absolutely confident of the answer. But we note that he parallels the "answer" with God 'hearing my words'. The answer is in the hearing, although the answer may not be as we imagine.

Psa 17:7 Show Your marvellous grace, You who save those who take refuge under Your right hand from their enemies- Although David seems to insist God answer him because of his own self-perceived righteousness (:2,3), he does here recognize that the answer would be by God's grace alone. And this is so true to human spiritual experience; we can within moments, within the same prayer, recognize that all is of grace; whilst also asserting our own self righteousness. Being at God's right hand suggests David felt he was before God's throne; the immediate reference is to the ark of the covenant. See on :8.

Psa 17:8 Keep me as the apple of Your eye, hide me under the shadow of Your wings- This is an appeal for God to treat him as He treated His true Israel (Dt. 32:10). The shadow of God's wings alludes to the mercy seat, upon which the blood of atonement was sprinkled, overshadowed by the cherubic wings. David saw himself as being right there. This was the throne of God, as it were, where David felt he was safe. See on :7; Ps. 18:28.

We are the apple of God's eye (Ps. 17:8; Dt. 32:10), and His word must be as the apple of our eye (Prov. 7:2). We dwell in God, and His word dwells in us (Jn. 15:7).

Psa 17:9 from the wicked who oppress me, my deadly enemies, who surround me- These enemies were "deadly" in that they wished his death. Saul and his supporters are in view. But the word for "oppress" is often used of Judah's Babylonian and Assyrian enemies who surrounded Jerusalem (e.g. Jer. 4:20,30), especially in the surrounding of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. Again we see a Psalm of David reused, under inspiration, in later history.

Psa 17:10 They close up their callous hearts. With their mouth they speak proudly- This

would have special relevance to the proud boasts of Rabshakeh outside the surrounded Jerusalem (see on :9).

Psa 17:11 They have now surrounded us in our steps, they set their eyes to cast us down to the earth- Again, the language of surrounding is very relevant to the Assyrian lion (:12) surrounding Jerusalem.

Psa 17:12 He is like a lion that is greedy of his prey, as it were a young lion lurking in secret places- As explained on :9-11, this has been reapplied to the lions of Judah's subsequent invaders and abusers, Assyria and Babylon.

Psa 17:13 Arise, Yahweh, confront him. Cast him down. Deliver my soul from the wicked by Your sword- This is the language of the casting down of the kings of Babylon and Assyria. David's personal salvation from Saul was to be seen as the guarantee that if Judah were likewise faithful, their enemies would also be thrown down.

Psa 17:14 from men by Your hand, Yahweh, from men of the world, whose portion is in this life- David's portion or inheritance he expected to be a kingdom in his own personal inheritance of mount Zion (see on Ps. 15:1; 16:5,6). He had hoped to receive this fully at the resurrection (Ps. 16:8-10), whereas the inheritance or portion of Saul and his men would be only "in this life".

You fill the belly of Your cherished ones. Your sons have plenty, and they store up wealth for their children- Here David sounds like Job, whose story he was evidently familiar with and identified with. The wicked prosper, for now- and that is evidence that a future day of judgment and eternal justice is yet to come. Although married, David's family life was a source of grief to him. He comments that the men of the world "are satisfied with children" (AV), but for him, the only satisfaction would be when he resurrected to behold God's face and to be turned into that same image: "As for me, I shall behold thy face... *I* shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:14,15 RV). This was *his* satisfaction; the satisfaction of men of the world was simply in their children, and to "leave the rest of their substance to their babes", i.e. their grandkids. And David's perspective must be that of us all.

Psa 17:15 As for me, I shall see Your face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with seeing Your form- Doubtless spurred by the insensitive prying into his

private spirituality by his friends / brethren, Job seems to almost exult that he would see God for himself, in his own way, and nobody else (Job 19:21 "and not another") would see God in this way. David had a similar vision; he looked to the day of resurrection when he would be satisfied, when he awoke, with seeing the face of God with a good conscience. These are the sort of pictures which should be embedded in our own private spirituality. Nobody, not even faithful brethren, can have dominion over our faith; by our *own* faith we stand (2 Cor. 1:24, filling in the ellipsis). David's vision of future reward was to see God's face, a thought unthinkable for many in Israel; and to do so "in righteousness", because righteousness had been imputed to him.

PSALMS CHAPTER 18

Psa 18:1 For the Chief Musician. By David the servant of Yahweh, who spoke to Yahweh the words of this song in the day that Yahweh delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. He said- We naturally want to know when this time was, when David was delivered from Saul and all his enemies. Abner's words in 2 Sam. 3:18 seem relevant. He tries to persuade the elders of Israel to have David as king by arguing that "For the Lord promised David, ‘By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies’". This may then be the moment at which David sung this. We note how Nathan quotes these words back to David at the time of the Bathsheba failure: "I anointed you king over Israel, and delivered you from the hand of Saul". This would again associate these words of David with his becoming king. The Psalm concludes with a reference to David as the anointed, so this could be a Psalm composed when Saul was slain and David was finally declared king, and his anointing came to fulfilment. It is a "song" but it has no strophes (unlike most of the Psalms), perhaps because it was intended for use at a procession. But quite possibly what was originally a song of thanks at David's declaration as king over Judah was then edited by him at the end of his life. Because parts of the song allude to the promises made to him in 2 Sam. 7, which was after this accession to the throne. Further 'his enemies and Saul' suggests he had many enemies but the greatest one was Saul. This is a style found elsewhere- e.g. "Nineteen men and Asahel" (2 Sam. 2:30); "Go spy out the land and Jericho" (Josh. 2:1); "King Solomon loved many foreign women and he loved the daughter of Pharaoh" (1 Kings 11:1).

This Psalm is basically 2 Samuel 22 and there seems no reason to me to consider 2 Samuel 21-24 as anything but chronological. The day of David's deliverance from his enemies is only logically at the end of his life.

As Abner recalled, God had promised David that He would use him to deliver Israel from their enemies: "For the Lord promised David, ‘By my servant David I will rescue my people Israel from the hand of the Philistines and from the hand of all their enemies'" (2 Sam. 3:18). But David adapts this, even twists it, to apply to his personal enemies. Possibly there is here a reflection of David's narcissism, and lack of appreciation that it was not all about him, but about the good he could do for others.

David doesn't see his deliverance from Saul as God saw it. Nathan has used the very words "saved / rescued out of the hand of Saul" in condemning David: "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel, and I rescued you from the hand of Saul”. God saw this fact as making David's sin with Bathsheba all the more shameful. David sees this fact as demonstration that he is of pure hands and was delivered because of his own righteousness.

Perhaps in this song David is alluding to things which had not been recorded or perhaps were generally unknown- like a great theophany to him, and Divine rescue of him from certain death at the hands of his enemies. Coming out in older age with such testimonial tributes to God's grace in earlier life is psychologically credible, and what many have done. This would be similar to how the previous chapter talks about a major sin of Saul's, and its consequences, which was unknown to the Biblical record.

We note the similarity between the Hebrew words for Saul and *sheol*, the grave, and indeed David now goes on to thank God for saving him from death on various occasions. And yet the greatest salvation from death he experienced was that from the death penalty for his sins with Uriah and Bathsheba. But he makes no specific reference to this, unless we take his talk of being dramatically saved from some great death by a theophany, God coming down, as referring to that. And even then we wonder why he had to reference it in such an oblique and disguised manner. After all, he had vowed in Psalm 32 to publically tell the world of his salvation from the death penalty for those sins, and this song at the end of his life would seem the obvious place to do so. But he doesn't, at least not specifically.

This song quite rightly [on one level] celebrates how God had saved David from certain death in various military confrontations, and had given him great victories. But David is sanitizing his past, talking in terms of conflict-deliverance-glorious victory, just as many kings boasted. His references to God as a rock, tower and stronghold seem to have in view his deliverances from Saul; see on :49. Rocks and strongholds feature much in the record (at least ten references- 1 Sam. 22:4,5; 23:14,19,25–28; 24:1,3,23). But that was in his earlier life pre-Bathsheba, and he has little to say about the majority of his kingship after that. And David carefully omits to mention God's salvation of him from his greatest 'death'- the Divine death penalty mandated for his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of her husband and other men to try to cover it. And he makes no more than passing allusion to the huge grace shown him in 2 Sam. 7, where he was promised a

pretty well unconditional eternal salvation through resurrection to behold his future descendant reigning eternally on his throne. Like every man, David had a strong tendency to whitewash himself, assuming the passage of time had worked a kind of quasi atonement for his sins. And yet God, as predicted through Nathan at the time, worked constantly to jog and nudge David to realize the dimensions of his sin with Bathsheba and his subsequent sinful behaviour. In the hope he would come to a higher grade of repentance. All these failures in appreciation by David are a relevant challenge to all of us, especially those who have already walked many years in the Lord.

I love You, Yahweh, my strength- This bald statement "I love You" is intentionally startling, and is the only place where we read this; usually we read the word of God's love to man. Here, David simply tells God "I love You".

Psa 18:2 Yahweh is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge- This is the language of rocky terrain, the type where Saul chased David and God saved him multiple times.

My shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower- David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Psa 18:3 I call on Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised; and I am saved from my enemies- David's focus of all his praises upon Yahweh was what he wanted his people to follow (Ps. 22:3). The implication of "worthy" could imply a contrast with other gods, as in Ps. 96:4 "He is to be feared / praised above all gods". This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on :31; Ps. 12:8; 16:4), and that idolatry was prevalent in Israel at the time.

We can render "derided, I called to the Lord; I called for help from my enemies", in which case the allusion is to his feigning madness before Achish, calling for help and being delivered (1 Sam. 21:14). As nearly always in this song, the reference is to the events of David's glory days in his 20s and not to the bulk of his life. He is sanitizing his past.

Psa 18:4 The cords of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid-

"The cords of death" is alluding to Saul trying to ensnare David in a trap that will lead to his death (1 Sam. 18:21). The allusion is also to Saul calling David a "son of death", certain to die, in 1 Sam. 20:31. Always the allusions are to David's life in his 20s, his dramatic deliverances during his halcyon years. Never to his not so wonderful life post Bathsheba. It could be argued that David is writing or singing these words after he was made king and Saul was dead. But he still had many "enemies" to be saved from (:1), and the placement of this song at this point in the narrative surely suggests it was David doing what most kings of the time did at the end of their lives- recount the glory of their lives and thank their god for all their victories and deliverances. "The day" when God had delivered David from all his enemies (:1) is surely only the "day" of the end of his life.

"Ungodliness" is 'ungodly men', 'men of Belial'. We think of Nabal, a man of Belial (1 Sam. 25:17,25). But he was saved from killing Nabal by God's grace to him through Abigail. David makes no reference to this. See on :27. But probably the reference is to large numbers of such men rising against David and almost killing him (:6), which would apply more naturally to the time of Absalom's rebellion. David's fear is not much hinted at in the record, but here he himself admits to it.

David felt as if he had been a sacrifice bound to an altar, and therefore about to be pulled into the grave (:5). The allusion is to Isaac and his miraculous deliverance from such cords, thanks to the ram in the thicket whom David is later to understand as representative of the future Messianic saviour; for the Lord quotes David's "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1) as the Aramaic *sabachthani*, "entangled", the word used of the ram entangled in the thicket.

Psalm 18 speaks of a time when David is surrounded but miraculously delivered by an earthquake. We wonder whether this applies to the time when he was surrounded by Saul's men in his home with Michal. The house was surrounded, but Michal let him down out of a window and he escaped. How come, if the house was surrounded? An earthquake would explain how this was possible: "The cords of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death came on me [all referring to Saul's men surrounding his house]... Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the mountains quaked and were shaken... He sent from on high. He took me [Ps. 59:1 "lift me on high from those who rise up against me"], He delivered me from my strong enemy [Saul] [Ps. 59:1 "Deliver me from my enemies"], from those who hated me [Saul's men surrounding his house]; for they were too mighty for me. They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support. He brought me forth also into a large place [David fled to Samuel]. He delivered me, because He delighted in me. Yahweh has judged me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For I

have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God [Ps. 59:3,4"not for my disobedience, nor for my sin, Yahweh. I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me"]" (Ps. 18:4,5,7,16-21).

Psa 18:5 The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death came on me- see on :4. David felt he had come face to face with death, to the point that his salvation was effectively a resurrection. The response to this near death situation is described in :7-12, but it is hard to locate such an incident in the historical records. Perhaps there was a particular salvation from death at Saul's hands which isn't recorded, but David alludes to it here.

"Cords" is literally the pangs, hence AV "sorrows" (as in Acts 2:24 "having loosened the pangs of death"). David saw even the death which he feared as the birth pangs to a rebirth in resurrection. Just as had been hinted at for him in the promises of 2 Sam. 7. But because he was saved out of imminent death, perhaps his focus on that future resurrection was diminished.

"Came on me" is literally 'went before me'. The same word is used in Ps. 59:10: "My God will go before me with His grace". David was inside his house surrounded by his enemies (Ps. 59:1), and escaped through a window. As he planned the escape, he believed that God's grace would go before him. At the end of his life he appears to reflect upon this incident, glorying that although he was "compassed about" with the threat of death, seeing the house was surrounded by Saul's men intending to kill him; yet God's grace had somehow gone before David and prepared a way of escape (Ps. 18:5,18 s.w.).

Psa 18:6 In my distress I called on Yahweh, and cried to my God. He heard my voice out of His temple; my cry before Him came into His ears- David again imagines his prayers as coming into the heavenly throne room, and eliciting a response. His later obsession with building a physical temple for God was a departure from how he had earlier perceived God's temple- as being in Heaven, and accessible by faithful prayer.

The reference to "my distress" could be to how David returned to find that the Amalekites had plundered Ziklag and taken his wives and children captive, and his men turned against him. "David was greatly distressed, for the men spoke of stoning him because they were grieved, every man for his sons and his daughters... David inquired of Yahweh" (1 Sam. 30:6-8). The theophany which is now described could possibly refer to some unrecorded events at the time when David pursued after the Amalekites and recovered the captives. The references to pursuing after a "troop" and overtaking them would then refer to this too. Likewise "You have delivered me from the contentions of my people" (2 Sam. 22:44) would refer to David regaining control of his

mutinous men at this time. Another alternative is that the theophany refers to how David heard the cherubim "marching on the tops of the balsam trees" in 2 Sam. 5:24.

Psa 18:7 Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the mountains quaked and were shaken, because He was angry- The response to the near death situation of :4,5 is described in :7-12, but it is hard to locate such an incident in the historical records. Perhaps there was a particular salvation from death at Saul's hands which isn't recorded, but David alludes to it here. Or perhaps the language here is that of theophany and God manifestation; it may not literally describe things which happened, but the hand of God in saving David was no less than as if He had appeared as He did at Sinai. For the language of earth shaking and quaking is that of the Sinai theophany and the deliverance from Egypt.

The theophany described in :8-16 clearly alludes to that at Sinai (Ex. 19:16-18; Jud. 5:4,5; and how David understood Sinai's events in Ps. 68:8; 77:16-18). David could be referring to some unrecorded amazing theophany and deliverance that he experienced; or he could be making the point that God's grace and salvation shown to him personally was as awesome for him as the vast outpouring of God's power, meaning, covenant, love, grace and awe on Sinai. Which is something we can relate to. The unrecorded amazing deliverance of David may be his way of describing his salvation from the Divine death penalties regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. For he makes no mention of this deliverance… which was the greatest deliverance.

Psa 18:8 Smoke went out of His nostrils, consuming fire came out of His mouth; coals were kindled by it- As discussed on :7, this sounds like the symbolic language of theophany and God manifestation, rather than describing actually observed events in literal terms. The allusion is clearly to what happened at the exodus and Sinai; see on :15.

Psa 18:9 He bowed the heavens also- The same phrase used of Moses stretching out his hands toward the heavens, and God responding by delivering His people (Ex. 9:22,23; 10:21).

And came down, thick darkness was under His feet- As Yahweh came down at Sinai (Ex. 19:11 s.w.). The idea is that as God had miraculously intervened for the salvation of His people in history, so David felt He had in his life; although there is no historical record of such dramatic scenes as on Sinai and at the Red Sea. We likewise experience His interventions; they aren't as dramatic as in history, but none less dramatic in ultimate reality. This coming down in a saving theophany was what David had in fact prayed for in

Ps. 144:5. He asked for a theophany to save him, no less that what happened at Sinai (s.w. Ex. 19:18-20), when again God had as it were made the mountains smoke by His touch. We marvel at David's spiritual ambition, unafraid to ask for a similar theophany to save him. And here he reflects at the end of his life that this prayer was in fact answered. The relevance to the exiles is that Yahweh was prepared to "bow" (s.w. "stretch out") the heavens and "come down" to restore the exiles; but they chose not to make use of that huge potential (s.w. Is. 40:22; 42:5; 64:1). See on :14.

Psa 18:10 He rode on a cherub, and flew. Yes, He soared on the wings of the wind- "Wind" and "spirit" are the same words in Hebrew. The cherubim chariot are presented as God's vehicle of manifestation, and this was language the exiles would've been familiar with through the visions of Ezekiel. Yet this is not to say that David also had such a vision. Rather did he perceive God's huge cherubic activity through the various experiences of salvation and grace he had in his life. And this is the same for us.

The reference may simply be to God as it were riding on clouds in glory: "He makes the clouds His chariot, He walks on the wings of the wind" (Ps. 104:3).

Psa 18:11 He made darkness His hiding place, His pavilion around Him, darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies- All the scene at God's manifestation on Sinai.

This could also be an allusion to the exodus. Rashi suggests: "He put [a protective] darkness around", alluding to how the pillar of cloud and the darkness separated between the Egyptians and Israelites (Ex. 14:20).

Psa 18:12 At the brightness before Him His thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire- The "coals of fire" speak of Divine judgment (Ps. 140:10), and were part of the cherubim vision (Ez. 1:13; 10:2). Hail and thick clouds were the judgment threatened upon the Assyrians in Hezekiah's time (Is. 28:2; 30:30). David's experience becomes developed as relevant to the manifestation of God in salvation in other contexts.

Psa 18:13 Yahweh also thundered in the sky, the Most High uttered His voice: hailstones and coals of fire- Hailstones and fire suggests the destruction of Sodom. And yet there is no recorded incident of God consuming David's enemies like this. But he felt that God had indeed come through for Him in no less powerful a way. And we can feel and experience the same.

Psa 18:14 He sent out His arrows, and scattered them; yes, great lightning bolts, and defeated them-

This continues the thanksgiving that his prayer of Ps. 144:6 had been answered. He had asked for a saving theophany of the magnitude of what was seen at Sinai; see on :9. Now at the end of his life, David was thankful that this prayer had in fact been answered. David rejoices that Divine "arrows" were sent to destroy his enemies (Ps. 7:13; 18:14; 45:5; 64:7; 144:6), in fulfilment of God's promise to do so to the sinful within Israel (Dt. 32:23,42). But David had realized that those same arrows had been fired by God into him in judgment for his sin (Ps. 38:2). But David appears unaware that he is rejoicing at the arrows fired at his enemies, when his sin with Bathsheba also merited Divine arrows to be fired at himself. This realization was perhaps to help David understand that his rejoicing in Divine arrows of judgment being fired at his enemies had not been mature; for he himself had to realize that he was worthy of the same.

"And confused them" (2 Sam. 22) is the language of God's enemies being destroyed (Ex. 14:24; Josh. 10:10; Jud. 4:15; 1 Sam. 7:10). Possibly there had been some supernatural intervention by God against Absalom's army, when we read that the forest consumed more of the enemy than did the sword. But there seems no other such example.

Psa 18:15 Then the channels of waters appeared, the foundations of the world were laid bare at Your rebuke, Yahweh, at the blast of the breath of Your nostrils- The opening word "then" is significant. As the channels of water were laid bare at the exodus, so God had acted for David. As discussed on :7, this section sounds like the symbolic language of theophany and God manifestation, rather than describing actually observed events in literal terms. The allusion is clearly to what happened at the exodus and Sinai; the essence of what God did then was experienced by David, just as it can be by us in our crises.

Psa 18:16 He sent from on high. He took me, He drew me out of many waters-

The allusion is clearly to Moses, drawn out of the waters and thereby saved from death (Ex. 2:10). David is saying that the salvation he had experienced was no less than on the level and significance of what God did for Moses. We can look at His work in our lives likewise, and thereby cease considering that men like Moses had far more dramatic and significant experiences of God than we do.

"Waters" are usually symbolic of armies or nations. David felt he had been surrounded and faced with certain death, but had been as it were airlifted to safety by God. The language here says that God has done this, but it is parallel with David's prayer for this to happen in Ps. 144:7. This triumphant song is therefore praise for the prayer of Ps. 144 being answered. We cannot locate any particular historical incident of fulfilment; perhaps it was too personal and wonderful to be recorded. Just as a Christian man or

woman might feel it inappropriate to record God's most dramatic salvation of them when they write their autobiography.

Psa 18:17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me- That thanksgiving was because he had prayed for salvation from "those who hate me" in Ps. 9:13 (s.w.). We have here a direct example of gratitude for answered prayer. It seems Saul and his supporters were the initial reference of the "strong enemy" (see on :1). These words are an allusion to his prayer of Ps. 69:14, asking to be delivered from "those who hated me" at the time of Absalom's rebellion. So we can reject the idea that this Song was written early in David's life; it is indeed his end of life reflection. Now at the end of his life David reflects that he has been delivered from those who hated him (s.w.). At the time, he wept bitterly for Absalom's death; but now in maturity he realized that this was in fact an answer to his prayers.

On one level, David's thanksgiving and gratitude is commendable. But his biggest and worst enemy was himself and his failure to recognize that reflects immaturity rather than spiritual maturity. We would far rather see a recognition that he had been his own worst enemy, but by grace he had been saved from himself. But we don't see that.

Psa 18:18 They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support- See on :5. The phrase "day of calamity" is consistently used of a day of Divine condemnation, especially of Judah at the hand of the Babylonians (Dt. 32:35; Job 21:30; Jer. 18:17; 46:21). Perhaps the Psalm was reworked as comfort for the exiles, that they could be saved even out of the day of their condemnation. And maybe David has the idea that he had been worthy of Divine condemnation, and the judgment was being articulated at the hands of his enemies- but by grace alone, God saved him from it.

"Support" is literally 'my stay', a staff for David. Possibly the reference is to the time of Absalom's rebellion in Ps. 23:4 "Your rod and staff [the rod and staff that is You] comfort me".

Psa 18:19 He brought me forth also into a large place. He delivered me, because He delighted in me- When the Lord's mockers jeered "If he desireth him" (RV), they were alluding to the LXX of Ps. 18:19 and 91:11. God cannot be tempted, otherwise He would have responded. 'If God *likes* Him', is what they were really implying.

Being brought out or escaping to freedom may be a reference to the night he escaped from his house with Michal's help.

Or he may have in mind the time when he was saved from effective captivity in Gath: "You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, You have set my feet in a large place'.

At the time of Absalom's rebellion, David's critics mocked "Let Yahweh rescue him, if He delights in him" (Ps. 22:8). David himself considered God's delight in him to be open to question and over to God to prove: "he king said to Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city. If I find grace in the eyes of Yahweh, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His dwelling place; but if He say thus, 'I have no delight in you;' behold, here am I. Let Him do to me as seems good to Him" (2 Sam. 15:25,26). David seems to now triumphantly consider that Yahweh does delight in him. But he does so on the basis that he considers that Divine delight in him to be a reward for his righteousness and clean hands (:21). Whereas the deliverance from Absalom was because Yahweh by grace alone 'delighted' in David.

"Delighted" is the same word as in Ps. 51:6 "Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts". This is the word here used by David at the end of his life of how God desired or delighted in him. Perhaps this desire or delight was because of the "truth" in David's heart in recognizing his sins and accepting God's grace. He had left God to decide whether He delighted in him when he fled Absalom (2 Sam. 15:26), and now he triumphs that God had done so, by grace (2 Sam. 15:25). And yet we could equally argue that indeed, God delights in confession of sin when it is the "truth" in the inward parts, But at the point of this song, is this how David still understands it? He seems to reason that God delights in him because of his righteousness. And not because of his inner contrition, as he had earlier understood at the time of Ps. 51.

Psa 18:20 Yahweh has judged me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me- As noted on :14, David was yet to learn that he himself was a sinner and no man apart from the Lord has clean hands or total personal righteousness. Yet David twice repeats this self righteousness (:24).

David seems to have in mind 1 Sam. 26:23 "Yahweh will reward every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness, because Yahweh delivered you into my hand today and I wouldn't put forth my hand against Yahweh's anointed". Likewise Saul says that David had "rewarded" him good when Saul had "rewarded" David evil (1 Sam. 24:18). He considers that he got saved from Absalom (see on :20) because of his good and gracious action towards Saul years before that. But that is salvation by works. He considers his hands were clean *in relation to Saul* and therefore this, he considers, saved him from the post-Bathsheba judgments. But those judgments were exactly because he did have blood on his hands. And the fact he didn't previously was no atonement or cleansing. Ps. 24:4 may suggest that David perceives 'cleanness of hands'

to be a way of saying he hadn't worshipped idols (see on :24), as the ideas are paralleled: "He who has clean hands... who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood".

But from another angle, we recall how it was the wise actions of Abigail which saved David from getting blood on his hands by killing her and her kids, as David had intended to do. He was saved from having blood on his hands by grace, God's grace, working through Abigail (1 Sam. 25:30,31). But there is no mention of that now by David, rather a simplistic persuasion that he had pure guiltless hands and that is why he was preserved and delivered by God.

Psa 18:21 For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God-

It would be hard to better describe David's sins with Bathsheba and Uriah than 'wickedly departing from God'. If David at the end of his life could say that he was upright and had kept himself from his iniquity (2 Sam. 22:21-24). He could only say this by a clear understanding of the concept of imputed righteousness. Paul's claim to have always lived in a pure conscience must be seen in the same way. And yet it seems to me that David ought to have added what we would all add if saying this- that this is only by grace, and me a sinner being counted righteous.

"Wickedly departed" is the word usually translated "condemn" (e.g. Ps. 37:33). Those who depart from God condemn themselves. This is a major Biblical theme; that the condemned are more self-condemned rather than condemned by God. "We make the answer now". But later David was to realize that he too had wickedly departed from God, and confession of that was vital for salvation (s.w. Ps. 106:6).

David felt preserved by God from Saul and his other enemies (1 Sam. 30:23; 2 Sam. 22:44), because he had preserved or obeyed [s.w.] God's ways (2 Sam. 22:22,24; Ps. 18:21,23); whereas Saul didn't obey / preserve them and was destroyed (1 Sam. 13:13,14; 1 Chron. 10:13). Hence Ps. 145:20: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy". And yet in all this David is without grace, thinking on the basis of human merit soliciting Divine response.

Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals that frequent and intense self-examination was a leading characteristic of David:, especially while on the run from Saul; as if he began to pick up false guilt from how he was being treated, wondering if it was all in fact justified (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

Psa 18:22 For all His ordinances were before me, I didn't put away His statutes from me- "Put away" is the word used for how God departed from Saul because he didn't keep God's statutes (1 Sam. 16:14; 18:12; 28:15). David is therefore comparing himself favourably with Saul; for this is his triumph song after Saul has been slain (see on :1). And yet in essence, David and Saul did the same sins and David was preserved by grace thanks to his heart for God- and not because he sinned less than Saul. "And his statutes did I not put away from me" (Ps. 18:22). We think about his adultery, murders, lies... And especially in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah, be broke so many Divine statutes. "You shall not murder", "You shall not commit adultery", "You shall not steal" (2 Sam. 12:4,7–10) and "You shall not covet your neighbour's wife".

Psa 18:23 I was also blameless with Him- A true seed of Abraham, who were to walk with or before Yahweh blameless (s.w. Gen. 17:1). David may be using 'perfect' in the sense of complete, undivided. In which case [as noted on :21] he may be protesting that the fact he didn't worship idols therefore made him somehow "perfect towards" Yahweh. And perhaps his lack of idolatry led to him thinking that lies, adultery, murder and family smashing were all quite legitimate because he didn't worship idols.

I kept myself from my iniquity- This sounds like a boast in his iron willed self-control. He would never be able to boast like this after the sin with Bathsheba. It is God by His grace who keeps men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and not he rigid self-discipline of the deeply religious. "My iniquity" could suggest some specific temptation David had. He boasts that he kept himself from it. But yet he did so many other sins... Alternatively David may refer to how "my iniquity" lurks in every man but we are to keep ourselves from it, having recognized it as always being latently there. David surely alludes to his words to Jonathan that there is no "iniquity" in him (1 Sam. 20:1,8). But now at 70 years of age, it is not exactly of integrity to take those earlier words of youth, uttered in a specific context of having done no iniquity to Saul, and use them as explanation of why God had been so good to David throughout his life. God's goodness had been on the basis of grace, and not David's lack of iniquity towards Saul at an earlier point. He broke his promise to Saul not to slay his descendants, and as argued on 2 Sam. 21, this was a sin of David's and was from political reasons. So David would have been wrong to argue that he was totally blameless in his actions toward Saul.

Verses 21-25 sound as if David is really commending himself. Possibly he was indeed too self congratulatory at this point. But his words clearly allude to the requirements for Israel's king in Dt. 17:18-20. If, as suggested on :1, he sung these words when he was first made king, he could be reflecting God's position that David was the king whom He had chosen in line with His requirements in Dt. 17:18-20: "When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must write for himself a copy of this law in a book... It shall be with him

and he must read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them. Thus his heart will not be raised up above his brothers, and he will not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, so that he may prolong his days in his kingdom".

Psa 18:24 Therefore Yahweh has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyesight- As noted on :14, David was yet to learn that he himself was a sinner and no man apart from the Lord has clean hands or total personal righteousness. Yet David twice repeats this self righteousness (:20). In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Ps. 18:23-26 has David describing his own uprightness before God, and how God only shows His grace to the pure and upright. How little did he understand grace! Worse still, he several times bids God judge men according to their sins (Ps. 5:10). It is against this background that we must understand the significance of David's statements that after Bathsheba, after how God did *not* deal with him according to his sin, there were no rebukes of others now in his mouth. Realizing the extent of his personal sin and the depth of God's grace led David to not only be less reproachful of others; but also to be less hurt by their unkindness to him. And in these things we surely have a great lesson to ourselves.

Psa 18:25 With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful. With the perfect man, You will show Yourself perfect- we have here the mixture of spirituality and yet arrogance which we can often detect in ourselves. David recognizes his salvation has been through God's mercy; but he sees himself as having earned this mercy by being "perfect". The same word is used of Job, but he had to be taught that that status was a case of having righteousness imputed to him by grace; and because David was unwilling to really learn this, he had to be taught it through the righteousness imputed to him after his sin with Bathsheba.

"Merciful" can also be translated "faithful", as in GNB "you are faithful to those who are faithful to you". In this case, David would be alluding to his faithfulness to his covenant with Jonathan. His idea is that God has been faithful to His covenant with David in 2 Sam. 7 because David has been faithful to his covenant with Jonathan. This totally disregards the huge grace behind the covenant with David as commented upon on 2 Sam. 7. David significantly omits to accept he had not been faithful to the oath he made to Saul before Yahweh, not to harm his seed. For we have seen on 2 Sam. 21 that he did

do so, and at several points appears to have tacitly ensured Saul's descendants were cut off if they appeared a potential threat to his throne. He was not a faithful covenant keeper, and was hardly faithful to Uriah and many others. David is certainly being selective about his past, and sanitizing himself.

"The perfect man" could refer to David's idea that he has 'perfect' devotion to God in that he worships no idols. And God will match this by a similar focus upon us. Or the Hebrew could be rendered "the upright hero", which raises the ugly vista of David considering that his heroic victories as a young man made him somehow worthy of God's acceptance in later life.

This verse is at the center of the song. There are 365 Hebrew words in the song, 182 on each side of the word "perfect". The centerpiece of David's argument is his innocence, rather than God's grace. And that says… not much for David's maturity and perception. On one hand, he was indeed made pure from his sin by grace, as he exalts in Psalms 32 and 51. But as ever with David, his spirituality is not pure. On one hand yes, he can rightly reason that God has treated him as justified, counted righteous, and had indeed cast David's sins behind His back. But if any of us were to tell the world of our spotless moral purity, we as convicted sinners would naturally add the rider that this is only by Divine grace through the Lord, seeing we eagerly confess that we of ourselves are sinners. But there is none of that here with David. Psalm 119, composed during his wilderness years on the run from Saul, has many references to his own sins. But that now seems far from him. And the spirit of Psalms 32 and 51, glorying in Divine grace and justification of sinners by grace alone, is likewise now far from him… As with Gideon and so many others, he reached pinnacles of understanding and spirituality which he spent the rest of his life receding from. And yet will still be ultimately saved. David is presented as the very opposite of what we might expect from a spiritual hero- progressively growing in grace until he faces his grave planks in gentle, calm spirituality and closeness to God. His final words recorded to Solomon breathed judgment and hated rather than any grace or personal expectation of future glory at the resurrection.

Psa 18:26 With the pure, You will show Yourself pure; with the crooked You will show Yourself shrewd-

"The pure" connects with David's please for a pure heart to be restored to him after his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 51:10). We could argue that he considered that he had been so cleansed of that sin that he was treated as pure. Or it could be that he simply forgot how he had been so impure in what he had done.

David's claim here is that God blessed the righteous and cursed the wicked, confirming each in their way. This may have some truth to it, but his claim is a tacit reflection of his

failure to understand the grace shown to him. Theoretically he had grasped it in Ps. 32, staying that God counts as right those who are not right, by grace. But now he reasons as if he has no grasp of the grace concept.

"Shrewd" or 2 Sam. 22 "Tortuous" translates a Hebrew word *pathel* which is very similar to the Hebrew for Ahithophel, David's one time confidante and counsellor, Bathsheba's grandfather, who betrayed him to Absalom. David was saved from Ahithophel's counsel by grace alone and by the loyalty of Hushai. But instead he appears to gloat over how God, as he saw it, had punished Ahithophel and justified himself. He appears to be oblivious to the fact that Ahithophel had good reason to be against him; and wishes all manner of curses upon him in the Psalms composed at this time.

David sees himself as the pure, and Saul as the crooked. Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

Psa 18:27 For You will save the afflicted people, but the proud eyes You will bring down- Again David perceives Saul as proud, and Saul's initial apparent humility must therefore be considered in this context. Perhaps he became proud, or maybe he had always been that way, and only appeared humble. But the word "people" may have been added when the Psalm was used by the exiles, for salvation for "the afflicted people" was the prophetic message to them (s.w. Is. 49:19).

David may be alluding to how he had proclaimed his own humility in God's eyes in dancing before all when the ark came to Zion: "I will make myself yet more contemptible

than this, and I will be abased [afflicted / brought down] in my own eyes" (2 Sam. 6:21,22). But humility is hardly something that a man self proclaims...

Psa 18:28 For You will light my lamp, Yahweh. My God will light up my darkness- The phrase is only used of the lighting of the lamps in the tabernacle (Ex. 25:37; Num. 8:2). I noted on Ps. 17:8 that David seems himself as located on the mercy seat, in the Most Holy place. "You will light my lamp" refers to his Messianic hopes for his family.

Psa 18:29 For by You I advance through a troop. By my God, I leap over a wall- Such victories were given to David against the Philistines; the idea is as in GNB "You give me strength to attack my enemies and power to overcome their defenses". "Troop" is the word used of the Amalekites whom David overcame (1 Sam. 30:8,15). The leaping over a wall may refer to the way that Zion was captured (2 Sam. 5:6-8).

Psa 18:30 As for God, His way is perfect. The word of Yahweh is tried in the furnace. He is a shield to all those who take refuge in Him- "The word" specifically in view may be the prophetic word that David would be king and thereby overcome all of Saul's machinations (see on :1).

Psa 18:31 For who is God, except Yahweh? Who is a rock besides our God- David perceives his victory over Saul (:1) as the vindication of Yahweh above other gods. This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on Ps. 12:8; 16:4).

Psa 18:32 the God who arms me with strength, and makes my way perfect?- A reference to his victory over Goliath without human armour, trusting completely in God (see on :33,34).

Psa 18:33 He makes my feet like deer's feet, and sets me on my high places- As in ::34, this may be a reference to his victory over Goliath, which he saw as the epitome of all his victories. For he ran swiftly towards Goliath before releasing the stone which slew him. Or as mentioned above, getting his high places may allude to the conquest of Zion from the Jebusites.

Psa 18:34 He teaches my hands to war, so that my arms bend a bow of bronze- Perhaps alluding to how it was David's dexterity of hand as a slinger which gave the victory over

Goliath. But he recognizes that this was all of God. He is careful not to exalt as if his strength was his own.

Psa 18:35 You have also given me the shield of Your salvation. Your right hand sustains me. Your gentleness has made me great- God's gentleness, His humility / bowing down (Heb.) has made us great, lifted us up (Ps. 18:35). And we respond to it by humbling *our*selves. Paul's take on "the shield of your salvation" is that it means "the shield of faith" (Eph. 6:16). If we enquire 'Faith in exactly what?', the answer is 'faith in salvation at the end of the day, that God will finally save me'.

The Hebrew can mean gentleness but it has the idea of condescension, so the idea may be 'Your answers to my prayers for help'.

Psa 18:36 You have enlarged my steps under me, My feet have not slipped- David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). But now at the end of his life, he considers his feet haven't slipped. But David's feet did slip terribly in relation to the Bathsheba affair. But he looks back on his life and whitewashes himself. Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Psa 18:37 I will pursue my enemies, and overtake them. Neither will I turn again until they are consumed- This is written *after* God had subdued Saul and David's other enemies (:1). He is taking this as a portent of future victory against all other enemies. But I will explain on :39-42 that David did not use all the potential authority and power of judgment which he was given. David pursuing his enemies alludes to David pursuing and overtaking a band of his enemies (1 Sam. 30:8). But again, David is alluding back to heroic deliverances and victories in his twenties. But human life isn't solely the halcyon years of youth. His life post Bathsheba was nothing to write home about. And he makes hardly any reference to it now at age 70 as he looks back on his life. In Ps. 18:37 "overtaken them", alluding to Ex. 15:9- again, David is saying that God's work for him was as dramatic as His salvation of Israel at the Exodus.

Psa 18:38 I will strike them through, so that they will not be able to rise. They shall fall

under my feet- See on :37. This refers to the potential power of judgment David felt he had been given, but this is not to say he would use it.

Psa 18:39 For You have armed me with strength to the battle, You have subdued under me those who rose up against me- In Ps. 18:39 (2 Sam. 22:40), David reflects how his victory in battle by God's strength meant that all was subdued under him (s.w. Ps. 8:6), a Psalm about the victory over Goliath). The victory in battle which he had in view was supremely that over Goliath, his most major and applauded victory, where he stood over Goliath in triumph. But again, he is harping on about his halcyon days and not taking into account the majority of his adult life post Bathsheba. To a far greater extent, the victory of the Lord Jesus meant not simply the subjugation of Israel beneath Him, but of all creation, including the natural creation.

Psa 18:40 You have also made my enemies turn their backs to me, that I might cut off those who hate me- Those who hated David surely refer to the house of Saul (:1). But David did not cut them off- even though he was given the opportunity of doing so. Literally, "I silenced those who hated me". The reference would then be to the defenders of Jebus / Jerusalem who hated David / were hated by David (2 Sam. 5:8). Perhaps his 'leaping over a wall' (:30) references his capture of the walled city of Jebus.

Psa 18:41 They cried, but there was none to save; even to Yahweh, but He didn't answer them- A reference to God refusing to answer Saul just before he died (1 Sam. 28:6). David is enjoying making the point that his enemies had no salvation, Saul's shield was cast away and he died in battle: "the shield of the mighty was shamefully cast away, the shield of Saul was not anointed with oil" (2 Sam. 1:21). David rejoices that in contrast, "you gave to me the shield of Your salvation" (:36). David fails to realize that the historical record actually paints Saul and himself as sinning in parallel. If anything, David sinned worse than Saul. He was saved by Divine grace because he had a heart for God. But instead he here posits that God chose to save him and not Saul because he was somehow more pure and righteous than Saul. He totally misses the grace of God towards him.

In their extremity even the Gentiles cry for mercy to the "unknown God" of their enemies (as in 1 Sam. 5:12; Jonah 3:7); there are no atheists on a plane going down.

Psa 18:42 Then I beat them small as the dust before the wind. I cast them out as the mire of the streets- I noted on :40 that David didn't execute the judgments against the house of Saul which he could have done. The language of being "cast out" and being driven by the wind is that of Divine judgment. It could be that David intends us to

understand that although he was given the opportunity of judging them ["that I might cut off...", :40], he didn't- he left it to God's judgment.

2 Sam. 22 adds "and spread them abroad". The 'spreading abroad' may refer to him making Moabite captives lay down and be slain: "he smote Moab, and measured them with a line, casting them down to the ground; even with two lines measured he to put to death, and with one full line to keep alive" (2 Sam. 8:2). This was hardly David at his best, and surely is an example of how he shed blood indiscriminately. But he rejoices in it as if it were some special reward from God for his piety.

Psa 18:43 You have delivered me from the strivings of the people, You have made me the head of the nations. A people whom I have not known shall serve me- David expected in faith that now he was solidly established as Israel's king, the surrounding Gentiles would come to serve him and his God (see on :49). We could render "You kept me as head of the nations" in which case the allusion would be to how under Achish the Philistine he was made “keeper of my head” (1 Sam. 28:2). Again, an allusion to his pre Bathsheba life.

Psa 18:44 As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me; the foreigners shall submit themselves to me- David's vision was that his kingdom would take the good news of Israel's God to the surrounding Gentiles (see on :49). Some of them would submit to David and his God, whereas others would not (:45). But if we read as past tenses, the reference would be to how at the mere rumour of David’s victories, Toi king of Hamath submitted to David (2 Sam. 8:9). But the Hebrew for "submit" is strictly 'to feign obedience'. This is exactly what happened with the Amalekite who lied about killing Saul (2 Sam. 1:2–16), coming kneeling to David; and Baanah and Rechab (2 Sam 4:5–12), who each came to David expecting a reward from him. Again we note these were all incidents pre-Bathsheba.

Psa 18:45 The foreigners shall fade away, and shall come trembling out of their close places- This may allude to how Saul's persecutors of David included "foreigners" such as Cush (see on Ps. 7:1) and Doeg the Edomite (1 Sam. 22:22). We should read in the past tense, "faded away", like plants scorched by the burning sun, which is the figure in Ex. 18:18. The idea repeatedly is that as God did for His people at the Exodus, so He had done for David. And so He does for us all.

Psa 18:46 Yahweh lives; and blessed be my rock. Exalted be the God of my salvation- David had earlier lamented that Saul "My enemy" (= Saul, 1 Sam. 18:29; 19:17) was

"exalted over me" (Ps. 13:2 s.w.). The David who had once triumphed over his enemy Goliath now felt that Saul was triumphing over him. This, in the bigger Divine picture, may have been to keep David from pride at the amazing victory and triumph. And he learned the lesson. David was indeed to triumph / be exalted over Saul (Ps. 18:48), but he saw it is God triumphing / being exalted (Ps. 18:46). His praise Psalms are full of this word and idea- of the exaltation of God (Ps. 57:5,11) and not himself.

Psa 18:47 even the God who executes vengeance for me, and subdues peoples under me- An allusion to how David had restrained himself from murdering Saul when he could have done, and instead had trusted in God to execute vengeance. Here David reflects that God had indeed cast down the peoples *under him* (2 Sam. 22:48; Ps. 18:47); by saying this he considers that his prayer of Ps. 56:7 has been answered: "In anger cast down the peoples, God". Perhaps when he prayed it, he just wanted God's anger to be poured out immediately, the day of judgment to come there and then, when the scales will be adjusted and men and nations cast down or lifted up. But he reflects that in a sense that had happened in his life, in that the peoples were cast down beneath *him*.

This is what Baanah and Rechab told David when they presented him with Ishbosheth's head: "Behold, the head of Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; thus, the Lord has given my lord the king vengeance this day on Saul and his descendants" (2 Sam. 4:8). As ever, David is alluding to things in the pre-Bathsheba part of his life. And he is citing his own refusal to personally take vengeance on Saul (1 Sam. 24,26 ,"May the Lord judge between you and me, and may the Lord avenge me on you; but my hand shall not be against you" (1 Sam 24:13)) as the basis for God giving him the throne over the people, who had [so David claims] been brought down under him. David's response to Baanah and Rechab is to comment that "Yahweh… has redeemed my life from all distress" (2 Sam. 4:9). He alludes to how he had told Saul "so may my life be highly valued in the sight of the Lord, and may He deliver me from all distress (1 Sam. 26:24). Even at that point, he had the idea that his deliverances by Yahweh were because he had not taken vengeance upon Saul. Now apparently at the end of his life, he has the same attitude. Grace to him by God doesn't seem to be in his thinking. David also seems to have forgotten that he had intended taking vengeance on Nabal, but was stopped from this by God's grace through Abigail's wisdom urging David not to avenge himself with his own hand (1 Sam. 25:23–35). It was only because this stopped him taking vengeance that God took vengeance for him. But the grace of it all is lost upon David.

We can read "who brought down the people [peoples could be an intensive plural for the great people, Israel] under me". The reference would be to his overcoming the internal opposition to his rule. But that opposition was because of the great disillusion

with David because of his actions over Bathsheba and Uriah and his subsequent politically foolish moves. He ought to have resigned the kingship, but he didn't. Yet here he credits God for keeping him on the throne, leaving us to ponder whether he really appreciated God's undeserved grace in this... And again he is sanitizing how things were. The series of revolts against David in the later years of his reign rather question his claim that the people had been "brought down" beneath him. The cry of Sheba the Benjamite "To your tents O Israel! What portion have we in the son of Jesse?" was to be repeated at the end of Solomon's reign. Even on his deathbed, David had to deal with a rebellion by his son Adonijah, backed by Joab his own general.

Psa 18:48 He rescues me from my enemies. Yes, You lift me up above those who rise up against me. You deliver me from the violent man-

"Deliver" translates the word commonly used in the record of David's escape from Saul when his house was surrounded one night (1 Sam. 19:10,11,12,17,18). Again we see David harking back to his glory days and the deliverances when he was a young man- and glossing over the majority of his kingship. David's enemies were the Philistines and other nations, from whom God had given David "rest" at the time of 2 Sam. 7:11 ("Yahweh has given you rest from all your enemies"). But the term is also used of Absalom and his followers by Ahimaaz and the Cushite (2 Sam. 18:32 "the enemies of my lord the king [are] like the young man" Absalom). But God's deliverance of David from Absalom and his supporters was not at David's hand; he didn't go out to fight in the battle. The victory was because of Joab daring to disobey David's order not to kill Absalom. And Joab rightly mocks David for having more sympathy with his enemies than with his own men. This was hardly David at his most glorious and heroic on the battlefield, but he likes to spin it that way.

See on :46. The violent man was initially Saul (see on :1). The Hebrew word *hamas* [basically meaning 'physical violence arising from wicked plans'] is quite common in Scripture, and the usages speak of how God is provoked by *hamas* to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people (Gen. 6:11-13; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 1:9) and also to intervene in order to save His people (Ps. 18:49; Ps. 72:14). How amazingly appropriate that an organization actually called *hamas* has arisen in these last days to do violence to Israel! If Biblical history means anything to us, clearly enough God's intervention in appropriate judgment and salvation cannot be far off. Note how Hagar's persecution of Sarah- typical of the Arab-Jew conflict- is described as her *hamas* (Gen. 16:5).

Psa 18:49 Therefore I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations, and will sing praises to Your name- Again we see how David was one of the few in the Old Testament

who had a sense of taking the good news of Yahweh's covenant to the Gentiles. And he apparently did so through exporting his musical productions to the surrounding peoples, who may well have been able to understand David's Hebrew.

Psa 18:50 He gives great deliverance to His king, and shows grace to His anointed, to David and to his seed, forevermore-

"Deliverance" is 'salvation'. This could be a reference to how at the time of Absalom's rebellion people considered that "there is no salvation for him in Yahweh" (Ps. 3:3). It's good to see that David does end with gratitude for grace and that he does mention the eternity of the promises made to him in 2 Sam. 7. David's song is presenting himself as the ideal king of Israel, who loved Yahweh and His word, saved Israel and was eternally blessed. We as readers know this is a highly sanitized view of himself. But in his "last words" in 2 Sam. 23 David appears to admit that his "house" was "not so with God", and "he that rules over men must be just"- and he had not been that.

The Psalm concludes with a reference to David as the anointed, so this could be a Psalm composed when Saul was slain and David was finally declared king, and his anointing came to fulfilment. But the reference to eternal salvation for "his seed" could suggest it was composed after he had received the promises of 2 Sam. 7.

PSALMS CHAPTER 19

Psa 19:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.
The heavens declare the glory of God, the expanse above shows His handiwork- Psalm 8 records David looking up at the skies after his victory over Goliath, marvelling at God's grace to man. Perhaps this is the same scene. Ps. 19 speaks of how the sun, moon and stars speak to humanity with no voice nor words. And yet that very passage is applied in the New Testament to the preachers of the Gospel. In mankind's meeting with *us* they should be seeing the same unspoken message which there is in the heavens above. We really can lead them on from their vague sense that there's something else out there in life and existence. They may feel that the answers lie shrouded by some impenetrable fog. But we need the spirit of Paul, when he noticed an altar to an unknown God. "Whom you ignorantly seek / worship, Him I will declare to you". People are fast realizing that advanced technology, social reforms, a rational approach to life… simply isn't the answer to our spiritual needs. People are seeking something beyond. They're asking the right questions, but seeking answers in the wrong places.

Having spoken of the vital need for preachers, Paul quotes this verse as concerning the preaching of the Gospel: "Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Rom. 10:18). Paul is doubtless alluding to the great commission here. But he says that it is fulfilled by the preachers spoken of in Ps. 19:1-4, which he quotes. This speaks of the "heavens" declaring God's gospel world-wide. In the same way as the sun 'goes forth' all over the world, so will the "heavens" go forth to declare the Gospel. The 'heavens' do not just refer to the twelve in the first century; the New Testament says that all in Christ are the "heavenlies"; we are all part of the "sun of righteousness". The arising of Christ as the sun at His second coming (Mal. 4:2) will be heralded by the church witnessing the Gospel of His coming beforehand. The enthusiast will note a number of other preaching allusions in Ps. 19: "The expanse *shows* His handiwork" uses a word (in the Septuagint) which occurs in Lk. 9:60 concerning the publishing of the Gospel. "Their voice is gone out through all the earth" (:4) is picked up by Paul in describing his preaching (2 Cor. 10:13-16 AVmg.). The idea of 'going out' throughout the earth was clearly at the root of Christ's great commission (Mk. 16:15). Yet the "heavens" to which this refers in Ps. 19 are interpreted by the New Testament as referring to *all* believers in Christ.

Psa 19:2 Day after day they pour forth speech, and night after night they display knowledge- As explained on :1, the New Testament interprets this as meaning that the lights of the heavens declare God's glory in the same way as Christian preachers constantly and continually present an unbroken witness to the Gospel. This means that David isn't saying that any amount of stargazing will of itself reveal the truths of the Gospel to men. The New Testament quotations (see on :1) are saying that *as* the stars and the sun daily pour out their testimony to the whole earth, so do the Christian preachers. This rather deconstructs the idea that God's truth is held only by one small group in some suburb who keep that truth largely to themselves.

Psa 19:3 There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard- As explained on :1, the New Testament interpretation is that *as* the stars and the sun daily pour out their testimony to the whole earth, so do the Christian preachers. And that Gospel is to go to all languages and peoples. And yet that witness is in who we are. The heavenly bodies, like the Christian preachers, are simply there, who they are. And this is the witness which will go to the ends of the earth. We can get all too caught up with ‘mission work’ in the sense of taking the message to all the earth through advertising and visits; but the essential witness, which will extend to the very core of this world, is the silent witness of who we *are*. Hence RV "Unheard is their voice", just as men can be won for Christ "without the word" (1 Pet. 3:1). We have assumed that there are men and women sitting in their homes trying to figure out whether, e.g., God is a trinity or not, just waiting

for our preaching to reach them. Yet this just isn't the case. When men and women saw the result of the Lord's ministry, they asked: "What new doctrine is this?" (Mk. 1:27). Now this is how we need people to be with us- to ask us, with the implication they are ready and willing to listen, what exactly it is that we believe. But they only get to that point by seeing the effect of our lives and witness.

LXX offers "It is not a speech or words whose voice is unintelligible". The simple message of the Gospel is as clear as the sunlight; it doesn't require any great process of theological interpretation before it is seen for what it is.

Psa 19:4 Their voice has gone out through all the earth, their words to the end of the world- This is picked up by Paul in describing his preaching (2 Cor. 10:13-16 AVmg.). The idea of 'going out' throughout the earth was clearly at the root of Christ's great commission (Mk. 16:15). See on :1. "Voice" is "line" in some manuscripts. The idea is that the territory of dominion for the message has been defined- and it is the whole world. As explained on :1, this is well interpreted in the New Testament with reference to the universality of the great commission, to take the Gospel to the whole planet and to every language upon it (:3).

And yet that huge work has been split up by God in His providence. We each have our specific area, either of people or the world, in which God intends us to make a witness. Paul thus spoke of how both he and other brethren had their specific "line" or sphere in which they were intended to witness (2 Cor. 10:16 cp. Ps. 19:4 AVmg.; Am. 7:17). We each have ours, whether it be the people who live in our block of flats, an area of our own country or city; or another part of the world.

In them He has set a tent for the sun- The special attention given to the sun is surely because it was a symbol of Messiah (Mal. 3:2). This is singled out as the major witness. Yet the witness of the heavenly bodies is understood as a representation of the witness of God's people to the Gospel (see on :1). They are "the sun" in that their witness is in Christ, they are Him to this world. The sun was a common symbol for a person, and the "tent" in view is the temporary abode at a wedding feast, which is the theme continued in :5.

Psa 19:5 which is as a bridegroom coming out of his room, like a strong man rejoicing to run his course- As the sun arises and passes across the sky (:6), so the Messianic sun (:4), the bridegroom, comes out. The dawn is therefore symbolic of Messiah's coming out from heaven to marry His bride, the church. This going forth of the bridegroom from his "chamber" clearly looks ahead to the going forth of Messiah when the Davidic kingdom is finally fully established and all Judah's enemies destroyed (s.w. Joel 2:16).

Psa 19:6 His going forth is from the end of the heavens, his circuit to its ends; there is nothing hidden from its heat- "Heat" is carefully chosen. For men can hide from the light of the sun, but not from its heat; sinners ultimately cannot hide themselves from God's sun (s.w. Job 34:22). The witness of the sun, reaching to every man, is being used as the pattern for all the witness of God's people who preach His word (:1,2). It cannot fail to have its impact and that word preached will not return without achievement and effect. "Circuit" is a poor translation and means simply "end", which is how the Hebrew is usually translated. It would be incorrect to base any argument for circular motion upon this word.

Psa 19:7 Yahweh's law is perfect, restoring the soul. Yahweh's testimony is sure, making wise the simple- The sudden change of subject to God's word is not at all out of context; for as explained on :1-4, the interpretation is that *as* the stars and the sun daily pour out their testimony to the whole earth, so will the preachers of God's word. The sureness of the sun's activities and the perfection of its light are therefore seen as reflections of the nature of God's word, especially as it is manifest in the flesh of Messiah (:5).

Psa 19:8 Yahweh's precepts are right, rejoicing the heart. Yahweh's commandment is pure, enlightening the eyes- See on :7. It is quite likely that Ps. 19:8,10 were written with Jonathan's experience of 1 Sam. 14 in mind: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes... sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb". Psalm 19 may well have been written in the Bathsheba period: "Cleanse (s.w. Ps. 51:2) thou me from secret faults". So the memory of Jonathan stayed with David all his life long. "Enlightening" is the word used of lights appearing at creation, on account of Gods spoken word (s.w. Gen. 1:15,17). The idea is that there is a new creation being achieved through the witness of that word, with lights going on in the darkness of previously darkened minds.

Psa 19:9 The fear of Yahweh is clean, enduring forever- The context is all about God's law and word. So the idea may be that we read n an ellipsis: 'the word which teaches the fear of Yahweh...'.

Yahweh's ordinances are true, and righteous altogether- See on :7. This may sound axiomatic, but the idea is that those influenced by God's word become "true" themselves. Truthfulness is therefore an essential psychological response in all those influenced by God's truth.

Psa 19:10 More to be desired are they than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also

than honey and the extract of the honeycomb- The power of transformation in God's word is priceless. No human wealth or enjoyment of the senses [eating of honey] can equal it.

Psa 19:11 Moreover by them is Your servant warned- "Warned" is "taught". The idea is that the laws and principles of God become teachers of themselves. There is an upward spiral in spirituality. Obedience leads to an experience of God's word as a teacher, obviating the need to rely upon human interpretations; the commandment itself comes to be the teacher of itself. That is the idea here.

In keeping them there is a great reward- It might help if we try to visualize the practical benefits of keeping the Mosaic laws (as in Ex. 15:26). "In keeping of them is great reward", David commented (Ps. 19:11). Moses likewise: "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes... *for our good always*" (Dt. 6:24)- not for their irritation, or as a pointless test of obedience. Perhaps this is why the giving of the Law is described as an expression of God's *love* for Israel (Dt. 33:2-4).

Psa 19:12 Who can discern his own errors? Forgive me from sins of ignorance- Reflecting upon the power and necessity of God's law and word elicits a natural awareness that we often must have failed to obey. And so David prayed for cleansing from "secret faults" (AV)- things which we do not specifically repent of, and yet which are still sinful in God's sight. All sin is sin- sin is not definable according to our awareness of it (as witness the Mosaic trespass offerings). If we disagree that we are forgiven for sins which we do not specifically repent of and forsake, then we must conclude that we actually *know* every one of our sins; and that just one sin, unrepented of, will keep us from salvation. None of us has the self knowledge, nor the appreciation of God's righteousness, to be confident that we do know each of our sins. It is only the self-righteous who claim that they have confessed every one of their sins. So we are driven to rely on salvation by grace- believing that we will be forgiven for sins we commit, which we do not recognize. If we hope for any amount of forgiveness without specific repentance, then we ought not to make it a principle that we will *never* forgive our brother unless he outwardly shows his repentance. For we all somehow hope for forgiveness without repentance.

Perhaps David went so far down the road of self-examination that the sin with Bathsheba made him realize that it was probably associated with many others which he did not even realize: "Who can understand his own errors? cleanse (s.w. Ps. 51:1,2 re. the Bathsheba affair) thou me from secret faults" (Ps. 19:12 AV). If our own self-examination and repentance is after the pattern of David's, we will appreciate how that each of our sins is associated with so many others. We will be aware how that each spiritual event in our life makes us either weaker or stronger in facing the next one, how

that each temptation is intertwined with others, so that in reality we do not commit (say) three or four sins per day. We are constantly failing and winning, and therefore we live in God's mercy; we do not just experience it for the few seconds in which we pray to Him for forgiveness to be granted. David's sin with Bathsheba is a process we each go through in one way or another.

Paul says that although he knows of nothing that would stand against him at the judgment, this doesn't justify him, because the Lord sees differently to us (1 Cor. 4:4 RSV). David likewise knew that his own self-examination was unable to give him an accurate picture of his status before God; "Who can understand his (own) errors?" (Ps. 19:12). All too often one hears it said: 'It's OK in my conscience, so there's nothing wrong with it'. Yet my comment is that our 'conscience', our natural sense of right and wrong, won't jump outside of us at judgment day and stand there and judge us. There is one thing that will judge us: the word of the Lord (Jn. 12:48). Morality isn't relative; there is such a thing as ultimate right and wrong, regardless of what our intuitive sense is.

Psa 19:13 Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me. Then I will be upright, I will be blameless and innocent of the great transgression- A fair case can be made that David's sin with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah was in fact a sin of presumption. David confessed that there was no sacrifice appropriate to his (singular) sin; his many individual sins associated with the matter were perceived as one sin, and that was the sin of presumption. The fact that he is condemned for having "despised the commandment of the Lord" (1 Sam. 12:9) indicates that He knew all along what God's will really was. The fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: "The soul that does anything presumptuously… because he has despised the word of the Lord… that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David's emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion.

In this case, we can reflect that God will keep men from sinning, but only if they wish to be kept from sinning. And David didn't wish for this at the time. In this case, 2the great transgression" would refer to the sin of presumption. Or we can read this as meaning that David is writing after the time of his sin, and is asking to be held back from repeating it, lest he become guilty of the "great transgression", the sin with Bathsheba. In this case, he felt as if he was as it were forgiven of that sin conditional upon not repeating it.

Psa 19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, Yahweh, my rock and my redeemer- The request is for God to "let" or allow us certain mental attitudes. Again and again in the psalms, we see David recognizing the direct operation of God upon the human spirit or heart- and that continues to be effected to this day, by *His* Spirit.

PSALMS CHAPTER 20

Psa 20:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David- It's possible to understand this Psalm as composed when David came to the tabernacle to offer sacrifice before going to war. The people pray for him in :1-3, then in :4 the High Priest speaks; then David and the people in :5; then once the offering has been burnt, the High Priest in :6, then :7,8 by David and his soldiers; and then :9 as a chorus by all present. It seems Ps. 21 is a psalm of thanks forr the victory given; and I note on Ps. 21:1 that this may have specifically been the victory over the Ammonites which David was given by grace right after his sin with Bathsheba.

May Yahweh answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob set you up on high- The intention of David's Psalms were to share his experience of God's grace and salvation with others. This Psalm is very clear- David is saying 'May this be true for you as it was for me'. And this is really the basis of all our witness. It was David who had been answered in his 'days of trouble', and set on high (Ps. 20:1). His desire was fulfilled- for this verse of the Psalm clearly was reapplied to the "day of trouble" of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3) and also to the Babylonian traumas of the exiles (s.w. Jer. 16:19; 30:7; Nah. 1:7; Hab. 3:16). See on Ex. 25:8.

Psa 20:2 send you help from the sanctuary, grant you support from Zion- The perception was that God lived in the sanctuary, perhaps symbolized by the shekinah glory there. This Psalm was written therefore after the ark had come to Zion. See on Ps. 80:1.

Psa 20:3 remember all your offerings and accept your burnt sacrifice. Selah- As noted on :1, success in the war and answer to prayer was thought to depend upon the offering of sacrifice. After the sin with Bathsheba, David was to mature in his understanding- that salvation and God's operation with His people is by grace and not because He desired sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; 51:16,17).

Psa 20:4 May He grant you your heart's desire, and fulfil all your word- It is God's word which is fulfilled, but if His word dwells in us, then our word becomes His word (Jn. 15:7); progressively, therefore, as we grow in Him and His word, we have an ever more impressive experience of answered prayer because our desires, the things we pray for, are in line with His desires and word.

Psa 20:5 We will triumph in Your salvation, in the name of our God, we will set up our banners- The setting up of banners implies going out to war; see on :1.

May Yahweh grant all your requests- This may be the response of the priest or the people to the confident prayer in the first half of the verse.

Psa 20:6 Now I know that Yahweh saves His anointed; He will answer him from His holy heaven, with the saving strength of His right hand- The sanctuary was seen as "heaven" on earth, located then in Zion (:2). The conception was that there was a little place on earth where God was king, heaven on earth. The Lord later develops this idea; the kingdom of heaven is to become the kingdom of God on the entire earth, not just a small spot on mount Zion.

Psa 20:7 Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust the name of Yahweh our God- As noted on :1, this is relevant to prayer before going into battle- when apparently disadvantaged by obedience to the Mosaic command not to use horses and chariots. Solomon's obsession with large numbers of horses and chariots (2 Chron. 1:14) was a marked contrast to these words of one of David's songs which Solomon must have often hummed to himself. He knew this, but the knowledge resided in just one part of his brain- in reality, he went ahead and did the very opposite.

Psa 20:8 They are bowed down and fallen, but we rise up, and stand upright- This was a prayer before going into battle (:1); but David exemplifies the command to believe that prayer is answered even before it is (Mk. 11:24).

Psa 20:9 Save, Yahweh! Let the King answer us when we call!- David was the king, but he and the people are taught in this song (see on :1) to believe that Yahweh is their ultimate king, and David was merely reigning on His behalf.

PSALMS CHAPTER 21

Psa 21:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.
The king rejoices in Your strength, Yahweh! How greatly he rejoices in Your salvation!- The Psalm could be thanks for David's becoming king after Saul's death, when he had the crown placed upon his head (:3). But the reference to being given eternal life at this time (:4) means that the "salvation" in view is surely not limited to David's miraculous salvation from Saul and establishment as king of Israel. It perhaps refers to his greater belief that his Messianic son would become an eternal king of Judah. But there are many connections with Ps. 20, which I explained as a Psalm before going into battle, perhaps against the Ammonites (see on Ps. 20:1). The crowning of David in :3 could however refer to the crowning of David with the gold crown of the Ammonite king (2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Chron. 20:2). This however was straight after his sin with Bathsheba. So David's joy in God's salvation was due to his sense that God had given him this victory by grace when he himself was a sinner. His thanks for giving him eternal life (:4) was therefore in the sense that he believed that despite his sin, he would be eternally saved, and he saw the victory against Ammon as a foretaste of that.

Psa 21:2 You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips. Selah- Often, "desire" is seen by God as prayer (Ps. 10:17; 21:2; 27:4; 59:10; 92:11; 140:8; 145:19; Mt. 18:32; Rom. 10:1; 1 Jn. 5:15). God interprets that inner desire as prayer, even if it is not articulated in specific requests. The heart's desire in this case was the prayer for victory against the Ammonites in Ps. 20:4.

Psa 21:3 For You meet him with the blessings of goodness, You set a crown of fine gold on his head- The reference would be to he crowning of David in :3 could however refer to the crowning of David with the gold crown of the Ammonite king (2 Sam. 12:30; 1 Chron. 20:2). This however was straight after his sin with Bathsheba. So David's joy in God's salvation was due to his sense that God had given him this victory by grace when he himself was a sinner.

Psa 21:4 He asked life of You, You gave it to him, even length of days forever and ever- His thanks for giving him eternal life comes after his forgiveness for the sin with Bathsheba (see on :1-3). It was therefore in the sense that he believed that despite his sin, he would be eternally saved, and he saw the victory against Ammon as a foretaste of that.

Psa 21:5 His glory is great in Your salvation; You lay honour and majesty on him- David

marvelled at this because he was such a sinner who had just been forgiven for the sin with Bathsheba. The victory against Ammon assured him that God was going to eternally save him, as it was a foretaste of God's great salvation (see on :1-4).

Psa 21:6 for You make him most blessed forever. You make him glad with joy in Your presence- After the sin with Bathsheba, David had asked for God to restore to him the joy of God's salvation (Ps. 51:12), and here he is thanking God for having done so, through the blessing of God's grace. See on :1.

Psa 21:7 for the king trusts in Yahweh. Through the grace of the Most High, he shall not be moved- David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). As explained on :1, this Psalm may well have been written immediately after receiving forgiveness for the sin; and so David is asking that he shall never slip like that again. Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Psa 21:8 Your hand will find out all of Your enemies; Your right hand will find out those who hate You- David saw the victory over the Ammonites as an encouragement that all his future enemies would likewise be overcome; but by God's hand / operation / strength, rather than his own military prowess (:3).

Psa 21:9 You will make them as a fiery furnace in the time of Your anger. Yahweh will swallow them up in His wrath, the fire shall devour them- This is the language of the condemnation of the last day (Mt. 13:42). David sees a portent of future things in his victory over the Ammonites, and the Divine judgment and salvation by grace meted out thereby. See on :1-3.

Psa 21:10 You will destroy their descendants from the land, their posterity from among the children of men- David saw these Ammonites as a seed which should be destroyed from the *eretz*. His vision was of the *eretz* promised to Abraham full of the righteous.

Psa 21:11 For they intended evil against You, they plotted evil against You which cannot succeed- There is a strange connection of ideas here with Joseph's comment to his brothers that "You thought / intended evil against me; but God meant it unto good... to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20). The connection shows Joseph to be far more gracious spirited than David, who seems to relish the thought of God's destruction of his enemies (despite his recent forgiveness for the Bathsheba / Uriah incident, see on :1).

Psa 21:12 For You will make them turn their back when You aim drawn bows at their face- As noted on :11, this appears a far too bloodthirsty attitude. So often in the psalms, David reveals a vicious desire for the blood of his enemies. Perhaps it was because of this bloodlust that David was precluded from building the temple because he had been a man of wars and had shed blood (1 Chron. 28:3). Solomon also shed blood as did many of God's servants, so that alone seems no reason why David couldn't build the temple. Perhaps it was his bloodthirsty attitude, albeit tinged with moments of great grace, forgiveness and gentleness, which led to God's prohibition. Shimei called David a "bloodthirsty man" (2 Sam. 16:7,8 s.w.). And the same words are used by God about David (1 Chron. 28:3). So we can wonder whether David was too quick in Ps. 5:6 to assume that the 'man of blood' was hated by God and was of course not him.

Psa 21:13 Be exalted, Yahweh, in Your strength; so we will sing and praise Your power- Whatever David's weakness of attitude noted on :11,12, he is very deeply and genuinely aware that he is strong only in God's strength, and this awareness was the basis for his absolutely genuine praise of Yahweh; despite having wrong attitudes in other sectors of his life. And all the same he was accepted by God.

PSALMS CHAPTER 22

Psa 22:1 For the Chief Musician; set to The Doe of the Morning- The hind is the symbol of grace and innocence (Song 2:7,9). This is in intentional contrast to the abusers who are called bulls, lions and dogs. Perhaps "the morning" alludes to the hope of resurrection.

A Psalm by David- Not all the experiences listed here appear to have been true of David, nor of any Biblical character. We conclude that some of the language of piercing and

crucifixion was therefore initially intended symbolically. But it all came together in a literal sense for the Lord Jesus.

My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?- David felt as if he had been a sacrifice bound to an altar, and therefore about to be pulled into the grave (Ps. 18:5,6; 116:3; 140:5). The allusion is to Isaac and his miraculous deliverance from such cords, thanks to the ram in the thicket whom David is later to understand as representative of the future Messianic saviour; for the Lord quotes David's "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1) as the Aramaic *sabachthani*, "entangled", the word used of the ram entangled in the thicket.

This verse is quoted by the Lord Jesus just moments before He died, and it has been suggested He cited the entire Psalm on the cross, as the last verse finishes (in LXX) with something similar to His last words, "it is finished". It certainly reflects a crisis in the Lord in His last few minutes of human life. He had been crying out aloud for deliverance, presumably for some time, according to Ps. 22:1-6, both during and before the unnatural three hour darkness. He felt that His desire for deliverance was not being heard, although the prayers of others had been heard in the past when they cried with a like intensity. The Lord Jesus was well aware of the connection between God's refusal to answer prayer and His recognition of sin in the person praying (2 Sam. 22:42 = Ps. 2:2-5). It is emphasized time and again that God will not forsake those who love Him (e.g. Dt. 4:31; 31:6; 1 Sam. 12:22; 1 Kings 6:13; Ps. 94:14; Is. 41:17; 42:16). Every one of these passages must have been well known to our Lord, the word made flesh. He knew that God forsaking Israel was a punishment for their sin (Jud. 6:13; 2 Kings 21:14; Is. 2:6; Jer. 23:33). God would forsake Israel only if they forsook Him (Dt. 31:16,17; 2 Chron. 15:2). The Lord was so identified with our sin that He felt as a sinner, although he wasn't in fact.

The Greek word translated "forsaken" occurs in Acts 2:27, where Peter quotes from Psalm 16 concerning how Christ was always aware of His own righteousness, and therefore confidently knew that God would not "*leave* (forsake) his soul in hell". In Ps. 22:1, our Lord was doubting His previous thoughts, as prophesied in Ps. 16:10. He now feared that God had forsaken Him, when previously He had been full of confidence that God would not do so, on account of His perfect character. Because He felt such a sinner deep within Him, He even doubted if He really was the Messiah. This is how deeply our Lord was our representative, this is how thoroughly He bare our own sins in His own body on the tree, this is how deeply He came to know us, to be able to exactly empathize with us in our spiritual weakness; this was how He became able to have a

fellow feeling with those who are out of the way, who have lost the faith, "for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2).

In every other recorded prayer of His in the Gospels, the Lord addressed the Almighty as “Father"; but finally He used the more distant “My God", reflecting the separation He felt. But therefore His mind flew to Ps. 22:1, and He quoted those words: "My God, why have You forsaken me". But the fact His mind went to the Scriptures like that was His salvation. There is reason to think that in His last few minutes, the Lord quoted the whole of Ps. 22 out loud. Thus He asked for a drink "that the Scripture might be fulfilled", or finished, and then His words "It is finished" followed- which are actually an exact quote from the Septuagint of the last verse of Ps. 22. Psalms 22 and 69 can be clearly divided into two halves; the first half speaks of the confused thoughts of the Lord Jesus as He hung on the cross, but then there is a sudden rally, and His thoughts become clearly more confident and positive, centered around the certainty of our future salvation. As Christ quoted or at least thought through Psalm 22, He came to the glorious conclusion: Of course this is how Messiah must feel, He *must* feel forsaken, as Ps. 22 prophesied, but He would go on to save God's people! Just because Messiah would *feel* forsaken didn't mean that He Himself had sinned! We can almost sense the wave of reassurance that swept over our Lord, that deep knowledge of His own good conscience. And therefore how desperate He was, despite that ravaging thirst, to utter to the world that cry, "It is finished" ; to show to us all that He had achieved God's work, that He *had* perfectly manifested the Father, and that thereby He really had achieved our redemption.

Why are You so far from helping me- "Helping" is *Yeshua*. The words clearly have relevance to the Lord Jesus; He wondered whether He was really 'Jesus'.

And from the words of my groaning?- Literally, as AV, "roaring". This is how David felt at the time of desolation he felt after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 32:3). This was probably the historical context of the Psalm. And yet it is those Psalms written whilst far from God which are most appropriate to the Lord Jesus on the cross. He didn't sin; but on the cross He was so identified with us as sinners that He felt as a sinner, and the words of David whilst far from God therefore seemed appropriate to Him. See on :19.

The same word is used of the roaring of the enemies as lions (:13). In response, David / Jesus roared to God. Because the weight is on the arms, the crucified can't speak easily. The whole conversation between the thief and the Lord would probably have been whispered, with long intervals between words. The final two loud cries of the Lord must have been made with immense pain. It also explains why they confused His "Eli, Eli" with 'Eliyahu' (Elijah); He was probably speaking very quietly. There is no recorded reaction of the crowd to His prayers. Yet Ps. 22:1 speaks of His prayer as a lion roaring to

God, and yet He felt that the abuse of the crowd was like the ravening and roaring of a lion (Ps. 22:13). It may be that they hurled abuse back at Him in response to the roaring of His prayers.

R.V.mg., "far from my help are the words of my roaring" reflects a sense that prayer has not in fact helped. The Lord's prayers in Gethsemane to not drink the cup had not in that sense helped. Unanswered prayer is part of the Christian experience and the Lord shared it.

Psa 22:2 My God, I cry in the daytime, but You don't answer; in the night season, and am not silent- As suggested on :1, the Lord did so both during and before the unnatural three hour darkness. We note that the repeated cry out to "My God" is always immediately followed by a sense of distance from God (:1,12,20). This is so true to human spiritual experience; a sense of closeness to God and yet distance at one and the same time. And the Son of God was truly Son of Man, and knew this experience so keenly in His final moments. Likewise :19, "Don't be far off, Yahweh. You are my help". The Lord was always with the Father and felt His presence: "I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (Jn. 16:32). In His death, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself". And yet at one and the same time the Lord felt forsaken by God.

The Lord's crying out in the night season may also refer to His experience in Gethsemane the night before. And "I am poured out like water" (:14) sounds like the Lord's sweat as great drops of blood. Yet the clear reference of the Psalm is to the Lord's crucifixion sufferings. But surely He has in mind His intense prayer some hours earlier in Gethsemane, for the cup to pass from Him. And in His crisis, He felt that prayer was apparently unanswered. Despite His acceptance, on one hand, that He must do God's will and not His own. We note that Heb. 5:7-10 speaks of the Lord's loud, anguished prayer to be saved from death, and thus alludes to the Lord's words both on the cross and in Gethsemene.

"And am not silent" is as R.V. mg., "but find no rest". The torture of the crucifixion process was that there was no let up in the pain.

Psa 22:3 But You are holy, You who inhabit the praises of Israel-

God inhabited the sanctuary. David wrote this when he couldn't access the sanctuary. Yet he perceived that God inhabits not a place but people and lives in the house or tent of their praises. The Lord likewise died totally outside of all religious structure, indeed rejected by it, but absolutely with the Father.

The simple take away from this is that whether or not God comes through for us as we hope or expect, or even think He should- we accept He is right and holy, and we are

never to charge God foolishly. Both David and the Lord were very aware that they were not alone, but there was an "Israel" of God's true people over time and space who were still faithful- even if they were not immediately visible.

David's focus of all his praises upon Yahweh as alone "worthy" of praise was what he wanted his people to follow (Ps. 18:3; 22:3). The implication of "worthy" could imply a contrast with other gods, as in Ps. 96:4 "He is to be feared / praised above all gods". This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on :31; Ps. 12:8; 16:4), and that idolatry was prevalent in Israel at the time.

Psa 22:4 Our fathers trusted in You- they trusted, and You delivered them- As noted on :1, whether or not God comes through for us as He has done in history is no reason to charge Him foolishly. This experience is to humble us, as we see in :6. See on :20.

Psa 22:5 they cried to You, and were delivered. They trusted in You, and were not disappointed- The idea in the Lord's mind was surely that men less spiritual than Himself had received miraculous deliverance, but His cry for deliverance was unheeded. As explained on :6, this brought Him to the final humility required before His death. The nature of the argument requires that the Lord expected some form of immediate deliverance, as David did. And we naturally struggle to reconcile this with His clear awareness that He must die on the cross and be resurrected. But this is the same question as to how He knew Judas would betray Him, and yet treated Judas as His own familiar friend in whom He trusted. It is a legitimate part of being human that we may know something on one level, and yet desperately believe and feel in a different way. We think of Samson trusting Delilah when he surely knew the inevitable was going to happen. Love and identity with others can be reasons this happens- and they were exactly what the Lord was full of in His time of dying.

Psa 22:6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised by the people- Phil. 2:4-7 speaks of the Lord Jesus as being progressively humbled right up to the point of His death. The Lord quoted this Psalm just moments before His death. What brought Him to this final humility was the reflection that although God had come through for men who were less perfect than Himself (:5), God had not done so for Him, at least not immediately. "Worm" is the word for 'scarlet' but probably the idea is simply of a worm, and this Psalm was likely used in the context of the exiles, "you worm Jacob" (Is. 41:14). They too had to be humbled before they could be saved and become the salvation of others. The reference to "worm" maybe significant in that worms "are simultaneous hermaphrodites, meaning worms have both male and female reproductive organs. During sexual intercourse among earthworms, both sets of sex organs are used by both worms. If all goes well, the eggs of both of the mates become fertilized". Some

worms are capable of parthenogenesis (asexual reproduction). There could therefore be a reference here to the virgin birth.

The LXX of Ps. 22:6 is alluded to in Mk. 9:12 and applied to the Lord: "How then is it written about the Son of Man, that he is to go through many sufferings and be treated with contempt" (s.w.).

All these ideas and words here find a parallel in Isaiah's descriptions of God's servant Israel; a worm (Is. 41:14); whom men despise (Is. 49:7, Is. 53:3); from whom they shrink with horror as scarcely human (Is. 52:14, Is. 53:2,3). The Lord as He hung there was our representative.

Psa 22:7 All those who see me mock me, they insult me with their lips, they shake their heads and say- This is again the language of Job, whose book David would have been familiar with. The connection between Ps. 22:7 and Mt. 27:39 would suggest that the 'passers-by' were there with the express intent of taunting Him. Because His eyes were inevitably downward, it would have been difficult for the Lord not to look at them. Their words were exactly those of the Sanhedrin (Mt. 26:61), so presumably they came from there- the work colleagues of Joseph and Nicodemus.

Psa 22:8 He trusts in Yahweh; let Him deliver him. Let Him rescue him, since He delights in him- We wonder why men so versed in the Old Testament would actually quote these words about the Lord. For by quoting them, they were presenting Him as the suffering believer of Psalm 22 who was to be justified. It seems that it was a case of hate blinding the eyes and sense of those caught up in it. They knew the words, and quoted them out of context, as they thought. They surely later realized what they had done. And were driven either to even deeper psychological blindness, or repentance.

There is a remarkable parallel to this passage in Wisdom of Solomon 2:16 where the ungodly decide to torture those who claim to be sons of God, in order to see if God would come and save them: "He makes his boast that God is his Father. Let us see if his words be true, and let us prove what shall happen in the end of him. For if the just man be the son of God, he will help him, and deliver him from the hand of his enemies". It seems they were alluding to this and therefore torturing the Lord to the uttermost.

Psa 22:9 But You brought me out of the womb, You made me trust at my mother's breasts- The Lord's mother and aunty stood by the cross- the tragedy of His mother being there needs no comment. If dying men do indeed think back to their childhood, His thoughts would have been with His mother. She would have seen the blood coming from the feet. Her head would have been parallel with His knees. His face marred more than the sons of men (Is. 52:14), sore from where His beard had been pulled off (Is.

50:6), teeth missing and loose, making His speech sound strange, fresh and dried blood mixing… and His mother there to behold and hear it all. She must have thought back, and surely He did too; for He was only a man. Mother around the house as a child, mending clothes, getting food, explaining things, telling Him about Simeon's prophecy, of how a sword would break her heart as well as His. This isn't just emotional speculation. Ps. 22:9,10 emphasizes the Lord's thoughts for His mother and His babyhood with her: "Thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou keptest me in safety (AVmg.- a reference to Herod's persecution) when I was on my mother's breasts. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly". The temptation would have been to go on and on. Was I too hard on her in Cana? How I must have stung her when I said " Behold *my mother* and my brethren" are these half hearted, superficially interested people (Mt. 12:49). She was the best mother I could have ever had. Like any man would think. And He was a man. Not a mere man, but a man. I wonder if He said those words of breakage, of severance, between Him and her, because these feelings welling up within Him were affecting His concentration on the Father.

He thought back to His deliverance from Herod's pogrom and His time in Egypt, as well as His infanthood. This is typical of men facing death. To think of their mothers and early childhood experiences. Truly the Lord was of our nature.

Psa 22:10 I was thrown on You from my mother's womb; You are my God since my mother bore me- See on ::9. The Lord's thoughts for His mother are absolutely psychologically credible; for she was the only person who knew for sure that there had been a virgin birth, and He was God's Son.

Psa 22:11 Don't be far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none else to help- "None else to help" felt so appropriate for the Lord, for His mother and few loyal friends stood "far" from the cross. The same words are used for how Israel and the exiles were under persecution with none to help apart from God (Ps. 107:12; Lam. 1:7). The paradox was that God saved His people through the Lord Jesus exactly because they had "none to help" (Is. 63:5 s.w.). But He Himself had to go through that experience of having none to help (Ps. 22:11). Their salvation was achieved through His being their total representative.

The same sense of "none to help" is in another crucifixion Psalm, Ps. 69:20. He was alone in this wondrous work . The Lord's experience on the cross of absolute, existential loneliness enables Him to meet every man in this experience.

Psa 22:12 Many bulls have surrounded me, strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me- It

could be in the historical application that David felt surrounded by enemies from Bashan. Bulls don't usually encircle a man to kill him. There is a sense that there is a supernatural, divinely controlled way in which the opposition was being orchestrated. The parallel is in :16, where it is the assembly (NEV "company") of the wicked who do this, alluding to the Sanhedrin.

Psa 22:13 They open their mouths wide against me, lions tearing prey and roaring- The same word is used of the roaring of the enemies as lions (:1 AV). In response, David / Jesus roared to God. The repeated reference to lions may reflect the later usage of the Psalm at the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, where again the imagery of lions was used.

Psa 22:14 I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint- The emphasis upon David's sense of dehydration looked forward to the Lord's thirst on the cross. Every word He spoke out loud was an expenditure of effort and saliva. He was intensely aware of this. He realized that unless He had more moisture, He just would not be able to speak out loud any more. And yet He so desperately wanted His last words to be heard and meditated upon. His sweat in the Garden had been dropping like blood drops; the nervous tension of bearing our sins sapped moisture from Him. There would have been a loss of lymph and body fluid to the point that He felt as if He had been "poured out like water" (Ps. 22:14); He "poured out his soul unto death" (Is. 53:12), as if His sense of dehydration was an act He consciously performed; He felt that the loss of moisture was because He was pouring it out Himself. This loss of moisture was therefore due to the mental processes within the Lord Jesus, it was a result of His act of the will in so mentally and emotionally giving Himself for us, rather than just the physical result of crucifixion. The same word for "poured out" is used of pouring out the soul to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:15; Ps. 62:8; 102:1; 142:2).

My heart is like wax; it is melted within me- The language of condemnation (Ps. 68:2; 97:5); and meting or fainting hearts is the description of the faithless (s.w. Dt. 20:8; Josh. 2:11; 7:5; Ps. 112:10; Is. 13:7). As discussed on :1, the Lord felt like a sinner, totally identifying with the feelings of sinners and their condemnation, whilst being personally innocent.

Psa 22:15 My strength is dried up like a shard of pottery; my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth. You have brought me into the dust of death- As noted on :1, the initial context of the Psalm was David's collapse of health after the sin with Bathsheba. The dehydration would be associated with various serious diseases. And it pointed forward to the Lord's thirst on the cross. David felt dead, already back to dust, when he wasn't. Perhaps the Lord likewise reasoned (for a moment, in the crisis of the cross) that He

might somehow experience effective death without dying. Although before that He clearly predicted His death for three days. Perhaps the extreme language is because David is continually alluding to Job's feelings in suffering.

Psa 22:16 For dogs have surrounded me, a company of evildoers have enclosed me- The assembly (AV) of the wicked who do this alludes to the Sanhedrin. They are unclean animals (as in :11)- when they prided themselves upon their purity.

They have pierced my hands and feet- As discussed on :1, not all the experiences listed here appear to have been true of David, nor of any Biblical character. We conclude that some of the language of piercing and crucifixion was therefore initially intended symbolically. But it all came together in a literal sense for the Lord Jesus. There is also the possibility that there were historical sufferings of David which are simply not recorded, and yet are alluded to in the Psalms.

Psa 22:17 I can count all of my bones, they look and stare at me- This may refer to the extension of his body when the whole of its weight hung upon the nails which attached his hands to the horizonal beam of the cross. The body being extended, the principal bones were prominent, and easily discernible. This is from the perspective of the crucified Lord Jesus looking downwards at His own body. And yet on the cross He saw all His bones, which represented the future members of His body (Eph. 5:30). David was presumably seriously, perhaps terminally ill as a result of the sin with Bathsheba; and the Psalms written at that time are descriptive of the Lord's time of dying. For then He was supremely identified with sinful people.

Psa 22:18 They divide my garments among them, they cast lots for my clothing- Again we wonder as to how this could be done without people instantly perceiving a fulfilment of the Psalm. As noted on :8, it seems that it was a case of hate blinding the eyes and sense of those caught up in it. They knew the words, and quoted them out of context, as they thought. They surely later realized what they had done. And were driven either to even deeper psychological blindness, or repentance. We note the plural "garments" and singular "clothing", exactly fulfilled in the decision of the soldiers to cast lots for the Lord's outter garment rather than divide it.

Psa 22:19 But don't be far off, Yahweh. You are my help: hurry to help me- David prayed at the time of the Bathsheba incident for God not be far from him nor forsake him (Ps.

38:21). But in Ps. 22:1,19 he feels he has been forsaken and that God is "far off". But this Psalm is absolutely the feelings of the Lord Jesus on the cross- because He was so intensely identified with sinners. I noted on :3 that the historical context of this Psalm was the sin with Bathsheba. David repeatedly asks God to "hurry to help me" (Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 141:1). But David had hurried (s.w.) to be obedient to God, always wanting to 'say yes straight away' (Ps. 119:60). Our response to God's voice is therefore related to His response to our voice; if His words abide in us, then we experience positive experience in answered prayer (Jn. 15:7).

Psa 22:20 Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog!- Life is perceived rightly as our most precious possession. The Lord's desire for deliverance, like David's, meant that He wanted immediate deliverance; He had to come to realize that the prayer would be answered, but not immediately. Such deliverance from the sword became appropriate to the salvation from Assyria (s.w. Mic. 5:6). But it is a quotation from the situation of Moses, who was saved from the sword of Pharaoh (s.w. Ex. 18:4). Moses was one of the 'fathers' whose prayers for deliverance had been heard (:4,5). The pinnacle of the Lord's humility just before He died was in realizing that others less spiritual than Himself had been delivered. What seemed so unfair and unjust, God coming through for him or her but not for me... caused the Lord to reach the required acme of humility with which He died (Phil. 2:6-12). And yet for many, those issues of injustice lead them to lose faith in God, because they refuse to humble themselves.

Psa 22:21 Save me from the lion's mouth! Yes, from the horns of the wild oxen, You have answered me- At this point the tone of the psalm changes. Whilst at the lion's mouth, the Lord Jesus felt answered. It seems He perceived that the answer was going to come in resurrection, rather than in immediate deliverance after the pattern of Isaac (see on :1). This of course was what the Lord had earlier believed, reflected in His clear teaching that He was to die and be dead for three days.

The primary reference in the life of David would have been to the time when he said he was saved from a lion, which he went on to kill: "Yahweh who delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:34,36,37- note how David three times recalls this incident). David was not only "saved from" the lion, but slew the lion. This was exactly the Lord's position in His battle against sin, the adversary like a roaring lion. "The wild oxen" is literally "the reem", and may refer to David having been lifted aloft on the horns of a wild animal. His salvation from that experience led him to cry out in faith that God would also save him from the mouth of a lion about to close upon him. The title of the Psalm "Concerning the

Hind of the Dawn", could be a reference to a gazelle being sent to distract the lion.

Psa 22:22 I will declare Your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation I will praise You- The Name was declared in the Lord's death, as He had foretold (Jn. 17:26). Forgiveness of sins is through baptism into the Name (Acts 2:38), as even in OT times forgiveness was for the sake of the Name (Ps. 79:9). And yet through the cross and blood of Christ is forgiveness made possible. His blood and death therefore was the supreme declaration of God's Name; through His cross the grace and forgiveness, love, salvation and judgment implicit in the Name was all enabled and revealed in practice. Ps. 22:22 prophesied that "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation [*ekklesia*, LXX]", and this is quoted about the Lord Jesus and His church in Heb. 2:12. "In the midst of..." is interpreted in Heb. 2:12 as a reason for understanding that the Lord had our human nature. He died with the vision of being one with us, singing along with us; not of being above us. It was to us His brethren that the Name was declared; in the eyes of an unbelieving world, this was just another crucified man, a failure, a wannabe who never made it. But to us, it is the declaration of the Name. It was and is done in the midst of the ecclesia, as if the whole church from that day to this beholds it all at first hand. And our response is to in turn "Declare his righteousness" (Ps. 22:31), in response to seeing the Name declared, we declare to Him...in lives of love for the brethren. For the Name was declared, that the love that was between the Father and Son might be in us.

The Lord died with the vision of us His "brothers", the congregation in whose midst He would walk and fellowship, as He does today. We, and His fellowship with us, was the vision He died with and was His comfort all through His time of dying. So the Lord's prayer thoughts to the Father on the cross included His awareness that the *ekklesia*, the church or "congregation", were His brothers. For He realized that it was through His sacrifice that a new family was being created. The declaration or preaching of the Father's Name to us was supremely through the Lord's death on the cross. The cross was the supreme declaration of the Name (Jn. 17:26); the first letters of the Hebrew title over the cross spelt 'YHWH'. And that declaration of the Name in the naked, bleeding, betrayed and crucified Christ was to us. And the Lord looked forward, perhaps in literal terms, to singing praise to the Father in the midst of His brothers. This all hardly sounds as if the Lord Jesus was "God the Son". He positioned Himself in the midst of His brethren, singing God's praise- even after His exaltation.

Psa 22:23 You who fear Yahweh, praise Him! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him! Stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel!- The seed of Jacob, the true Israel,

were understood by the Lord as "my brothers", the *ekklesia* (:22), the "humble" (:26), the new people who were to be born through His sacrifice (:31). This was to be the new Israel of God. The Lord died with us in view.

Psa 22:24 For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither has He hidden His face from him; but when he cried to Him, He heard-

"He heard / answered" is in contrast to the initial lament that God has not answered. The Psalmist, looking forward to the Lord Jesus, is overcome by this wave of recognition that in fact, the lack of answer was the answer. and what an amazing answer it was. Through the Lord's death, so much was achieved. And the desperate prayers for salvation were heard in the resurrection of His body. Exactly as it shall be and is for us all who are in Him.

In deep sickness or depression it can simply be that we find formal, verbalized prayer impossible. Ps. 77:4 speaks of this: "I am so troubled that I cannot speak" (formally, to God). It's in those moments that comfort can be taken from the fact that it is our spirit which is mediated as it were to God. Tribulation is read as prayer- hence even the Lord's suffering on the cross, "the affliction of the afflicted", was read by the Father as the Lord Jesus 'crying unto' the Father (Ps. 22:24). This is sure comfort to those so beset by illness and physical pain that they lack the clarity of mind to formally pray- their very affliction is read by the Father as their prayer.

Psa 22:25 Of You comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him- Verse 22 prophesied that “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation [*ekklesia*, LXX]", and this is quoted about the Lord Jesus and His church in Heb. 2:12. "In the midst of..." is interpreted in Heb. 2:12 as a reason for understanding that the Lord had our human nature. He died with the vision of being one with us, singing along with us; not of being above us. And here we have the same idea; the Lord looked ahead to the day when along with other God fearers, He would pay his vows before God. His God was their God, as He specifically stated after His resurrection (Jn. 20:17).

As discussed on :1, this was originally a Psalm written at the time of the sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. David increasingly recognized his sinfulness and his reliance upon the grace of God. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this

evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps. 71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

Psa 22:26 The humble shall eat and be satisfied, they who seek after Him shall praise Yahweh. May your hearts live forever- Psalms 22 and 69 describe the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross foreseeing "the great congregation" gratefully and humbly eating in memory of Him (cp. the breaking of bread), serving Him, inheriting Zion and declaring His righteousness and His victory on the cross to others down the generations. Let us remember this as we break bread and witness to Him (Ps. 22:30,31).

The Psalm opens with a detailed musical direction, suggesting this Psalm was to be sung or used in a collective context. Many of the Psalms are clearly like this. The superscriptions mention being used for the memorial offering (Psalms 38, 70), the Sabbath day (Psalm 92) and the thanksgiving offering (Psalm 100). The reference to paying vows (:25) suggests Psalm 22 may have been used in the context of paying vows and the freewill offering associated with that. The vow being paid would have been gratitude for deliverance from a time when the psalmist or user of the Psalm felt God had forsaken them (:1). The individual worshippers were to see themselves in the Psalm. It was used in a "great assembly" when individuals paid their vows (:25). And there was to be an 'eating and being satisfied' (:26). This collective meal would have been when the offerer made a freewill offering and ate part of it before the priest, with the other part being given to God to show His eating with the offerer. This was the Old Testament equivalent of the "table of the Lord", the breaking of bread service. But the Psalm has clear reference to the Lord Jesus on the cross, firstly in His desperation (:1) and then in His progressive self persuasion of the glory that was ahead for Him, and His death in absolute confidence that God's Kingdom would come. Yet the Psalm was to be used or sung by individual Israelites as they did their equivalent of the 'breaking of bread' at the Lord's table. Which originally was the altar on which they placed their offering before eating part of it. The Lord's experience is intended to be that of every man in Him. And is especially relevant to our dedication to Him at the breaking of bread service. The words of :16 are specifically applied to the Lord as if they were His words; but the Psalms uses them of every man using the Psalm at a gathering of the believers:

"I will declare Your name to my brothers, in the midst of the congregation I will praise You".

"Your heart shall live for ever" is a promise repeated in Ps. 69:32, with an eternal heart again promised to those who "seek" Yahweh and again in a crucifixion Psalm. The attitude of seeking Yahweh is part of our spirit / personality that will be eternally preserved. Seeking Yahweh can mean to praose Him but it can also mean simply to want to be like Him. The Lord thus speaks of those who seek and thirst to be righteous even if they don't totally get to spiritual maturity in this life. It's the desiring God and His ways that matters and is so significant to Him. This is why prayer and seeking to be spiritually minded is perhaps what should be our strongest desire.

Psa 22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to Yahweh, all the families of nations shall worship before You- As a result of the Lord being lifted up on the stake, “all the ends of the world shall... turn unto [s.w. ‘convert to’] the Lord” (Ps. 22:27). Jn. 12:38-41 draws a parallel between being converted, and understanding the prophecies of the glory of the crucified Christ. To know Him in His time of dying, to see the arm of Yahweh revealed in Him there and to respond, is to be converted. This is why the cross is at the center of all truly Christian witness. The Lord saw a new community developing from His dead and resurrected body, comprised of people from all nations, and thereby fulfilling the implications of the promises to Abraham.

In Lk. 24:45-47 we read how Christ explained to the disciples that their preaching of the Gospel "among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" was foretold in the Psalms and prophets. So the Bible student asks: *Where* in the Psalms and prophets? The Lord spoke as if the prophecies about this were copious. There do not seem to be any specific prophecies which speak of the twelve spreading the Gospel from Jerusalem in the first century. Instead we read of the Gospel being spread from Jerusalem *in the Kingdom*, and often the phrase "all nations" occurs in a Kingdom context, describing how "all nations" will come to worship Christ at Jerusalem (Ps. 22:27; 67:2; 72:11,17; 82:8; 86:9; 117:1; Is. 2:2; 66:18,20; Jer. 3:17; Dan. 7:14; Hag. 2:7; Zech. 8:23). This selection of "Psalms and prophets" is impressive. Yet the Lord Jesus clearly interpreted these future Kingdom passages as having relevance to the world-wide spreading of the Gospel. "All nations" also occurs in many passages exhorting us to praise Yahweh among all the nations of this world. The reason for this is that God's glory is so great it should be declared as far as possible by us. 1 Chron. 16:24,25 is typical of many such verses: "Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations. *For* great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised…for all the gods of the people are idols". World-wide preaching is therefore an aspect of our praise of Yahweh, and as such it is a spiritual work which is timeless.

Psa 22:28 For the kingdom is Yahweh's, He is the ruler over the nations- The "for" connects this with surrounding verses, where the Lord has foreseen the new community of worshippers as emerging from the dust of death through a resurrection of the body similar to that which was to be His experience, in answer to His prayer in this Psalm (:29). And this was to be at the time when Yahweh's Kingdom was established over the nations; that new community which was to be created (:31) would comprise peoples from all nations (:27).

A number of Psalms appear to have some verses relevant to the exile, and others relevant to earlier historical situations. It would seem that an inspired writer inserted the verses which spoke specifically to the exilic situation. Psalm 22 thus appears to have had vv. 28-32 added or rewritten with reference to the exiles; other examples in Psalms 9, 10; 59; 66; 68; 69:34; 85; 107; 108 and 118.

Psa 22:29 All the rich ones of the earth shall eat and worship, all those who go down to the dust shall bow before Him, even he who can't keep his own soul alive- In :26, the community envisaged by the Lord who would "eat ad worship" were "the humble". He looked to the day when the poor would become the eternally rich, and the hungry would eat. This situation was envisaged as happening when those humble ones who had returned to dust would again "bow before Him". As the Lord Jesus perceived that the answer to His prayer was to be through resurrection, so He further perceived that this would enable the resurrection of those in Him. They are characterized as those who recognize they cannot keep their own soul alive. They denied that they had any inherent immortality (no immortal soul), and their search for a resurrection of the body by grace was to be met in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

Psa 22:30 Posterity shall serve Him, future generations shall be told about the Lord- AV "a seed". The Lord perceived that through His death and resurrection (in answer to His prayer for deliverance from death in this Psalm), the "seed" of promise would be developed. They were to be comprised of people from "all nations" (:27,29), and as noted on :31, the Lord perceived that the new community of saved ones would be characterized by telling others about Him, His death and resurrection. The implication could be that the sufferer had no seed, but a seed would be written or created for him. Exactly through his sacrificial death without a seed. This is the very teaching of Is. 53.

Psa 22:31 They shall come and shall declare His righteousness to a people that shall be born, for He has finished it- The seed of Jacob, the true Israel, were understood by the

Lord as "my brothers", the *ekklesia* (:22), the "humble" (:26), the new people who were to be born through His sacrifice (:31). This was to be the new Israel of God who were 'to come'; their lead characteristic was that they would "declare His righteousness" to others. Witness is to be at the core of the redeemed community. The Lord died with us in view.

The last phrase seems to be what the Lord said at the very end of His life, "It is finished ". What was finished was the declaration of God's righteousness. The cross was that declaration, just as it was the declaration of the Name as discussed above. Surely Rom. 3:25,26 allude here. The Lord's shed blood achieved the ultimate declaration of God's righteousness in that sinners who believe in what it achieved are counted righteous eternally: "whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to declare God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to declare His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus".

PSALMS CHAPTER 23

Psa 23:1 A Psalm by David. Yahweh is my shepherd: I shall be in need of nothing- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father is essentially *mutual*. David was a shepherd, but Yahweh was his shepherd (Ps. 23:1), and he was to shepherd Israel (2 Sam. 5:2 Heb.). It seems this Psalm was written when David was on the run from Absalom, having fled Jerusalem for his life, and now making his way along the banks of the river Kidron into the wilderness (2 Sam. 15:23), to be surprised by the feasts prepared for him in the desert (:5) by Ziba (2 Sam. 16:2) and Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27-29). With no clear plan or course of action apart from to get away from Jerusalem, wandering in the desert… David felt all the same that God was his shepherd and was leading him. As having nothing, he had all things.

Shepherd is a title for a king. Although himself not effectively king, and with Absalom's claim to kingship lacking legitimacy, David is confident that in any case, Yahweh is the shepherd / king of His people; and of David too. We see in this David's humility. He was losing his crown, but he in any case had always seen Yahweh as Israel's true king.

An element of unreality in the imagery here is that sheep are herd animals; separated from the flock, they will always seek to return to the flock. But this sheep, or even lamb (see on :2), has a one on one relationship with the shepherd. There is no mention of the flock. This reflects how David felt at the time, fleeing from his narcissistic son, betrayed by many of his inner cabinet and lifetime friends and political allies. And this is indeed the comfort of personal relationship with the good shepherd. We could go further and

posit that the one on one relationship here between shepherd and sheep is because this is about a lost sheep. David would thereby be tacitly recognizing that his flight from Absalom was because he had gone astray; but through his exile, through the crisis of apparent failure, he was being led back to God.

The promise that we shall lack nothing is repeated and clear in Ps. 34:10; 84:11. It takes some perceiving. As it did for David at that time. Being "in need of nothing" or "I lack nothing" was an amazing thing for David to feel at a time when materially and socially, he had lost everything. Absalom had even slept with David's wives on the rooftop of the palace. But like Jacob, David was brought to realize that if we have God's grace (:6), we have "all things". David quotes here from Dt. 2:7, where Israel "lacked nothing" in the wilderness. They of course thought they lacked everything- new clothing, the food of Egypt etc. But they "lacked nothing" because they had been saved from Egypt and were assured of salvation- if they remained within the covenant. Israel doubted whether Yahweh could "spread a table in the wilderness" (Ps. 78:19)- but He did in that He provided manna and quail. And provided David likewise with a table in the wilderness (:5).

Psa 23:2 He makes me lie down in green meadows, He leads me beside still waters- This is the language of sheep lying down and being led. As noted on :1, David had no clear plan when he suddenly had to flee Jerusalem. But he has a strong sense of being led. The still waters and green meadows may refer to how the Kidron brook began, but 2 Sam. 15:23 notes that David's path soon went from there into the desert. So maybe he is perceiving the wilderness as "green meadows" because God is leading him. Perhaps he had in view how God lead (s.w.) Israel through the desert, but with the waters of the stream from the rock going with them (Ex. 15:13). The restoration application is to God's promise to "lead" (s.w.) the exiles on the desert journey back to Zion (Is. 40:11; 49:10).

We can equally translate: "In grassy pastures he lets me lie, chewing the cud". It has been observed: "Sheep remain standing while they are eating, but they lie down to chew the cud, that is, ruminate on their food, which they will happily do for several hours a day". This is the picture of not only a sheep but specifically a lamb. Lying down and peacefully feeding. And yet David was madly rushing against the clock, trying to escape death at the hand of his own narcissistic son. Despite that external reality, he felt inwardly this kind of peace. And we must make the beloved point that the Hebrew shepherd lead rather than drove the sheep.

Psa 23:3 He restores my soul- As God doesn't faint or weary, so somehow those who identify their lives with His will also keep on keeping on- even now (Is. 40:31 cp. 29). David felt that his youth was renewed like the eagle's in his repeated experience of God's grace (Ps. 103:5), that his soul was restored (Ps. 23:3), and that a right spirit could

be renewed by God within him (Ps. 51:10). This is the equivalent of the "newness of life" which is promised to us through acceptance of God's Spirit.

The great restoration prophecies of Jer. 23:1-8 and Ez. 34:1-31 speak of the flock of Israel going astray due to bad shepherds, being saved by the good shepherd, being delivered / gathered, and then returning to the land. The Hebrew word *shub* means both 'to return' in the sense of returning to the land, and 'turning' in the sense of repentance. But these restoration prophecies are packed with allusion to the great shepherd Psalm 23. Here, David says that the good shepherd 'causes me to repent' (Ps. 23:3 Heb.). This is matched in Ez. 36 by the idea of God *giving* Israel a new heart. And the Lord's amazing parable of the good shepherd (Lk. 15:1-7) brings together Ps. 23 and also these restoration passages, in speaking of how He goes out and finds the lost sheep and brings it back home (Kenneth Bailey brings together all the many points of similarity between Ps. 23, Jer. 23:1-8, Ez. 34:1-31 and the parable of the lost sheep (Lk. 15:1-7) in his book *Jacob And The Prodigal* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003) p. 70). The sheep is found, and accepts being found- there is no actual mention of repentance. Thus the 'return' of Judah to their land was intended as a work of God- He would make them return, He would give them repentance [note how Acts 11:18 speaks of God granting men repentance]. This is all such wonderful grace. The even more incredible thing, though, is that Judah refused to accept this grace; they didn't 'return' to the land because they saw no need to 'return' to God. They willingly forgot that they were only in Babylon because of their sins; to 'return' to the land was a 'return' to God, which He had enabled. But they were like the lost sheep refusing to sit on the shepherd's shoulders, preferring to sit in a hole and die… and this is the warning to us. For truly, absolutely all things have been prepared for us to enter the Kingdom. It's only those who don't want to be there who won't be.

He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake- Here is yet another evidence that there can be a higher hand in the achievement of human spirituality. This guidance is part of God's sovereign ability to act "for His Name's sake"; if a man wants to be righteous, he will be confirmed in that path. Right paths are literally straight paths. This is a major theme. The cherubim led Israel back to the land with straight feet, God's paths are straight, without the agonies of constant struggle in decision making which characterize the unbelieving life.

Psa 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death- The sheep has just been led through the picture of tranquility in :2,3, and now it finds itself in danger, in a dark valley. Through these sudden changes of circumstance, with things coming at us out of left field, the Lord is still our shepherd. After the valley of death, or even within it, there is the surprise feast prepared. And then the hope that the sheep will be led to live in the Lord's house for ever. The immediate context was David fleeing Jerusalem at the

time of Absalom's rebellion. He passed through a valley from the top of which Shimei, one of Absalom's supporters, threw rocks at him and cursed him (2 Sam. 16:13). There was naturally the fear of an ambush, for David's location was thereby clearly known to his enemies.

The place of the shadow of death is a term used in Job 10:21 for death itself. David knew that even if he died at Absalom's hand at that time, the good shepherd would lead him through that valley to resurrection. The allusion is also to the wilderness journey of Israel, through the land of the shadow of death (Jer. 2:6).

Shepherds keep sheep in order for them to be slaughtered. Any care they may show the sheep is only within the context of that final overall intention. But this shepherd restores the life of the sheep (:3), and guides it through the valley of death to eternal life at the end; the Psalm ends with the word "forever" (:6).

I will fear no evil, for You are with me- This was the fear of ambush just described. David's sense that 'God is with me' is that of 'Emmanuel', God with us, the great comfort to the exiles in Isaiah's restoration prophecies. He felt the essence of the result of the yet future work of the Lord Jesus.

Your rod and staff, they comfort me- This returns to the idea of David being God's sheep in :1. He believed he was suffering God's rod of correction, the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba; and yet at the same time, God's staff of protection against his enemies. "Comfort" is the word used for repentance or change of mind. Although he had repented for the sin with Bathsheba, his experience of the ongoing consequences led him to further repentance. And likewise in our experience, repentance tends to be a process, moving to ever deeper levels and further dimensions over time.

Psa 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies- We enquire: Who sets a royal banquet before someone? It is a king who does this to show favour to His guests. David had himself done this to Mephibosheth as a sign of grace and acceptance. The King is God, the shepherd of David (:1). It's as if David saw in the feast of Barzillai a reconfirmation of God's covenant love for Him, and assurance Yahweh was still King regardless of what Absalom was playing at. I noted on :4 that David's flight from Jerusalem was not in secret; Shimei and other "enemies" were aware of his path. The reference is to the feasts prepared for him in the desert by Ziba (2 Sam. 16:2) and Barzillai (2 Sam. 17:27-29). But the phrase "prepare a table" is that used of the preparation of the table of shewbread (Ex. 40:4), and it is used in a religious sense in Is. 65:11; Ez. 23:41. Perhaps David held some kind of religious ceremony whilst on the run, the equivalent to our breaking of bread meeting. And his experience of the Lord's table strengthened him with great encouragement, as we also can experience.

"Before me" suggests that the shepherd has gone in front of the sheep to prepare the table. The shepherd has been next to him in the valley of death ("You are with me"), and yet has led the sheep earlier, going before him. "He guides me" (:3) could suggest guidance from behind, as to be guided is a slightly different image to being led. Behind, next to / with and in front, the shepherd is always "there" on the journey which Ps. 23 describes. And the whole journey from pasture to wilderness, shadow of death and the temple, the Lord's house, is all relevant to the experience of the exiles by and for whom this Psalm was surely used.

You anoint my head with oil- RV has "anointed" in the past tense. David reflected as we can on the fact we have been anointed and called to kingship, even when it seems a bridge too far, too great a disconnect, between present experience and that future weight of glory. David recalls how Samuel had anointed him as a teenager. He was the anointed king of Israel. And he had learnt from Saul's demise that this could only be undone by God and not by man. We too have to recall our earlier calling to the Kingdom, for "He that anointed us is God", and the anointing, as John says, abides within us. But in times of crisis and rejection we have to consciously remember that.

My cup runs over- With everything against him, fleeing from his own son Absalom who had garnered mass support, with no clear plan as to where to go or how now to act, David felt he had blessing above blessing- because he had experienced God's grace. The cup can refer to destiny, and the Lord in Gethsemane spoke of His cup in this way. Our cup . destiny is overflowing; and David perceived this when at the nadir of human experience.

This verse must be read with the awareness that the previous four verses have been about a sheep or a lamb being led by a loving shepherd. Instead of assuming that the metaphor now changes to that of a host, we could see an element of total unreality in the story at this point: the lamb / sheep finds itself suddenly confronted by a banquet table, is anointed, and is given an overflowing cup. This is the extremity of the inappropriate grace David felt he had encountered. The Lord uses the same figure when His parable speaks of the lost sheep coming into the home of the shepherd and apparently attending the banquet to which the neighbours are invited.

Psa 23:6 Surely goodness and grace shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in Yahweh's house forever- see on Gen. 28:20,21. As explained on :5, despite being at the nadir of his life at the time of Absalom's rebellion, David felt he was so blessed with God's grace and kindness. The fact God had saved him from execution after the Bathsheba incident… was felt by David to be such an experience of saving grace, that nothing else mattered. Although now heading away from the sanctuary in Zion, he was certain that finally he would dwell in Yahweh's sanctuary eternally. Perhaps he is displaying faith that he would ultimately return to Zion; but more likely he has in view his eternal future in the Kingdom yet to come. Indeed "I shall dwell" is strictly "I

shall return". David at this time was being followed by Absalom's men; but he feels God's grace is following him. In this Psalm he inverts everything; the dry desert becomes green meadows, the roaring stream becomes still waters, his random path is in fact a path that is under Divine guidance, God's rod of correction is a source of comfort. Moffatt renders "Goodness and Kindness wait on me", continuing the banquet image of the previous verse. God's grace and kindness are as it were the waiters at the feast. They refer to the covenant mercies to David; that covenant, like God's covenant with us, endures through rejection by men and death itself. We can experience something of this at the breaking of bread, where we take the cup of the covenant to again proclaim ourselves in that covenant.

I discussed on :5 the possibility that the metaphor of sheep and shepherd continues throughout the Psalm. Shepherds keep sheep in order to lead them to slaughter at the end of their lives. That is why shepherds keep sheep. All this is reversed; this unusual shepherd leads the sheep to eternal life, in God's house.

PSALMS CHAPTER 24

Psa 24:1 A Psalm by David- This Psalm may have been used when David brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the sanctuary on Zion (2 Sam. 6:12). Perhaps the Levites who carried it sung this, or it was sung by a choir of Levites at this time. Maybe these were the words of final blessing said by David at the time of 2 Sam. 6:18 "When David finished sacrificing... he blessed the people in the name of Yahweh of Hosts". It has been suggested that Psalm 68 relates to the setting out of the procession, Psalm 24 to the entrance up to Zion and Psalm 87 to the joy of the entrance with dancings and shouting.

The earth is Yahweh's, with all its fullness; the world, and they who dwell in it- The fact that "the earth is the Lord's" is used to highlight the wonder of the fact that therefore how much moreso do His people belong to Him, and are cared for by Him with such sensitivity (Ex. 19:5; Dt. 10:14; Ps. 50:12; 89:11). Just as the *eretz* / earth / land promised to Abraham is Yahweh's, so is in fact the entire planet, and His purpose was perceived by David as incorporating the entire planet and not just Israel.

If this Psalm was composed when the ark was brought to Zion, then "Unto Yahweh belongs the land / earth" is an example of David's emphasis that Yahweh is the true king of Israel, not David of himself; the land is Yahweh's not David's. Ps. 89:11 is a commentary on the promises to David, and comments that the "heaven and earth", i.e. Israel, are Yahweh's. The people of the earth / land may have been under David, but they

were really Yahweh's people more than David's. David's correct attitude at this point in bring the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6) was therefore commended by Yahweh in 2 Sam. 7, when He explains that David's kingdom and "son" were to be His Kingdom and Son.

Psa 24:2 For He has founded it on the seas, and established it on the floods- The *eretz* in view in :1 was the territory promised to Abraham, greater Israel. It is presented as founded upon the seas and rivers ("floods") of Gentile nations; for as noted on :1, the *eretz* is paralleled with the entire world. David perceived God's intention was that the Gentiles should also come to Israel's God.

Psa 24:3 Who may ascend to Yahweh's hill? Who may stand in His holy place?- This rhetorical question is given in the context of having implied that people well beyond Israel had a place in God's Kingdom. But that Kingdom was not just for any Israelite; it was for anyone who kept His ways as later defined in the Psalm. And it seems David is saying that the sanctuary on mount Zion, God's holy hill, was open to all regardless of ethnicity. And even entrance into the holy place was no longer just for Levites, but for whoever was spiritually qualified. David himself was not a Levite but at times acted as one.

In the context of bringing the ark to Zion, this may be David's reflection on how the sons of Eli and Uzzah were destroyed for wrongfully handling the ark. The rhetorical question "Who may...?" echoes the spirit of David's words after Uzzah had been killed, and the words of the men of Bethshemesh about the ark in 1 Sam. 6:20: "Who can stand in attendance on the LORD, this holy God? And to whom shall He go up from us?". David says that those who have the ark must be "He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood" (:4). He clearly refers to himself. But his later behaviour with Bathsheba showed him to be none of those things. And yet the ark remained with him, along with the Shekinah glory of Yahweh; but he would have perceived that this abiding presence of Yahweh with a man of unclean hands and heart, famed for his falsehoods, was by grace alone.

It could be argued that :3-5 are alluding to a temple tabernacle entry liturgy. Along with Psalm 15 and Is. 33:14-17, the passage begins with the double question 'Who can enter / fellowship with God?', conditions given similar to those in Psalm 15 and Is. 33:14-17, and then blessings of fellowship with God pronounced. See more commentary on this on Ps. 15:2.

Psa 24:4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood, and has not sworn deceitfully-

David may have in view how Uzzah was slain the first time he tried to bring the ark to Zion. The hands he stretched forth to touch the ark were not "clean" and [seeing others touhed the ark without dying], his heart was clearly not "pure". Possibly Uzzah was an idolator and deceiver and intended to make the ark stay on that threshing floor- and threshing floors are often associated with idolatry. Clearly something more than well intentioned touching of the ark was concerned.

Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Psalms 24, 25 and 26 are full of David explaining that fellowship with God was dependent upon a man's "integrity", walking in truth, hating sinners, personal innocence, "uprightness", clean hands and pure heart. And throughout these Psalms, David holds up himself as the great example.

Psa 24:5 He shall receive a blessing from Yahweh, namely righteousness from the God of his salvation-

It was Obed Edom who received a blessing from Yahweh for looking after the ark. So possibly he is the one in view in :4 who had clean hands and a pure heart.

The priests clothed with righteousness in Ps. 132:9 parallels them being clothed with salvation in Ps. 132:16. This reflects the Pauline teaching that salvation is brought about by being counted righteous by God's grace. And that is the basis for the joy of the saints.

Ps. 24:5, like Ps. 132, is also in the context of the ark coming to Zion, and the same point is made- those who have salvation have received the gift of righteousness from God. And quite possibly it is the Gentile Obed Edom who is in view- making it sound even more like Paul's argument in Romans.

This passage implies that our purity is not so much from forsaking sin, but rather from the imputation of God's righteousness to us. The letter to the Romans makes it clear that such imputation depends upon faith, not works (e.g. rectifying marriage problems). It is *God's* righteousness which is credited to us, not our own (2 Cor. 5:21). And as noted on :3, David is open to the idea that all people, regardless of ethnicity, could partake of this imputed righteousness by grace through faith.

Psa 24:6 This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face- We are frequently reminded in the prophets that the spiritual way of life is one which *is seeking* God. We are to seek His face (Ps. 24:6; 27:8)- which it is impossible to behold (Ex. 33:20). Actually finding God in the ultimate sense is therefore unattainable in this life; but our whole mortal life must be lived in this spirit of *seeking* ultimate perfection. Seeking God is often defined in the prophets as forsaking our sins and desiring to be righteous (Amos 5:5,8,14,15). None of us are completely successful in our seeking of God, and therefore it follows that none of is *completely* forsakes all our sinfulness.

"Face" is 'presence'. David seems to reason that those who seek God's presence will come to the ark. But in his wilderness years, driven away from the ark and from the tabernacle, his Psalms express his sense that he had found the presence of God out in the desert, without the ark. He even felt he dwelt beneath the cherubim wings on the mercy seat, covered with the blood of atonement. But now he is slipping from that to the idea that God's presence is only mediated through the ark and tabernacle system. He has slipped from the spiritual back to the religious.

Even that of the God of Jacob. Selah- Every reference to "the God of Jacob / Israel" is effectively saying: 'I'm the God that stuck with mixed up, struggling Jacob. And I'll stick with you too, through spiritual thick and thin, and bring you through in the end'. This is the love of God for Jacob. So close is the association between God and Jacob that there are times when the name 'Jacob' becomes a synonym for 'the God of Jacob'. Ps. 24:6 is an example: "The generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob" (cp. other examples in Is. 44:5; Jer. 10:16; 51:19). The name of Israel therefore was paralleled with the name of God- Joshua feared that the name of Israel would be cut off, “and what wilt thou do unto thy great name?” (Josh. 2:9).

Psa 24:7 Lift up your heads, you gatekeepers! Be lifted up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in- As noted on :1, the immediate reference was to the ark entering Zion. The mercy seat over which the glory of the shekinah was seen was understood as enthroned there. In this sense God was king there. And yet His entry into the sanctuary is parallel with the entry of righteous people into it, of all ethnicities (see on :1-5). The gatekeepers are being exhorted to lift up their heads and open the gates- both to God in the ark, and to all righteous people. This mention of gates, walls and gatekeepers reflects David's fantasy even at that stage for a temple to be built to house the ark.

Psa 24:8 Who is the King of glory? Yahweh strong and mighty, Yahweh mighty in battle- "Who is...?" matches the same rhetorical question in :3. The entry of God and that of His people is paralleled. Note the word play- Yahweh is the "mighty", the *izuzah*, and smote *Uzzah f*or mishandling the ark. David's Psalms for bringing the ark to Zion often mention Yahweh as the King, victorious against His enemies. Yet bringing the ark to Zion was part of David's establishment of himself as king after his victories over his enemies. He is to be commended for stressing that actually, Yahweh is Israel's true king and not himself. Despite his bad motives and trust in human strength, David still has spirituality at one and the same time.

Psa 24:9 Lift up your heads, you gatekeepers; yes, lift them up, you everlasting doors, and the King of glory will come in- This states that when the gatekeepers of Zion lift up their heads [to God in truth], then the King of glory will come in. And the Lord applies these words to His true people of the last days in Lk. 21:28- they are to likewise lift up their heads [so that] their redemption will draw nigh, or be hastened. Israelite repentance is a condition for the Lord's return.

The "everlasting doors" may reflect David's fantasy that the temple he would build for the ark would last eternally. God corrects this in the promises to him in 2 Sam. 7- God would build an eternal house for David in the sense of a people, not a building. And of course Yahweh eventually destroyed the physical temple, with the record emphasizing the destruction of the walls and gates [and the record of their rebuilding stresses the need to rebuild the destroyed walls and gates]. David's fantasy was misplaced, and so we likewise can read his claims that God loved Zion more than anywhere else in Israel as likewise his assumptions about God's positions. When in fact he seriously misunderstood God's grace. Even when God showed him the huge grace of the unconditional promises of 2 Sam. 7 about David's house and seed, he is still ultimately unmoved by them and presses on with his plan to enable Solomon to build a physical house. To my mind that stands heavily against David.

Psa 24:10 Who is this King of glory? Yahweh of Armies is the King of glory! Selah-

Using the title Yahweh of Hosts recalls how this is the title used to describe Yahweh enthrned between the cherubimin the record of bringing the ark to Zion: "Then David and all the troops that were with him set out from Baale of Judah to bring up from there the Ark of God to which the Name was attached, the name Yahweh of Hosts, enthroned on the Cherubim" (2 Sam. 6:2).

The entry of the ark into Zion looked forward to the final entry of God's glory into Zion in the person of the Lord Jesus in the last day. Christ's approach to Jerusalem is described in Ps. 24:10: "Who is this King of glory? The Lord of Hosts (Angels), he is the King of glory". Thus Christ, the Lord of glory, will be especially clearly associated with the Angels as He approaches Jerusalem. He comes with all the Holy Angels with Him, with “saints”, i.e. Angels, to relieve the invasion of the latter-day Sennacherib.

PSALMS CHAPTER 25

Psa 25:1 By David- This Psalm is based around the alphabet. But the letters *beth* and *vav* are omitted, instead of *koph* there is *resh*; and the *he* section is doubled at the end. This isn't careless construction or corruption, but rather does Hebrew poetry function through such intentional omissions or departures from an expected pattern.

To You, Yahweh, do I lift up my soul- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. David lifts himself up to God (Ps. 25:1; 28:2; 86:4), and asks God to lift up Himself in response (Ps. 7:6; 10:12; 94:2). Lifting up is the language of sacrifice; David sees himself as a priest offering himself.

Psa 25:2 My God, I have trusted in You; don’t let me be shamed- Typical of men of his time, David seems to fear shame more than death itself. Defeat meant shame, and he desperately begged not to be shamed. Perhaps it was the function of his failure with Bathsheba to help him redefine the motives for his trust in God.

Don't let my enemies triumph over me- These are the words of Hannah (1 Sam. 2:1). David had the humility to be influenced by a woman's words, something unusual for males of his time.

Psa 25:3 Truly, no one who waits for You shall be shamed. They shall be shamed who deal treacherously without cause- As noted on :2, David had to be taught that those who wait upon / serve God can be shamed, by their sins. And it was David who dealt with Uriah treacherously without cause.

Psa 25:4 Show me Your ways, Yahweh, teach me Your paths- Seeing David had access to the existing scriptures, as Ps. 119 shows, this indicates that David believed that God could show him His ways in a way other than simply reading the text of the Bible. Just as is true today, and as is often mentioned in Ps. 119, God is willing to operate directly on the hearts of men in a way over and above His written word. David realized this, and asked to be taught and shown God's ways (Ps. 25:4; 143:8). "Show" is the usual word for 'to know'. Knowledge in its ultimate, spiritual sense is not attained simply by reading or hearing the text of the Bible; not that I am at all decrying that. But there is a higher, Divine hand at work in making us know Divine knowledge. Moses had prayed the same words in Ex. 33:13: "Show me [make me to know] Your way, that I may know [s.w. "show"] You [and] find grace in Your sight". The gift of knowledge, in the Hebraic sense of relationship, is related to God's grace. That knowledge which is in view is not the same as technical, theological knowledge. Moses' prayer was answered; the same words are used in saying that God "made known His ways to Moses" (Ps. 103:7).

Psa 25:5 Guide me in Your truth, and teach me- As noted on :4, the desire for guidance or being led suggests that there is a higher power available, beyond a man engaging alone with God's word and seeking to obey it in his own strength. The idea is beyond that of guidance; the same word is translated "make me to go in the path of Your commandments" (Ps. 119:35). It is the word used for a bow being bent; the idea is of God's hand directly and forcefully acting upon a willing human mind. The idea of the gift of the Holy Spirit is the New Testament equivalent of this.

For You are the God of my salvation; I wait for You all day long- David wanted to be guided because he knew that the end point of the path was "my salvation". His 'waiting' can be understood as an idiom for 'serving', or a waiting for salvation to be revealed in his lifetime.

Psa 25:6 Yahweh, remember Your tender mercies and Your grace, for they are from old

times- Mercy and grace often refer to the Abrahamic covenant, made in "old times". David perceived God's entire path with His people as being of "tender mercies", whereas the skeptic will not see His path in history that way.

Psa 25:7 Don't remember the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions- It should be noted that the sin of adultery is not highlighted in Nathan's rebuke of David, but rather that David had "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife". This is twice emphasized in 2 Sam. 12:9,10. This is not to say that the sin of weakness, of the moment, was irrelevant in God's sight. But the emphasis on how he had taken Bathsheba as his wife hints that this had been his long term intention, further suggesting that his sin with her was the end result of much prior meditation. This further illuminates the way in which David speaks of his sin with Bathsheba as if it comprised a whole multitude of other sins: "I acknowledged my sin (singular) unto thee... I said, I will confess my transgressions (plural)" (Ps. 32:5 cp. 38:3,4,18). Ps. 25:7 also occurs in a Bathsheba context: "Remember not the sins of my youth..."; as if facing up to his sin with Bathsheba made David face up to sins of years ago, possibly also in a sexual context.

Remember me according to Your grace, for Your goodness' sake, Yahweh- "Remember me" carries the connotation of 'remember me for good and therefore forgive me at the judgment' in Jud. 16:28; Lk. 23:46.

Psa 25:8 Good and upright is Yahweh, therefore He will instruct sinners in the way- David felt that his sin and its forgiveness was a time of instruction for him, and he vows to in turn teach sinners God's way (Ps. 32:1 etc.). God wishes to manifest Himself through our witness; He wants to use each one of us as a witness to Himself. Rev. 12:11 may imply that our testimony to others is proportionate to our victory against the devil. Preaching is therefore an expression of basic righteousness. God teaches sinners His ways because He is essentially good (Ps. 25:8); and if we are righteous, we will manifest Him in this.

Psa 25:9 He will guide the humble in justice; He will teach the humble His way- To receive the guidance and teaching discussed on :4,5, we must be humble, as the clay must be soft to be worked by the Divine hand. Comparing with the context of :8, David parallels "the meek" and the repentant sinner (:8,9). The publican was so worried about his own position before God that he paid no attention, so we sense, to the hypocritical brother next to him: "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a

sinner...this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for ...he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 18:13-14). That sin-conscious man is an essay in self-humbling.

Psa 25:10 All the ways of Yahweh are grace and truth to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies- "Grace and truth" is a term associated with the promises to Abraham, which formed the new covenant. If that covenant was kept, then God would lead those within it- in grace and truth. See on :13.

Psa 25:11 For Your name's sake, Yahweh, pardon my iniquity, for it is great- See on Ex. 32:32. David, realizing he was seen by God as a representative of his people, prayed for forgiveness in that he realized that he was thereby a pattern for all the wayward people of God. "For Your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my iniquity; for it is great" is an undoubted reference to Moses praying for Israel's forgiveness relating to the golden calf (Ex. 32:30,31). He saw himself as both Moses in prayer and also guilty Israel. He saw Bathsheba had been his golden calf idol, mixing as it had done sexual abandon with an appearance of Yahweh worship. There was nobody to pray for him apart from himself. He saw himself as all Israel, savable only by pure grace and the sincere prayer of a mediator- even if the mediator himself was guilty. God's Name is His character and personality (Ex. 34:5-7), and integral to that is His desire to forgive.

Psa 25:12 What man is he who fears Yahweh? He shall instruct him in the way that he shall choose- The man who fears Yahweh is the repentant, humbled sinner who is open to instruction (:8,9). This is the man who fears Yahweh and His judgments in a way they should be feared. The Father opens up new ways of understanding for us each, of His choosing and according to our individual needs, in response to our living a God-fearing life. If our hearts are knit together in brotherly love, the more we will understand- for true understanding is, in the end, to fathom the depths of God's love (Col. 2:2).

Psa 25:13 His soul shall dwell at ease, His descendants shall inherit the land- David here appropriates the promises to Abraham to himself (see on :10). He saw the outcome of the promised blessing as peace with God, knowing that we have been forgiven (:8,10). And this is how the New Testament interprets the Abrahamic blessing (Acts 3:25,26).

Psa 25:14 The friendship of Yahweh is with those who fear Him; He will show them His covenant- "Friendship" is better "secret" or "council". What is so awesome is that the

Hebrew word *sod*, 'council' or 'court', is something open to us as mortals. In Biblical times, Kings had their *sod*, their gathering of intimate advisors and ministers. But *we*, mere mortals on earth, are invited to be part of the *sod* of God Almighty, having His purpose and plans revealed to us (Ps. 25:14; Job 29:4). But *sod* members weren't passive listeners; they gave their advice and requests, and the King factored that into His decision making. This is a picture of the power of prayer from those who have understood the way and essence of the King of Heaven.

God's doctrines are described as a secret, a mystery; the Hebrew word used in this connection means 'A confidential plan revealed to intimate friends'; and yet they are revealed to the true believers (Am. 3:7-8; Jer. 23: 18,22 AV mg.; Ps. 25:14; Eph. 3:3-6). Therefore the congregation of true believers is called "the secret assembly of the saints"(Ps. 89:7 Heb.). There are many Bibles around, but God's doctrines are to some extent a secret, and not understood by many of those who possess and read the Bible. It therefore follows that the Bible must be written in such a way as to conceal Truth from the majority of readers.

Psa 25:15 My eyes are ever on Yahweh, for He will pluck my feet out of the net- The metaphor suggests that instead of looking carefully at his feet to ensure he didn't step into a net or trap, David's eyes instead were looking upwards to Yahweh. See on Ps. 26:3.

Psa 25:16 Turn to me- The phrase used of God having respect to those in covenant with Him (Lev. 26:9); the theme of covenant relationship is clearly in David's mind (:10,13,14).

And have mercy on me, for I am desolate and afflicted- This would be appropriate to how David felt when ill and politically isolated after his sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 25:17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged. Oh bring me out of my distresses!- These troubles of the heart surely refer to his feelings at the time after the sin with Bathsheba. David's mind was on how Jacob and Joseph had been rescued from their "troubles" (s.w. Gen. 35:3; 42:21). Such "troubles" come to those who break covenant (Dt. 31:17,21), and David is asking for covenant relationship to be restored (:10,13,14,16).

Psa 25:18 Consider my affliction and my travail, forgive all my sins- David perceived that

his affliction was a result of his sins; yet he saw it as "travail", pregnant with the hope of restored relationship with God and a new birth to a new life with Him.

Psa 25:19 Consider my enemies, for they are many; they hate me with total hatred- The sin with Bathsheba led to David having enemies, within his own family, and also within Bathsheba's family. For Ahithophel David's counsellor was her grandfather.

Psa 25:20 Oh keep my soul, and deliver me; let me not be disappointed, for I take refuge in You- "Disappointed" is s.w. "ashamed" in :2. Typical of men of his time, David seems to fear shame more than death itself. Defeat meant shame, and he desperately begged not to be shamed. Perhaps it was the function of his failure with Bathsheba to help him redefine the motives for his trust in God.

Psa 25:21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for You- If David means that his own previous integrity and uprightness should preserve him, then he was arguing for salvation by works. And if he intended to from then on promise integrity, then he also failed in that. He still hasn't come to a total casting of himself upon God's grace. “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” was surely a collapse of faith and "uprightness" (1 Sam. 27:1). And it led to the way in which David deceived Achish by pretending he was attacking Jewish towns, when in fact he was going out and attacking the Amalekite settlements, killing all men, women and children in them so that nobody was left alive to tell that it was David who had attacked them (1 Sam. 27:8-10). Innocent people were slain by David’s sword for the ‘political’ reason that he had to keep Achish ‘in the dark’ about what he was really up to. And so in case a 5 year old say something incriminating later, David simply killed the little boy. Indeed, when Achish later says that David would be best not to go with him to fight Saul, David hypocritically says: “But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant so long as I have been with you unto this day, that I may not go fight against the enemies [i.e. Saul] of my lord the king?” (1 Sam. 29:8). This was hardly an example of the “integrity” and “uprightness” which David glorifies in his Psalms, and which he insisted he was full of (Ps. 25:21). Indeed he claims that his integrity is the basis of his acceptance by God (Ps. 26:1).

Psa 25:22 Redeem Israel, God, out all of His troubles- David parallels his own afflictions and need for forgiveness with Israel’s need for redemption (Ps. 25:18,22); or how the saving strength of Yahweh’s anointed (i.e. David) was to be Israel’s saving strength likewise (Ps. 28:8,9). This is why his Psalms were reused in later historical contexts

within Israel. The feelings and pulse of David are expressed at more length than those of any other Bible character; and therefore in these we are to see something of the Lord we follow. It is significant that David is seen as the representative of Israel, just as was and is the Lord- hence, e.g., the confusion between “the city of Judah” and “the city of David” (2 Kings 14:20 cp. 2 Chron. 25:28 AVmg.). But this is an alphabetical Psalm, the :21 was already the last letter of the alphabet, and it is now repeated. This could imply that this verse was added later, under inspiration, because it was so well perceived that David was a patter for all God's subsequent people.

PSALMS CHAPTER 26

Psa 26:1 By David.

Judge me, Yahweh, for I have walked in my integrity. I have trusted also in Yahweh without wavering- What David learnt from the Bathsheba failure is in essence what we all have to learn. Psalm 26 was surely written before he sinned with her. He speaks of how he had walked in integrity before God “without wavering” (Ps. 26:1 RV), and how his foot did not slip (Ps. 26:12). He was yet to "walk" upon the roof of his house and lust after Bathsheba. What else does this evidently pre-Bathsheba Psalm indicate about David’s attitude, and what changed after Bathsheba? He speaks in Ps. 26:5 of how he refuses to sit at table with sinners. Yet the Lord rejoiced to do just this. He contrasts his righteousness with the sinfulness of the wicked (Ps. 26:10,11)- a far cry from Paul’s insistence in Romans that we have sinned just as much as the world has, in the sense that we desperately need salvation by grace. When David asks for forgiveness in Ps. 26:11 (“redeem me, and be merciful unto me”), he therefore was apparently asking for mercy in an almost technical way, perhaps seeing the only mercy he required as a resurrection from the dead. All these attitudes changed radically after his Bathsheba experience. He could look back and reflect how “As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved” (Ps. 30:6), perhaps looking back to Ps. 26:10, where he had felt confident his foot had never been moved. And he speaks of how he only stands strong because of God’s gracious favour (Ps. 30:7). God works through sin and failure- to bring us to know His grace. We follow the same learning curve as David, if we are truly God’s man or woman.

“I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” is surely a collapse of faith (1 Sam. 27:1). And it led to the way in which David deceived Achish by pretending he was attacking Jewish towns, when in fact he was going out and attacking the Amalekite settlements, killing all men, women and children in them so that nobody was left alive to tell that it was David who had attacked them (1 Sam. 27:8-10). Innocent people were slain by David’s sword for the ‘political’ reason that he had to keep Achish ‘in the dark’ about what he was really up to. And so in case a 5 year old say something incriminating later, David simply killed the little boy. Indeed, when Achish later says that David would be best not to go with him to fight Saul, David hypocritically says: “But what have I done? And what have you found in your servant so long as I have been with you unto this day, that I may not go fight against the

enemies [i.e. Saul] of my lord the king?" (1 Sam. 29:8). This was hardly an example of the "integrity" and "uprightness" which David glorifies in his Psalms, and which he insisted he was full of (Ps. 25:21). Indeed he claims that his integrity is the basis of his acceptance by God (Ps. 26:1).

Psa 26:2 Examine me, Yahweh, and prove me; test my heart and my mind- David was confident not only of legalistic obedience but also of a heart in which God would find nothing wrong. Indeed David had been considered a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), but it seems this led David to assume that from then on, his heart would be always found perfect before God. He didn't remain the idealistic, spiritually minded shepherd boy. And this assumption that how he was at one point in his life was how he would always be... led him into his sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 26:3 For Your grace is before my eyes, I have walked in Your truth- Grace and truth often refer to the covenant with Abraham, which David so often alludes to and feels bound to. We notice that his eyes were not upon the path of his feet, but were toward God and His grace; that meant that in practice, he would walk in "truth". The same idea is in Ps. 25:15 "My eyes are ever on Yahweh, for He will pluck my feet out of the net". The metaphor suggests that instead of looking carefully at his feet to ensure he didn't step into a net or trap, David's eyes instead were looking upwards to Yahweh. And so here too, if the focus of our eyes is upward towards God's grace, then we will naturally walk in the path of truth. So often religious people have put the emphasis the other way around; truth in the sense of theoretical purity of understanding has been given the priority, and with eyes down upon that, the wonder of God's grace has not been the guiding light of their walk.

Psa 26:4 I have not sat with deceitful men, neither will I go in with hypocrites- So often David makes reference to his hypocritical enemies within Israel, and the judgments to come upon the wicked (Ps. 1:1; 4:3; 5:5; 15:4; 26:4,5; 35:3-8; 45:7; 52:6; 58:6; 104:35; 109:5-20; 137:8,9; 139:21). The hypocrisy in view may refer to the prevalent idolatry which was deceit against God, and not simply to their two faced behaviour to David personally.

Psa 26:5 I hate the assembly of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked- Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self

righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

Psa 26:6 I will wash my hands in innocence- David's insistence upon his own purity (see on :2) may not necessarily be naive self-righteousness, but rather a reflection of his faith in God's cleansing, which has thereby made him innocent before God. This is also an allusion to the priests washing before they came to the altar (Ex. 30:17-21). We note David acted as a priest even though he was not a Levite.

So I will go around Your altar, Yahweh- Walking around the altar in procession was not required by the Mosaic law, but was clearly done by other religions. We recall the priests of Baal doing so on Mount Carmel. Perhaps this and other Psalms were sung during such processions around the altar.

Psa 26:7 that I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, and tell of all Your wondrous works- As noted on :6, it would appear that whilst marching around the altar, this and other Psalms were sung in praise, including the recounting of God's works in history.

Psa 26:8 Yahweh, I love the habitation of Your dwelling place, the place where Your glory dwells- David contrasts his love of the sanctuary (where God dwelt, Ex. 25:8) and the shekinah glory with his dislike of the gatherings of sinners (:5). The implication could be that those gatherings also had a religious dimension, which involved idolatry. We see the power of idolatry in that despite the visible presence of the shekinah, men still worshipped idols- proof enough that visible miracle is no absolute basis for faith or spiritual behaviour.

Whilst on the run from Saul, David longed to be in the "place... and habitation / dwelling" of Yahweh, at the sanctuary operated by Samuel. There was no temple, but Yahweh still had a place and dwelling on earth. But later in Ps. 132:5 David seems to feel that Yahweh needed a more grandiose "place... dwelling" (s.w.), otherwise He would have no dwelling place. Over the years, he had come to focus more upon the physical and external rather than upon the essential and the spiritual. This is a tendency for all of us.

Psa 26:9 Don't gather my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloodthirsty men- In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Psalms 24, 25 and 26 are full of David explaining that fellowship with God was dependent upon a man's "integrity", walking in truth, hating sinners, personal innocence, "uprightness", clean hands and pure heart. And throughout these Psalms, David holds up himself as the great example.

Psa 26:10 in whose hands is wickedness, their right hand is full of bribes- This appears to be commentary upon the state of affairs under Saul's kingship and Absalom's corruption; but the later prophets so often criticize the leadership of Israel for taking bribes, and perhaps this was rewritten in order to make this point to those later generations.

Psa 26:11 But as for me, I will walk in my integrity. Redeem me, and be merciful to

me- The two halves of this verse are an intentional contrast. David is persuaded of his own integrity, but he realizes he still needs mercy and redemption; he therefore asked for forgiveness for his sins of ignorance. Paul had a similar sense (1 Cor. 4:4). It was this abiding sense of the need for God's mercy which was David's salvation.

Psa 26:12 My foot stands in an even place- The idea may be as in Ps. 27:11, that he felt he was being led in a path where there were no spiritual stumblingblocks.

In the congregations I will bless Yahweh- It is the struggle of every spiritually minded and righteous man to humble himself to accept he is only part of a far wider congregation, comprised of believers who may frankly be less spiritually minded than himself (Ps. 26:12; 35:18; 68:26). David and the Lord Jesus are parade examples of achieving this sense.

PSALMS CHAPTER 27

Psa 27:1 By David- The references to armies and war being against David (:3) suggest this Psalm was written whilst fleeing Saul or Absalom. David's great longing was for the sanctuary (:4) which he was excluded from, and his desire was to return there. And yet he still feels God's presence with him in exile. These Psalms were therefore understandably used for the exiles in captivity.

Yahweh is my light and my salvation- whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the strength of my life- of whom shall I be afraid?- The reference to "light" may be because David so loved seeing the shekinah glory over the ark in the sanctuary: "Yahweh, I love the habitation of Your dwelling place, the place where Your glory dwells" (Ps. 26:8). On the run, he had no access to the sanctuary, and had actually sent the ark back to Zion when he fled from Absalom. And yet he feels that God's "light" is still with him wherever he is. And all those unable to access church meetings and the visible gatherings of God's people can know the same. Likewise David was fleeing away from the "stronghold" of Zion, but felt that God was His strength or stronghold.

Psa 27:2 When evildoers came at me to eat up my flesh, even my adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell- "Came upon me to eat up my flesh" (AV). This is what Ahithophel proposed at the time of Absalom's uprising; to 'come upon' David, as the dew falls (2 Sam. 17:12), aiming to totally destroy David. But they were the ones who were to fall (s.w.).

Psa 27:3 Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, even then I will be confident- Perhaps a reference to Ahithophel's advice to surround David with a huge army, at the time of Absalom's

rebellion. The conditional "*though* an army..." is appropriate in that Ahithophel's advice was not actually implemented.

Psa 27:4 One thing I have asked of Yahweh, that I will seek after: That I may dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life, to see Yahweh's beauty, and to inquire in His temple- David's simple desire was to be able to again worship God in the sanctuary on Mount Zion. Under inspiration, this is rewritten and reapplied to the exiles and their desire to return to the temple; for there was no temple in David's lifetime.

Often, "desire" is seen by God as prayer (Ps. 10:17; 21:2; 27:4; 59:10; 92:11; 140:8; 145:19; Mt. 18:32; Rom. 10:1; 1 Jn. 5:15). God interprets that inner desire as prayer, even if it is not articulated in specific requests.

Psa 27:5 For in the day of trouble He will keep me secretly in His pavilion, under the shadow of His tabernacle He will hide me. He will lift me up on a rock- Although David was exiled from the sanctuary (:4), he felt he was within the tabernacle, even under the shadow of the cherubic wings over the ark; with the shekinah glory as it were around him, over the blood of atonement sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Again and again, Old Testament incidents taught that the intensest presence of God was not in fact in the Jerusalem sanctuary, but in the hearts of sincere, exiled believers. And so it has often been in the later Christian experience; spirituality and the most active presence of God has often been experienced in exile from the established, visible sanctuaries. See on Ps. 29:8.

Psa 27:6 Now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me, I will offer sacrifices of joy in His tent. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to Yahweh- David looked forward to returning to the sanctuary in Zion and praising God for his salvation from his enemies. However when Absalom was slain, his head was not at all lifted up.

Psa 27:7 Hear, Yahweh, when I cry with my voice. Have mercy also on me, and answer me- "Have mercy" or 'give graciously' is the word of Jacob when seeking to return from exile, yet facing apparently insuperable obstacles (Gen. 33:5,11). Time and again we see the example of taking strength from historical (Biblical) precedents.

Psa 27:8 When You said, Seek my face, my heart said to You, I will seek Your face, Yahweh- This can be understood as David's plea to be allowed back into the Jerusalem sanctuary to worship / seek God. Hence GNB "When you said, "Come worship me," I

answered, "I will come, LORD"". But David appears somewhat manipulative in this argument, because he is experiencing the sanctuary presence of God from far outside it (see on :5).

We are frequently reminded in the prophets that the spiritual way of life is one which *is seeking* God. We are to seek His face (Ps. 24:6; 27:8)- which it is impossible to behold (Ex. 33:20). Actually finding God in the ultimate sense is therefore unattainable in this life; but our whole mortal life must be lived in this spirit of *seeking* ultimate perfection. Seeking God is often defined in the prophets as forsaking our sins and desiring to be righteous (Amos 5:5,8,14,15). None of us are completely successful in our seeking of God, and therefore it follows that none of is *completely* forsakes all our sinfulness.

The historical point when God invited David to seek His face may have been when Samuel anointed David, and gave him the message that he was to be king. And doubtless David was told at the time that he was to seek God's face. When under persecution by Saul, when the promise of kingship seemed so far from fulfilment, David reminds God that he had indeed sought His face as required; and asks God to fulfil the prophetic word about kingship (Ps. 119:58).

Psa 27:9 Don't hide Your face from me; don't put Your servant away in anger. You have been my help, don't abandon me, neither forsake me, God of my salvation- David feels that his suffering at Absalom's hand is a result of his sin with Bathsheba (which indeed it was), but is making the mistake of assuming that suffering the consequences of sin means that sin hasn't been forgiven. Or we can reflect that Paul can speak in Rom. 7 as if he is two different people; "I myself serve the law of God", but "my flesh" serves sin. Likewise David asked God not to hide His face from him, David *personally*, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's *sins* (Ps. 51:9). And one wonders whether the way the records of the Lord's temptations are written implies some similar recognition by the Spirit of the two 'men' within the Lord.

Psa 27:10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then Yahweh will take me up- He evidently loved his parents and expected their passing when he wrote this. Perhaps therefore the Psalm had its genesis in David's experience when fleeing from Saul, when he sent his parents to Moab for safety (1 Sam. 22:3). But now he edits the Psalm and develops it with reference to his flight from Absalom. And yet 'forsaking' could imply they turned against him. This would then make David's sufferings the more poignant. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters (Ps. 27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18).

This speaks Messianically of the Lord's sense of being forsaken. The disciples forsook Him (Mt. 26:56), His mother left Him, on John's arm, and so the words of Ps. 27:9,10 started to come true: "Leave me not, neither forsake me, O God... when my father and my mother forsake me" . All His scaffolding was being removed. He had leaned on His disciples (Lk. 22:28), He had naturally leaned on His mother. Now they had forsaken Him. And now His mother had forsaken Him. And so He pleaded with His true Father not to leave Him. And hence the agony, the deep agony of Mt. 27:46: "My God, my God, Why hast *thou* (this is where the emphasis should be) forsaken me?".

Psa 27:11 Teach me Your way, Yahweh. Lead me in a straight path, because of my enemies- When David fled Jerusalem from Absalom, he apparently had no clear game plan. He didn't know quite where to go, as Absalom appeared to have garnered mass popularity. And yet David felt he was being led in a straight path; God likewise would lead the exiles in a straight path if they repented and wished to be truly restored to Zion (s.w. Is. 40:4; 42:16 s.w.).

Psa 27:12 Don't deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen up against me, such as breathe out cruelty- So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind. And it seems this situation repeated at the time of Absalom's rebellion, to which this psalm was reapplied by David.

Psa 27:13 I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living- This appears to be another reference to David's desire to be restored to the sanctuary in Zion, to see the shekinah glory which he saw as the quintessence of God's goodness.

Psa 27:14 Wait for Yahweh, be strong, and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for Yahweh- Again we see David understanding his experiences as setting a pattern for others. This is the way to use suffering, as 2 Cor. 1:4-7 makes clear. The way David's Psalms were rewritten for use in other contexts is evidence enough that his desire was fulfilled. The hearts or spirits of others were to "take courage". The Greek and Hebrew words translated 'spirit' don't *only* mean 'power'. They frequently refer to the mind / heart. We read of God giving men a new heart, a new spirit; of Him working on men's hearts to make them do His will. He gives them a new spirit. This doesn't mean that they of their own volition have the *power* of the Holy Spirit gifts, as, e.g., some in the early church did. God will strengthen the heart / spirit of those who try to be strong (Ps. 27:14;

31:24). He can even, somehow, withhold men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and keep us from falling (Jude 24). We should therefore have no essential objection to the idea of the Lord granting us His Spirit, in the sense of His thinking, His heart / mind.

We're familiar with the references to God hardening the heart of Pharaoh (Ex. 14:8 etc.). However, the same Hebrew words occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the righteous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other. This is a sobering thought- for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too.

PSALMS CHAPTER 28

Psa 28:1 By David.
To You, Yahweh, I call. My rock, don't be deaf to me; lest, if You are silent to me, I would become like those who go down into the pit- Rocks are only a place of safety if they have caves within them. The imagery suggests this is a wilderness Psalm, whilst David was on the run from Saul. Indeed this is how probably most of the Psalms originated, although they were edited for relevance to later situations and generations.

Psa 28:2 Hear the voice of my petitions when I cry to You, when I lift up my hands toward Your Most Holy Place- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. David lifts himself up to God (Ps. 25:1; 28:2; 86:4), and asks God to lift up Himself in response (Ps. 7:6; 10:12; 94:2). David at this point is in exile from the sanctuary but still prays towards it. This therefore became appropriate material for the Jewish captives of later generations.

Psa 28:3 Don't draw me away with the wicked- This is the language of final condemnation. David is asking not to be condemned along with the wicked at the last day.

With the workers of iniquity who speak peace with their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts- Clearly David has in view specific people with whom he mixed, but knew they would be condemned at the last day. We query whether such judgment of others' salvation was appropriate. David himself had spoken peace with his neighbour Uriah, giving him presents etc., when mischief was in his heart- he took his neighbour's wife and had his neighbour murdered. But David at this point sees poor behaviour to one's

neighbour as the epitome of the wickedness that deserved Divine condemnation, and he insists he is not in that category. Seeing most of the Psalms were evidently rewritten by David over the years, we wonder why he didn't as it were edit out such earlier self righteousness. The truth is that he never really accepted much guilt over the Bathsheba incident after he was spared the death sentence.

Psa 28:4 Give them according to their work, and according to the wickedness of their doings. Give them according to the working of their own hands; bring back on them what they deserve- Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

Psa 28:5 Because they don't respect the works of Yahweh, nor the working of His hands, He will break them down and not build them up- This is alluded to in 2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10 about how we ought to build up the weak and condemned, rather than destroying them. It's as if Paul felt David had things the wrong way around at this point. See on :3,4.

Psa 28:6 Blessed be Yahweh, because He has heard the voice of my petitions- As so often in the Psalms, there appears a change in attitude half way through them. What begins as desperate pleading turns into a peaceful sense of having been answered by God. This could have been because of some visible or audible answer coming in the course of the prayer. But I would suggest it is far truer to the experience of prayerful people that in the course of prayer, we who began in urgent pleading with God for action become convinced that in essence He has already responded. And we see this often in the Psalms.

Psa 28:7 Yahweh is my strength and my shield. My heart has trusted in Him, and I have been helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoices. With my song I will thank Him- This is another reference to Abraham, for whom Yahweh was a shield (Gen. 15:1). As noted on :6, David feels motivated to thank God for answers which he has apparently not yet received.

Psa 28:8 Yahweh is their strength- "Strength" is *Yeshua*. So we have here an allusion to 'Jesus Christ / the anointed'.

He is a stronghold of salvation to His anointed- In Old Testament times, God described His whole people as His anointed one, His Christ: “The Lord is a strength unto his people, and he is the saving strength of his anointed” (Ps. 28:8 RVmg.). The whole people were His anointed King, His Messiah, the anointed one. And so it is for all those today who are “in Christ”. Thus the prophecy about Christ personally that He would tread upon snakes and wild animals (Ps. 91:13) is quoted as being fulfilled in the disciples, who ‘were’ Christ on their preaching mission (Lk. 10:19; Mk. 16:18). Zion was the stronghold, but even outside the sanctuary, David realized God was just as much present and active.

Psa 28:9 Save Your people, and bless Your inheritance. Be their shepherd also, and bear them up forever- The feelings and pulse of David are expressed at more length than those of any other Bible character; and therefore in these we are to see something of the Lord we follow. It is significant that David is seen as the representative of Israel ["be their shepherd *also*"], just as was and is the Lord- hence, e.g., the confusion between “the city of Judah” and “the city of David” (2 Kings 14:20 cp. 2 Chron. 25:28 AVmg.). Or consider how David parallels his own afflictions and need for forgiveness with Israel’s need for redemption (Ps. 25:18,22); or how the saving strength of Yahweh’s anointed (i.e. David) was to be Israel’s saving strength likewise (Ps. 28:8,9).

PSALMS CHAPTER 29

Psa 29:1 A Psalm by David- The last verse concludes: "A Song for the Dedication of the Temple". Perhaps this was written by David before his death in anticipation of the building of Solomon's temple.

Ascribe to Yahweh, you sons of the mighty, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength- This

could refer to the Angels in the court of heaven (Ps. 89:6 cp. Ps. 29:5,7). David saw his praise of God in the sanctuary as reflecting that of the Angels in the heavenly sanctuary, which was mirrored in the earthly one (Heb. 9:23).

Psa 29:2 Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name. Worship Yahweh in holy array- As noted on :1, this was "A Song for the Dedication of the Temple". David therefore feels that the heavely temple is reflected in the earthly temple. As the priests in the earthly temple were clothed in “holy garments for glory and for beauty” (Ex. 28:2) so were the Angels above.

Psa 29:3 Yahweh’s voice is on the waters. The God of glory thunders, even Yahweh on many waters- This is all the language of theophany (Ex. 9:23; Ps. 18:9,13; 104:3; Rev. 10:3). Perhaps David expected a theophany at the dedication of the temple, and the voice of Yahweh to be heard as at Sinai. But I have argued elsewhere that David's obsession with the physical temple was misplaced idealism. God only reluctantly accepted it; His immediate response to David's request to build Him a house was that He didn't want one. Therefore it could be that here we have David as it were running ahead of himself in expectation that God would respond to the temple with the theophany he expectantly hoped for in this psalm.

Psa 29:4 Yahweh’s voice is powerful. Yahweh’s voice is full of majesty- The sanctuary was full of power and majesty (Ps. 96:6 s.w.); David imagines God's voice booming in majesty through the new temple.

Psa 29:5 The voice of Yahweh breaks the cedars. Yes, Yahweh breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon- David had made plans for cedars to be brought from Lebanon for the new temple. He imagines the voice of Yahweh tearing through the temple as a wind, stronger than the cedars.

Psa 29:6 He also makes them to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox- GNB "He makes the mountains of Lebanon jump like calves and makes Mount Hermon leap like a young bull". It is as if the temple comes alive with joy now that God has entered it. And there is the idea that Lebanon and Hermon, from where the cedars came from, would join in response to God's word. For David ever had the hope of Gentile response to Israel's God.

Psa 29:7 Yahweh’s voice strikes with flashes of lightning- This is the language of

theophany (Ex. 9:23; Ps. 18:9,13; 104:3; Rev. 10:3), which David hoped and expected would happen when the temple was dedicated; see on :1.

Psa 29:8 Yahweh's voice shakes the wilderness, Yahweh shakes the wilderness of Kadesh- "Kadesh" is the same word as "sanctuary" (e.g. Ps. 20:2; 63:2). The idea is that the wilderness is as holy as the sanctuary. This is a common theme in the Psalms. Although David was exiled from the sanctuary (Ps. 27:4), he felt he was within the tabernacle, even under the shadow of the cherubic wings over the ark (Ps. 27:5); with the shekinah glory as it were around him, over the blood of atonement sprinkled upon the mercy seat. Again and again, Old Testament incidents taught that the intensest presence of God was not in fact in the Jerusalem sanctuary, but in the hearts of sincere, exiled believers. And so it has often been in the later Christian experience; spirituality and the most active presence of God has often been experienced in exile from the established, visible sanctuaries.

Psa 29:9 Yahweh's voice makes the deer calve, and strips the forests bare. In His temple everything says, Glory!- As explained on :8, David had learned that the glory and presence of God was as real in the wilderness and forests as in the Jerusalem sanctuary. And so in this proposed dedication of the temple, he makes the point that the same voice of God which would thunder "Glory!" in the temple was just as present and active in the desert.

Psa 29:10 Yahweh sat enthroned at the flood; truly, Yahweh sits as King forever- The reference would be to the mercy seat as a kind of throne for God. As He had judged the earth at the time of the flood, so He would as it were reign in judgment when the ark was permanently settled in the new temple; that was David's idea. Note how David the king repeatedly calls God his "king". His exaltation didn't lead him to pride, as he was always under the deep impression that he was not the ultimate king (Ps. 5:2; 10:16; 29:10; 44:4; 47:6).

Psa 29:11 Yahweh will give strength to His people, Yahweh will bless His people with peace. A Psalm. A Song for the Dedication of the Temple- See on :1. The allusion is to the priestly blessing of Num. 6:24. This was to be given from the new temple which David envisioned.

PSALMS CHAPTER 30

Psa 30:1 By David- The primary context may have been David's relief at having been healed and forgiven after his sin with Bathsheba.

I will extol You, Yahweh, for You have raised me up, and have not made my enemies to rejoice over me- The political threats to David immediately after his sin with Bathsheba aren't detailed in the historical narratives, but the Psalms often refer to them. However, David suffered so much from Bathsheba's grandfather Ahithophel, his own son Absalom and others. So his rejoicing as if all consequences of the sin were somehow annulled is in a sense incorrect.

Psa 30:2 Yahweh my God, I cried to You, and You have healed me- Whilst this applies to David's healing of his mortal sickness after the sin with Bathsheba, the same word for "healed" is used of Hezekiah's healing (2 Kings 20:8). So many of the Psalms were clearly rewritten with reference to Hezekiah.

Psa 30:3 Yahweh, You have brought up my soul from Sheol. You have kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit- "Brought up" is the language of resurrection. The language on one hand suggests a kind of living death; and yet there is also the clear hint at resurrection, because finally it was only true of the Lord Jesus.

Psa 30:4 Sing praise to Yahweh, You saints of His, give thanks to His holy name- David wanted the whole world and brotherhood of his time to praise God- because of the grace shown to him. This was the great positive outcome of David's awful sins.

Psa 30:5 For His anger is but for a moment; His grace is for all our lifetime. Weeping may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning- There is no indication in the historical records that God's anger was visibly poured out upon David because of his sin. But the Psalms so often imply this. The silence of the historical record about his mortal sickness at the time is perhaps because the record reflects the forgiveness and blessing given at the time. God's anger with the exiles is likewise likened to being only for a relatively short moment; a night of weeping to be followed by an eternal dawn. The restoration prophets are full of these images.

Psa 30:6 As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved- What David learnt from the Bathsheba failure is in essence what we all have to learn. Psalm 26 was surely

written before he sinned with her. He speaks of how he had walked in integrity before God “without wavering” (Ps. 26:1 RV), and how his foot did not slip (Ps. 26:12). What else does this evidently pre-Bathsheba Psalm indicate about David’s attitude, and what changed after Bathsheba? He speaks in Ps. 26:5 of how he refuses to sit at table with sinners. Yet the Lord rejoiced to do just this. He contrasts his righteousness with the sinfulness of the wicked (Ps. 26:10,11)- a far cry from Paul’s insistence in Romans that we have sinned just as much as the world has, in the sense that we desperately need salvation by grace. When David asks for forgiveness in Ps. 26:11 (“redeem me, and be merciful unto me”), he therefore was apparently asking for mercy in an almost technical way, perhaps seeing the only mercy he required as a resurrection from the dead. All these attitudes changed radically after his Bathsheba experience. He could look back and reflect how “As for me, I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved” (Ps. 30:6), perhaps looking back to Ps. 26:10, where he had felt confident his foot had never been moved. And he speaks of how he only stands strong because of God’s gracious favour (Ps. 30:7). God works through sin and failure- to bring us to know His grace. We follow the same learning curve as David, if we are truly God’s man or woman. The soliloquy of David is commented upon in Rom. 4:6: “David pronounceth blessing upon the man [i.e. any man, each of us] unto whom God reckoneth righteousness...” (RV). Rom. 4:9 RV likewise speaks of David in the soliloquy of Ps. 32 pronouncing blessing upon *us*.

It has been rightly noted that David's remaining at Jerusalem " at the time when kings go forth to battle" (11:1) is the classic example of the devil finding work for idle hands. It was the set up for David's sin with Bathsheba. That he was lying down on his bed in the late afternoon rather than working would exemplify the same thing. He appears to recognize his attitude problem in Ps. 30:6: " In my prosperity I said, I shall never be (spiritually) moved" . In the lead up to the sin, God had given him victory after victory- leading him to think that he must therefore be spiritually OK because of his many physical blessings (1 Chron. 18:6 RV). His conscience had been blunted. David may have cleverly alluded to this when he comments that the ark was abiding in a *tent*, and therefore he would not go down to his *house* (2 Sam. 11:11). The tension between a tent and a house is surely intended to take David back to his words in 2 Sam. 7:2, where he laments as unacceptable the fact that he lives in a *house* but the ark is in a *tent*. And David was ‘tarrying’, living in a settled way, in a house in Jerusalem now.

The fact that he is condemned for having "despised the commandment of the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:9) in David's sin with Bathsheba indicates that He knew all along what God's will really was. The fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: "The soul that doeth ought presumptuously... because he hath despised the word of the Lord... that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David’s emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing

sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion. In his prosperity he had said “I shall never be moved” and he was determined that he couldn’t be (Ps. 30:6). Hearing those words from Nathan must have struck real fear into David- he was being incriminated for the supreme sin of presumption, for which there was no provision of sacrifice or repentance.

David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Psa 30:7 You, Yahweh, when You favoured me, made my mountain stand strong; but when You hid Your face, I was troubled- David's mountain presumably refers to his kingdom. The troubles that came to David's kingdom as a result of his sin with Bathsheba never really left him; the kingdom was never really "strong" as it had been before. It was full of division and infighting.

Psa 30:8 I cried to You, Yahweh; to Yahweh I made supplication- "Supplication" is the same word translated "have mercy" in :10, and is the term used in David's plea for forgiveness in Ps. 51:1. The cry for mercy suggests the moral guilt of the sin with Bathsheba, which had its consequence in David's mortal sickness with which it seems he was stricken soon afterwards (as in Ps. 41:4).

Psa 30:9 What profit is there in my destruction, if I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise You? Shall it declare Your truth?- These are very much the thoughts of Hezekiah when terminally ill. But David clearly had these same thoughts. There is the clear implication that there is no conscious survival of death. After death there is no praise of God; and that points up the critical importance to use life to praise Him. The implication of David's argument, even if it could appear somewhat manipulative, is that God ought to keep him alive as he can then praise God. But God isn't interested in receiving praise for its own sake; otherwise there would be no death in this life for the righteous. So there seems some error of logic in the argument, although it is true so far as it goes. "Declare" is the word used for David's declaration of praise after his forgiveness concerning

Bathsheba (Ps. 51:15). The "truth" which David declared after his forgiveness (Ps. 30:9) was the ultimate truth, of God's forgiveness of him by grace; a 'declaring' of his sin (Ps. 38:18 s.w.) and God's forgiveness.

Psa 30:10 Hear, Yahweh, and have mercy on me. Yahweh, be my helper- Earlier David had sought Yahweh's help (s.w.) on the basis that he had been obedient to God's word (Ps. 119:173 s.w.), and was innocent (Ps. 119:86 s.w.). But the sin with Bathsheba led David to beg for God to be his helper purely on the basis of grace (Ps. 30:10 s.w.). He had asked for God's words to be his "helper" (Ps. 119:175), but now he quits his academic study and begs directly for God Himself to be his "helper".

Psa 30:11 You have turned my mourning into dancing for me. You have removed my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness- David removed his sackcloth when his child died (2 Sam. 12:20-22). It was perhaps at this point that he realized that he had been truly forgiven; hence the strange and much observed paradox of David's relative rejoicing at a time when he was supposed to be mourning for his child's death.

Psa 30:12 To the end that my heart may sing praise to You, and not be silent. Yahweh my God, I will give thanks to You forever!- David often uses the idea of 'confession', in the double Hebrew sense of both confessing sin and yet also confessing the knowledge of God to others (e.g. Ps. 30:12 AV cp. NEB). Imagine *his* attitude in preaching! There must have been a true humility in his style of speaking, his body language and in his message- coupled with an earnestness and intensity few have since matched.

PSALMS CHAPTER 31

Psa 31:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.
In You, Yahweh, I take refuge- The idea is that God was David's city of refuge. These cities were for those who needed to flee when being chased by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:26). The imagery is very appropriate to David when fleeing from Saul and Absalom. David's constant meditation upon God's law would have included the sections about the cities of refuge; he realized that actually no such city was available for him, but the spirit of the law led him to reflect that Yahweh was his refuge, wherever he was. David tends to open wilderness Psalms with this reflection, just as we may tend

to begin prayers with the same opening phrase and thoughts (Ps. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1).

Let me never be disappointed. Deliver me in Your righteousness- Typical of men of his time, David seems to fear shame [s.w. "disappointed"] more than death itself. Defeat meant shame, and he desperately begged not to be shamed. Perhaps it was the function of his failure with Bathsheba to help him redefine the motives for his trust in God.

Psa 31:2 Bow down Your ear to me, deliver me quickly- The way men like Abraham and Moses reasoned with God and changed His stated purpose indicates the condescension of God to us. The way He hears and responds to human prayer is humility itself. David realized this: " Bow down thine ear to me" he prayed, recognizing that it was through His humility that God hears human prayer (Ps. 31:2).

Be to me a strong rock, a house of defence to save me- Exiled from the stronghold of Zion, David looked instead to God, whose 'Zion' he now perceived to be wherever he was.

Psa 31:3 For You are my rock and my fortress- or the allusion to Zion, see on :2.

Therefore for Your name's sake lead me and guide me- The Hebrew for "lead" is only used elsewhere in Ps. 23:2 in the context of God leading David as he fled Jerusalem during Absalom's rebellion. Perhaps he had in view how God lead (s.w.) Israel through the desert (Ex. 15:13). The restoration application is to God's promise to "lead" (s.w.) the exiles on the desert journey back to Zion (Is. 40:11; 49:10).

Psa 31:4 Pluck me out of the net that they have laid secretly for me, for You are my stronghold- Although David fled the stronghold of Zion during Absalom's rebellion (see on :3), he felt God was still his stronghold, and he needed no human strength. The net secretly laid clearly alludes to Absalom's deceitful plans. The net secretly laid would refer to Absalom's lengthy planning of his rebellion.

Psa 31:5 Into Your hand I commend my spirit. You have redeemed me, Yahweh, God of truth- These words were quoted by the Lord on the cross as His very last words (Lk. 23:46); and we wonder whether "You have redeemed me" were His first words upon resurrection. The context is Absalom's rebellion (:3,4), and again we see how the Psalms

most appropriate to the crucifixion are those written about David's experience of the consequence of his sins. The Lord on the cross suffered the consequence of sin whilst personally innocent.

If we place the seven last sayings of Christ chronologically, we find that the number of words Christ uttered runs 12-9-4-3-1-1-8. This indicates that He found speaking increasingly difficult on the cross. Now He breathes His last using these words, literally giving His Spirit to God. The Greek translated "commend" means literally to place beside, to lay down beside. The Lord Jesus had a sense that His character would not be forgotten by the Father, it would take it's place beside the Father as it were, as He later would physically. This is not, of course, to give any support to the notion of disembodied spirits. Existence can only be in an animate, bodily sense. Yet the word "commend" in the Greek does suggest that Christ felt that the place He would soon take beside the Father was due to the fact that His spirit / mind had found acceptance with Him first. The Father's hands no doubt is an idiom for His care, His preservation (cp. Mt. 4:6). Christ was taking comfort in the fact that His character, those endless minutes of spiritual effort, of struggle to develop and preserve a spiritual mind, would surely not be forgotten, it would be preserved in the Father's hands.

He could have avoided His final death; but He chose not to, and in this sense He willingly gave His life rather than had it taken from Him. The death of human beings can be seen as a result of physical processes over which they have no control. They are killed, often against their will, or disease takes hold of them and eventually forces them to a point where they breathe their last. There is never a conscious giving up of the last breath as an act of the will. Death either occurs in a state of semi-consciousness or unexpectedly, in a moment. We usually, in the final analysis, cling to life at all costs, throwing our feeble best into the fight we have no chance to win. Truly did Dylan Thomas observe that men do not "go gentle into that good night" but "'rage, rage against the dying of the light". The death of the Lord Jesus Christ was altogether different- and the death of the thieves next to Him would have highlighted this. It is so often emphasized that He gave His life for us: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" in itself suggests that the death of Christ was an act of the will. He gave His flesh for us (Jn. 6:51).

The Lord was at great pains to emphasize this aspect of His death, saying the same thing time and again: " I lay down my life for the sheep...therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life...no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself...this commandment have I received of my Father" (Jn. 10:15-18). The death of Christ was therefore a conscious act of giving, it was not simply a result of being murdered by the Jews or Roman soldiers. No man took Christ's life from Him, He laid it

down of Himself, i.e. of His own will. It is therefore apparent that Christ's death was not solely a physical result of being impaled on the stake. The fact He died abnormally quickly is proof enough of this. And it explains why the centurion when he saw how the Lord so cried out was by this fact persuaded that He was the Son of God (Mk. 15:39). That last outbreathing, that death as an act of the will, was something phenomenal. We are therefore driven to the conclusion that Christ was in a position to give His life at a certain point in time chosen by Himself. "He poured out his soul unto death" (Is. 53:12) suggests that the actual point of His death was a result of mental activity within the mind of the Lord Jesus. He was the servant who "makes himself an offering for sin" (Is. 53:10).

The Greek *para-tithemi* means literally to place or lay down beside. *Tithemi* is the same word translated "lay down" when we read of Christ laying down His life for us. It is the word used to describe the palsied man being laid down at the feet of Jesus (Lk. 5:18), or the laying of a foundation stone (1 Cor. 3:11). It is also translated to bow down. The point at which Christ laid down His life, bowing down before the Father, was therefore when He commended His spirit to the Father. When Christ "yielded up the spirit" (Mt. 27:50), He was commending His spirit to God, laying down His life for us. The Greek for "yielded up" is *para-didomi*, to yield or give beside, and is evidently related in meaning to *para-tithemi*, to commend, to lay down beside.

So the idea of Christ giving Himself for us therefore refers to that final moment of giving up, yielding, laying down His breath for us. Paul was evidently moved by this; he marvelled at how Christ "gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20), using the same word as in Jn. 19:30 concerning him giving up His spirit. And we can enter into that sense or marvel and wonder. Paul again alludes to this in Eph. 5:2: "Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour". And therefore, Paul goes on, fornication, covetousness, foolish talking etc. should not even be named amongst us, "but rather giving of thanks" (Eph. 5:3,4).

That wondrous moment when Christ reached such self-control as to give His life for us, to breathe out His last breath for us as an act of the will, that moment was evidently deep within the mind of Paul. Because of it we should find ample inspiration to "walk in love" towards each other, to be so full of praise for this that we have no time to even speak about the sins to which are earthly nature is so prone. These are high ideals indeed, yet in Paul (another sin-stricken human) they began to be realized. They really can be realized in our lives, we truly can begin to appreciate the intensity of that yielding up, that laying down of the life spirit of our Lord Jesus- and therefore and thereby we will find the inspiration to respond in a life of true love for each other.
It seems likely that Peter was at the cross, and therefore his letters are packed with

allusions to it. What he saw there had a lifelong impact upon him. He makes at least two allusions to the words of Christ on the cross, and bids us enter into the spirit of it. "Hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps... who... when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:21-23). This is the same word as used about Christ commending His spirit to God in that final agony. We really are bidden enter into His example and follow Him. Christ overcame the temptation to react wrongly to His sufferings by instead committing Himself to God. This idea of laying Himself down for us was what enabled Him not to get bitter. The antidote to our own bitterness is likewise to enter into this spirit of laying down our lives.

The hands of God are also connected with the Angels, the means by which God performs His actions. Moses' hands being upheld by the hands of others can be seen as a type of the Lord Jesus being sustained by Angelic hands on the cross, connecting with the Messianic prophecy of Gen. 49:24 concerning the hands of Messiah being strengthened for His mediation by the hands of God. Throughout Scripture, God's hands are associated with His creative work in the natural creation (e.g. Ps. 8:6; 95:5; Heb. 1:10)- work which was and is performed through the Angels.

Psa 31:6 I hate those who regard lying vanities, but I trust in Yahweh- This would be another hint in the Psalms that David's enemies, be they Saul or Absalom, were involved in idolatry; whereas David trusted Yahweh alone. See on :14.

Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), how he hates them, how the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed

after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

Psa 31:7 I will be glad and rejoice in Your grace, for You have seen my affliction. You have known my soul in adversities- "Adversities" is the word used of Jacob and Joseph when in exile situations apparently lacking any human hope of restoration (Gen. 35:3; 42:21). The comfort that God sees and knows leads David to joy in an otherwise joyless situation.

Psa 31:8 You have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy, You have set my feet in a large place- This language of constriction, being shut up, was perhaps based upon David's living in caves at the time of his exile from Saul; and he reuses those Psalms when under persecution from Absalom and others. It continues the allusion to Joseph in the pit noted on :7. He saw those constricted places as "a large place", and here we have a timeless encouragement for all who find themselves constricted in whatever way.

Psa 31:9 Have mercy on me, Yahweh, for I am in distress. My eye, my soul, and my body waste away with grief- "Grief" is the word used for the wrath of God (Ps. 85:4), but could also refer to the anger of others- perhaps the family of Bathsheba, or the followers of Saul, was originally in view. A sense of fading vision would be appropriate to both his physical and emotional state. In the Bathsheba context it would seem that during his illness, there arose "adversaries" against him. But the Psalm may have originated whilst under persecution by Saul.

Psa 31:10 For my life is spent with sorrow, my years with sighing. My strength fails because of my sin, my bones are wasted away- What is in places a wilderness Psalm was clearly reused by David during his illness after the sin with Bathsheba. In our lives too, circumstances repeat under God's good hand, as He repeats the lessons and we learn them through that repetition. Despite his undoubted physique stamina, David was a broken man, even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam.2 4:14 with 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps. 75:10 and the whole of Ps. 101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam.11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom. He had a heart cruelly torn so many ways. All these traits are amply

reflected in the Psalms: Ps. 6:7; 31:10; 42:3,6; 38:8; 55:4; 56:8; 69:3,29; 88:3,9; 94:19 (what introspection!); 102:4; 116:3; 143:4.

Psa 31:11 Because of all my adversaries I have become utterly contemptible to my neighbours, a fear to my acquaintances. Those who saw me on the street fled from me- David's family appear to have later disowned him during Saul's persecution (Ps. 31:11), fleeing from him, as the Lord's friends also did (Ps. 31:11 = Mt. 26:56). Here we have another allusion to Job. It is twice stressed that David's brothers "followed Saul" (1 Sam.17:13,14); is it possible to argue back from this that Christ's brothers were strong Judaists? The "neighbours" could also here refer to the neighbouring nations around Judah. The recoiling from David "on the street" could refer to some visible skin disease, perhaps leprosy.

Psa 31:12 I am forgotten from their hearts like a dead man; I am like broken pottery- According to how Jeremiah later uses the metaphor of pottery, this would imply that David felt as if he were the vessel which God had broken. There is continually the sense that his physical condition was a judgment for his immorality.

Psa 31:13 For I have heard the slander of many, terror on every side, while they conspire together against me, they plot to take away my life- So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13; 109:23 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind. And yet the pain of slander continued at the time of his sin with Bathsheba, and later during Absalom's rebellion. The plot to take away David's life could specifically refer to Ahithophel's advice to Absalom.

Psa 31:14 But I trust in You, Yahweh. I said, You are my God- The stress may be upon "You", given the note on :6 that David's enemies, be they Saul or Absalom, were involved in idolatry; whereas David trusted Yahweh alone.

Psa 31:15 My times are in Your hand- This could be an admission that the time of his death was in God's hand, but he committed his life into God's hands (:5). LXX "My lots are in thy hands" could mean that he rejected the idea of drawing lots in order to know where to run or how to act; or that if he did, he recognized that God's hands would control the outcome.

Redeem me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me- "Redeem / deliver me from the hand..." is again a quotation from Jacob's words when he found his relative Esau barring his path back home (Gen. 32:11,30). And the word is used of David's desire for deliverance from Saul (1 Sam. 26:24); and yet this was a redemption unappreciated by him as it ought to have been (2 Sam. 12:7). Finally David recognized that this prayer was answered (2 Sam. 22:18,49). As David had earlier prayed for redemption / deliverance from Saul and his enemies (Ps. 31:15; 59:1; 144:7), he would later pray for redemption / deliverance from his sins (Ps. 39:8; 79:9).

Psa 31:16 Make Your face to shine on Your servant; save me in Your grace- At this time David rejoiced in God's grace (:7), and yet also felt God's face was not shining upon him. We can still rejoice in Divine grace even if we don't have a buzz of emotional awareness that God is shining upon us.

Psa 31:17 Let me not be disappointed, Yahweh, for I have called on You- "Disappointed" is 'shamed'. It is likely that the Lord was crucified naked, thereby sharing the shame of Adam's nakedness. The *shame* of the cross is stressed (Heb. 11:26; 12:2; Ps. 31:17; Ps. 69:6,7,12,19,20). And we are to share those sufferings. There *must*, therefore, be an open standing up for what we believe in the eyes of a hostile world. Preaching, in this sense, is for all of us. And if we dodge this, we put the Son of God to a naked shame; we re-crucify Him naked, we shame Him again (Heb. 6:6). He was crucified naked, and the sun went in for three hours. He must have been cold, very cold (Jn. 18:18). Artemidorus Daldianus (*Oneirokritika* 2.53) confirms that the Romans usually crucified victims naked. Melito of Sardis, writing in the 2nd century, writes of “his body naked and not even deemed worthy of a clothing that it might not be seen. Therefore the heavenly lights turned away and the day darkened in order that he might be hidden who was denuded upon the cross" (*On the Pasch* 97). The earliest portrayals of the crucified Jesus, on carved gems, feature Him naked.

Let the wicked be disappointed, may they be silent in Sheol- Clearly David understands the punishment of the wicked to be silence in the grave, and not eternal torment.

Psa 31:18 Let the lying lips be mute, which speak against the righteous insolently, with pride and contempt- This implies David was a victim of slander far more than the historical records suggest. The silencing of the lying lips may connect with the wish that the wicked "be silent" in the grave. This wishing of death upon slanderers seems rather extreme and out of step with the later spirit of the Lord Jesus.

Psa 31:19 Oh how great is Your goodness, which You have laid up for those who fear You,

which You have worked for those who take refuge in You, before the sons of men!- David's thoughts in :18,19 have been upon the final future condemnation of the wicked. Therefore the goodness "laid up" for the righteous would refer to the future reward of the Kingdom of God. The nature of our eternal existence will be unique to each of us, and God is developing or 'working' it right now through our experience of life. We note that David's trust in Yahweh was unashamed and public, "before the sons of men".

Psa 31:20 In the shelter of Your presence You will hide them from the plotting of man. You will keep them secretly in a dwelling away from the strife of tongues- The reference may be to the plotting of Absalom and his party to overthrow David, which went on many years before Absalom's putsch. The pain of words is difficult to deal with; here David imagines himself as living in a Divinely provided pavilion which was somehow soundproofed against "the strife of tongues". And again David sees himself as dwelling in the shadow of the cherubic wings over the mercy seat, where the shekinah presence of Yahweh was to be seen. And he felt that wherever he was.

Psa 31:21 Praise be to Yahweh, for He has shown me His marvellous grace in a fortified city- This could refer to David's escape from Keilah, or how he got out of Gath when he fled there and the Philistines turned against him (1 Sam. 21:10-14). Or maybe this refers to how safe felt in his fortified city of Ziklag.

Psa 31:22 As for me, I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes. Nevertheless You heard the voice of my petitions when I cried to You- If "eyes" refer to Angels, this could be a prophecy of the Lord Jesus' fear of losing the Angelic presence whilst He was on the cross- hence Mt. 27:46.

Psa 31:23 Oh love Yahweh, all you His saints! Yahweh preserves the faithful, and fully recompenses him who behaves arrogantly- David persistently sees the problem of his enemies, be they Saul or Absalom, as pride. And yet when the 'full recompense' of death came upon those men, David genuinely mourned and was heart broken. Sometimes we get the impression that the Psalms, although inspired, are very much a flow of consciousness statement.

Psa 31:24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who hope in Yahweh- This is another teaching to the effect that God will strengthen human hearts. The Greek and Hebrew words translated 'spirit' don't *only* mean 'power'. They frequently refer to the mind / heart. We read of God giving men a new heart, a new spirit; of Him working on men's hearts to make them do His will. He gives them a new spirit. This doesn't mean

that they of their own volition have the *power* of the Holy Spirit gifts, as, e.g., some in the early church did. God will strengthen the heart / spirit of those who try to be strong (Ps. 27:14; 31:24). He can even, somehow, withhold men from sinning (Gen. 20:6), and keep us from falling (Jude 24). We should therefore have no essential objection to the idea of the Lord granting us His Spirit, in the sense of His thinking, His heart / mind.

PSALMS CHAPTER 32

Psa 32:1 By David. A contemplative psalm- Or *maschil*. Being so certain of having received God's mercy, and therefore knowing the joy of living in good conscience with God, led David to preach to those around him. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:13). Note too that Psalm 32 is a 'Maschil' psalm- 'for instruction'. If we have really experienced the mercy of God, we *will* preach to others from our personal experience. 'Preaching' will not be something which we will have to will ourselves to do, nor will it be just a compartment of our lives. Like David, our very existence, the very spirit of our lives, will be an open proclamation of what God's mercy has achieved in us. Morally disgraced in the eyes of all Israel and even the surrounding nations, not to mention his own family, David didn't have a leg to stand on when it came to telling other people how to live their lives. A lesser man than David would have resigned all connection with any kind of preaching. But throughout the Bathsheba psalms there is constant reference to David's desire to go and share the grace of God which he had experienced with others (Ps. 32 title; 51:13). He titles them 'maschil'- for instruction / teaching. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord... *that* I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates" (Ps. 9:13,14).

Blessed is he whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered- "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1), David wrote, after experiencing God's mercy in the matter of Bathsheba. But Paul sees this verse as David describing "the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works" (Rom. 4:6). Each of us are in need of a like justification; therefore we find ourselves in David's position. The Spirit changes Ps. 32:1 ("Blessed is *he* whose transgression is forgiven") to "Blessed are *they*" (Rom. 4:7) to make the same point.

Paul quotes David's rejoicing in the righteousness imputed to him when he had sinned and had no works left to do- and changes the pronoun from "he" to "they" (Rom. 4:6-8). David's personal experience became typical of that of each of us. It was *through* the experience of that wretched and hopeless position that David and all believers come to know the true 'blessedness' of imputed righteousness and sin forgiven by grace.

After his sin with Bathsheba, David was a desperate man. Sin is serious. He had to die, and he was shamed before all Israel. What he had done could not be undone, nor could it be forgiven through sacrifice. No amount of re-interpretation of the texts could get round it. Having been confronted by his desperation for nine months, he found a miraculous forgiveness. And he uttered a soliloquy: "Blessed is he (himself- David) whose transgression is forgiven" (Ps. 32:1). Rom. 4:6,7 slightly changes this, with the preface that these words describe "the blessedness of [any] man" who finds true forgiveness: "Blessed *are they* whose *iniquities* [plural] are forgiven". The point is plain: David's desperation is that of every one redeemed in Christ.

Psa 32:2 Blessed is the man to whom Yahweh doesn't impute iniquity- "Blessed is the man (e.g. David, or any sinner- David is our example) to whom Yahweh doesn't impute iniquity" is alluded to in 2 Cor. 5:19: "God was in Christ... not imputing (the world's) trespasses unto them".

In whose spirit there is no deceit- In Christ there was no guile (1 Pet. 2:22), as there was not in David (or any other believer) after the justification of forgiveness (Ps. 32:2). "Blessed is the man...i n whose spirit is no guile" is picked up in Rev. 14:5: "In their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God". The picture of forgiven David in Ps. 32 is what we will each be like after acceptance "before the throne of God". Yet David's experience can also be ours here and now; in those moments of true contrition, we surely are experiencing salvation in prospect.

In the same way as God did not impute iniquity to David, so David did not 'impute iniquity' to Shimei for cursing him, and did not carry out a rightful death sentence against that man (2 Sam. 19:19,21). Note how Shimei uses the very same wording which David used in *his* repentance: "I have sinned" (2 Sam. 19:20). It makes a good homework to now look through the New Testament, looking for David allusions.

Psa 32:3 When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long- This must refer to David's roaring to God in prayer (Ps. 22:1) before David's repentance, whilst keeping silent about his sin. In the same context he laments: "I have roared by reason of the disquietness (bad conscience) of my heart" (Ps. 38:8). His very separation from God made him pray to God the more, pleading for some form of spiritual healing. But without realistic confession of sin, such prayer was shouting out words into the darkness. David found that attempting to have a relationship with God in such bad conscience only adds to the pain.

Psa 32:4 For day and night Your hand was heavy on me, my strength was dried as in the heat of summer. Selah- David found his sins associated with Bathsheba "as an heavy burden... too heavy for me... I am (thereby) bowed down greatly" (Ps. 32:4,6). Surely our Lord was thinking back to David when He invited all of us: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden (with sins), and I will give you rest... for my... burden is light" (Mt. 11:28-30).

Psa 32:5 I acknowledged my sin to You, I didn't hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah- Solomon inserts parts of his father's Bathsheba psalms in his prayers for how all Israel could be forgiven if they "confess thy name... when thou afflictest them... saying, We have sinned... forgive thy people... and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed" (1 Kings 8:35,47,50 = Ps. 32:5 etc.). On the basis of David's pattern, all God's people can find forgiveness, if they make a like confession.

It should be noted that the sin of adultery is not highlighted in Nathan's rebuke of David, but rather that David had "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife". This is twice emphasized in 2 Sam. 12:9,10. This is not to say that the sin of weakness, of the moment, was irrelevant in God's sight. But the emphasis on how he had taken Bathsheba as his wife hints that this had been his long term intention, further suggesting that his sin with her was the end result of much prior meditation. This further illuminates the way in which David speaks of his sin with Bathsheba as if it comprised a whole multitude of other sins: " I acknowledged my sin (singular) unto thee... I said, I will confess my transgressions (plural)" (Ps. 32:5 cp. 38:3,4,18). Ps. 25:7 also occurs in a Bathsheba context: "Remember not the sins of my youth..." ; as if facing up to his sin with Bathsheba made David face up to sins of years ago, possibly also in a sexual context.

Psalm 38 speaks of how the guilt of his sin weighed so heavily upon him (Ps. 38:4 NIV), whereas Ps. 32:5 describes how the guilt of sin has now been lifted from him- implying that he wrote Ps. 38 some time after the sin, but before repenting properly. The point is, he didn't crash completely, he didn't turn away from God in totality- he was still writing Psalms at the time!

Psa 32:6 For this, let each one who is Godly pray to You- The serious but repentant sinner is here called "Godly". This is alluded to in 2 Cor. 7:7-11. Paul wished to interpret the news from Titus as meaning that the Corinthians had repented of their deep immorality: "Ye were made sorry... ye sorrowed to repentance...ye were made sorry after

a *Godly* manner (cp. "every one that is *Godly*...", Ps. 32:6)... for *Godly* sorrow worketh repentance to salvation... ye sorrowed after a *Godly* sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation (cp. David's in 2 Sam. 12:5)... what zeal... your mourning, your fervent mind" (AV). Allusion after allusion to David is being piled up here. The eight references to their "sorrow" in four verses is surely a signpost back to David's intense sorrow for his sin with Bathsheba: "My sin is ever before me (Ps. 51:3)... my sorrow is continually before me... I will be sorry for my sin... many sorrows shall be to the wicked" who, unlike David, refused to repent (Ps. 38:17,18; 32:10). This association between sin and sorrow is a common one (Job 9:28; 1 Tim. 6:10; Ex. 4:31; Is. 35:10. The last two references show how Israel's sorrowing in Egypt was on account of their sinfulness). We must pause to ask whether our consciousness of sin leads us to a like sorrowing, whether our repentance features a similar depth of remorse. It would appear that Paul is likening Corinth to David. They too were guilty of sexual "uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness" (2 Cor. 12:21). As David's repentance was made in a "day of salvation", so in 2 Cor. 6:2 Paul told Corinth that they were in a similar position to him; they too had the chance of repentance. Those who had heeded this call earlier had experienced the zeal and clear conscience which David did on his repentance (2 Cor. 7:9-11). In this case, Paul would be likening himself to Nathan the prophet. This zeal which was seen in both David and Corinth is a sure sign of clear conscience and a joyful openness with God. Again, we ask how much of our zeal is motivated by this, or is it just a continuation of a level of service which we set ourselves in more spiritual days, which we now struggle to maintain for appearances sake?

In a time when You may be found. Surely when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach to him- This is alluded to in 2 Cor. 6:2: "In a time of acceptance I hearkened to you, and in a day of salvation did I succour you. Behold, now is the time of acceptance; behold, now is the day of salvation". This quotation is in support of the statement that we have received God's grace, *charis*, gift of the Spirit; but we are not to receive it in vain, but rather make use of it. The 'succouring' in view refers to just that. The same word is used in Heb. 2:18 of how the Lord Jesus gives us such help in time of temptation. Seeing that temptation is internal to the human mind, this help is surely psychological, within the heart- which is exactly what the gift of the Spirit is all about. Forgiveness is indeed in view, but beyond that- strength against falling into sin.

For every sinner, for whom David is our example, *now* is the time when God may be "found" in the sense of experiencing His forgiveness. God *is* love towards men, He *is* forgiveness. To experience this and respond back to it is therefore to find the knowledge of God. This "time when You (i.e. God's forgiveness, which *is* God) may be found" which David speaks of is that of 2 Cor. 6:2: "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day

of salvation". Paul was speaking of how all sinners, baptized or not, need to realize this; we are all in David's position. Some complain that they did not experience a very great upsurge in finding and knowing God at the point of baptism. This may be due to an insufficient emphasis on the need for repentance and appreciating the seriousness of sin before baptism; and not being willing to make use of the Spirit gift which we are then given. We must not think that we know God because we believe a Statement of Faith and have been baptized. "Now is the accepted time", Paul wrote to the baptized Corinthians, to truly take on board the marvel of God's forgiveness, to know it and respond to it for ourselves, and thereby to come to a dynamic, two-way relationship with God.

As David "found" God through experiencing His forgiveness, so can " every one that is Godly" today. It is quite possible that "seek and you shall find" (Mt. 7:7) was uttered by the Lord with his mind on Ps. 32:6 and David's experience. After all, we cannot expect this to be a blank cheque offer, that whatever we seek for we must receive. But if these words are an allusion to David's seeking and finding forgiveness in Ps. 32:6, then the promise is more realistic. If we seek for forgiveness and a living relationship with God, then we have this unconditional promise that we *will* find this. Yet in a sense, the time when we will ultimately find God will be at the judgment: we will "find mercy of the Lord in that day" (2 Tim. 1:18), so that "ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:14). We will find God, as He will find us, in that great moment of consummation; "for then shall (we) know (God), even as also (we) are known" by Him (1 Cor. 13:12;). Then we will "be *found* in him…that I may (then) *know* him" (Phil. 3:9,10). Yet David says that after forgiveness, we can find and know God. It is as if whenever we sin, we in a sense face our judgment seat.

Psa 32:7 You are my hiding place, You will preserve me from trouble, You will surround me with songs of deliverance. Selah- "In the hidden part You shall make me to know wisdom" (Ps. 51:6) David meditated, as he looked forward to his new life with God after receiving forgiveness. His very innermost being would then be able to learn more deeply of God's real wisdom. There is a connection between David knowing God in his "hidden part", and Ps. 32:7: "You art my hiding place", or 'hidden part'. This shows that David felt that after his repentance, God Himself would live in David's 'hidden part', that part of his mind and thinking which no one else knows. Through knowing God, God would come and live in that part which truly knew God. The tabernacling of God in our 'hidden part' also requires us to come to know Him, as David did.

David came to know the marvel of all this. And David is our example. His response was to eagerly desire to spread the knowledge of God which he acquired through his experience of God's forgiveness. "I will instruct thee and teach thee" he exalts in Ps. 32:8. He knew that as God would surround him with songs of deliverance on

forgiveness, so "he (anyone) that trusteth in the Lord (as David did), mercy shall *compass him* about" (Ps. 32:10). "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways" (Ps. 51:13) is another example. Likewise, Peter (Lk. 5:8-10), Isaiah (Is. 6:5-9) and Paul (Eph. 3:8) all received preaching commissions straight after their experience of forgiveness. Our knowledge of God through receiving it should be a powerful stimulus to our personal witnessing. There is every reason why *some* of our witnessing should include personal testimony of what the Lord has done for us.

Psa 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you shall go, I will counsel you with my eye on you- These could be God's words to David, assuring him that He would use this experience of sin and restoration to teach him and lead him further in the way to life. Or as noted on :1, seeing this is a Psalm for instructing others, these may be David's words, seeking to bring others to know the way he himself had trodden. "Counsel" is the word used of Ahithophel, David's counsellor who was Bathsheba's grandfather, who later betrayed him and turned against him (2 Sam. 15:12; 16:23). Perhaps David is reflecting that due to his experience of grace, he is now qualified to counsel others; and therefore Ahithophel, Israel's renowned counsellor, was thereby further offended. See on Ps. 33:18.

Solomon taught his son obedience to him as a father, but not to God Himself. He tells him: “I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths” (Prov. 4:11), repeating the words of David in Ps. 32:8: “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye”. But those words in their context were wrung from a David desperately grateful for God’s forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba. Solomon hadn’t gone through this contrition- he was a self-justified womanizer, and yet he used the same outward form of words as his father. Solomon was playing God by implying that *his* words carried the weight of *God’s* words.

Psa 32:9 Don’t be like the horse or like the mule which have no understanding, who are controlled by bit and bridle, or else they will not come near to you- Through David's repentance he obviously learnt from his sin, as we can from each of ours. Ps. 32:9 comments that men ought to learn from David’s example, and not be as horses who must have their mouths kept in with a bridle. In Ps. 39:1 David reminisces how he had earlier said [before his sin with Bathsheba] that he would stop himself sinning by restraining himself with a bridle. He learnt that sheer will power is not enough; blind resolution to simply ‘obey’ will fail. Instead, it is a living relationship with the Father, a deep sense of His glory, that creates an environment of life where we just won’t do what David did with Bathsheba. This was what he learnt, and this is what he was so eager to pass on to us in the post-Bathsheba Psalms of David's repentance. "Come near" is a common idiom for offering sacrifice and worshipping God. The idea may be that God

doesn't want to force men to come near to Him through using the force of bit and bridle; rather does He want genuinely repentant sinners like David, in awe of His grace, to come to Him of themselves with the "understanding" of Him as the God of all grace. But God all the same causes men to "come near" to Him (Ps. 65:4 s.w.); but not be coercion, rather by the experience of His grace.

Psa 32:10 Many sorrows come to the wicked, but grace shall surround him who trusts in Yahweh- The nervous effects on David may well have continued throughout the rest of his life. Despite exalting in the fact that he has now confessed his sin and been forgiven, David uttered Ps. 32:4: "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me (in the days before repentance): my moisture *is* (present tense) turned into the drought of summer. Selah" (AV). Is this not an eloquent picture of the David who was once so sure of himself, full of vitality, now shrivelled up, at least emotionally? "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about" (Ps. 32:10) may also give insight here. It does not say 'Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but the repentant will have joy'. Instead, the contrast is made between sorrow and experiencing God's mercy; as if to imply 'The sorrows brought about by sin will go on and on in this life, but knowing you are surrounded by God's mercy more than compensates'. It takes little imagination to realize how that after his sin, David must have become a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, tortured with deep and manic depressions. David's repentance comes as a relief to the reader.

Psa 32:11 Be glad in Yahweh, and rejoice, you righteous! Shout for joy, all you who are upright in heart!- see on Ps. 51:4. We along with all the righteous ought to “shout for joy” that David really was forgiven- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. No matter how we have sinned, we can still like him feel and be "upright in heart" before God. And yet the intensity of David’s repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord’s grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). David is seeing himself and the righteous as Job, and he here continues that connection, seeing that Job is described likewise as "upright in heart" (Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

PSALMS CHAPTER 33

Psa 33:1 Rejoice in Yahweh, you righteous! Praise is fitting for the upright- This may continue from the previous Psalm, which has conclude that those like David who have seriously sinned and yet been forgiven… are the joyfully "upright in heart" who can legitimately "rejoice" (Ps. 32:11 s.w.). Psalm 33 is without a title, which is unusual for the first book of the "Psalms of David". It could be a follow on from the previous Psalm 32. We note other connections throughout these notes; especially how Ps. 32:8 = Ps. 33:17,18. Psalm 33 is clearly intended for use in collective worship accompanied by instruments (:1-3, and note the final three verses are a kind of collective chorus). As Paul likewise reasons, we are to all rejoice in David's forgiveness regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. For his sin is in essence that of every man. "Rejoice" or 'Shout for joy' is the same verb as in Ps. 32:11 where all men are hidden rejoice and shout for joy at the grave shown David regarding Bathsheba and Uriah. Clearly Ps. 33 follows on from Ps. 32. Ps. 33 marvels at the creative power of God's word, seen at creation and in rescuing Israel from Egypt. The "word" in the immediate context was God's word of grace through Nathan, and His response to David's subsequent requests for God to create in him a new heart. He accepts God's word through Nathan was correct: "The word of the Lord is right" (:4). The same awesome power used at creation is used in the new creation of contrite men. Hence :10 "has brought … has made", grammatically implying particular reference to some recent event. Which was God's forgiveness and re-creation of David. Thus :15 speaks of God forming hearts; a creation of mindsets. This is the supreme work of the Holy Spirit today. This is why both Psalms speak of the blessedness of God's people; in Ps. 32:1,2 it is David who is blessed with forgiveness, whilst in Ps. 33:12 is is all God's nation who are "blessed". Both psalms end with a call to rejoice (Ps. 32:11; 33:21) in faith / trust (Ps. 32:10,11; 33:21) in God's grace (Ps. 32:10; 33:18,22). Ps. 33:5 sees God's grace as supreme, filling the earth; which is the whole essence of David's experience in Ps. 32.

Psa 33:2 Give thanks to Yahweh with the lyre, sing praises to Him with the harp of ten strings- This continues the theme of Ps. 32 (see on :1); David is inviting praise to be offered for his forgiveness, and for that which is now demonstrated as possible for all repentant sinners. He was renowned for his harp playing; and he now invites us all to follow him and also take up the harp in worship of the grace shown him.

Psa 33:3 Sing to Him a new song, play skillfully with a shout of joy!- Is. 42:9,10 [which is relevant to the exiles] says that we sing the “new song” now, because we sing / meditate

of the “new things” which will be in the Kingdom. In that day, we will “sing a new song” (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). And yet this is undoubtedly picking up on the way in which we can *now* sing the ‘new song’, every morning (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). This was how David felt after receiving God's grace over the Bathsheba incidents. Likewise, all things will be made new at the Lord’s coming (Rev. 21:5), and yet those in whom the new creation is worked out already have all things made new in their spiritual experience (2 Cor. 5:17,18). The life that the Lord Jesus had and now lives is the essence of the Kingdom life. Who He was and is, this is the definition of the Kingdom life. It’s why one of His titles is “the kingdom of God” (Lk. 17:21). And it’s why it can be said that we ‘have’ eternal life now, in that we can live the essence of the life we will eternally live, right now.

There are a significant seven references to singing a "new song"; this is the first (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Is. 42:10). Life after baptism leads to living in "newness of life". This ever-new aspect of spiritual life is unique to true, Bible-based spirituality. The "new song" was to be sung by the returning exiles (Is. 42:9,10), and may suggest the new covenant they were intended to enter with a new heart created in them (Jer. 31:31-33). Hence Psalm 33 speaks of the heart formed or created by God as all important. Sadly they spurned that opportunity.

Psa 33:4 For the word of Yahweh is right, all His work is done in faithfulness- The specific word of Yahweh David may have in view is the message from Nathan the prophet which condemned him for his sin with Bathsheba. Part of repentance is acceptance that God is right.

Psa 33:5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the grace of Yahweh- David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her… will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and *felt* this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to "every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. See on Ps. 41:12.

We can perceive instances of the earth being filled with Yahweh's grace and other aspects of His righteousness. They may be in the lives of others not just our own.

Psa 33:6 By Yahweh's word the heavens were made- God's word is paralleled with His breath, His Spirit. I suggested on :4 that the word of Yahweh which David initially had in view was the message from Nathan the prophet which condemned him for his sin with Bathsheba. But just as that one prophetic word had produced a new creation within David, so that same word called into existence all of creation.

All their army by the breath of His mouth- Many passages clearly identify God's spirit with His power. In order to create the earth, "the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:2,3). God's spirit was the power by which all things, e.g. light, were made. "By His spirit He has created the heavens; His hand has formed the crooked serpent" (Job 26:13). A comparison of Mt. 12:28 and Lk. 11:20 shows that "the finger of God" and "the spirit of God" are parallel - God in action is His spirit. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Ps. 33:6).

God's spirit was seen at work in the creation: "By his spirit he has created the heavens" (Job 26:13) - the spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters to bring about the present creation (Gen. 1:2). Yet we also read that "by the word of the Lord" the world was made (Ps. 33:6), as shown by the Genesis narrative recording that "God said" things were to be created, and it happened. God's spirit, therefore, is very much reflected in His word. Likewise our words express our inner thoughts and desires - the real 'us' - very accurately. Jesus wisely pointed out: "Out of the abundance of the heart (the mind) the mouth speaks" (Mt. 12:34).

The Psalm alludes clearly to the power of God's word and breath over the waters at creation, but goes on to allude to the deliverance at the Red Sea. This was again by the breath of Yahweh (Ex. 15:8), and the waters were again gathered into a heap (:7 cp. Ex. 15:8). The relevance to the exiles was that just as God's word had brought about creation, so His prophetic word of restoration was powerful to come true too. Just as the large army and horses of the Egyptians couldn't stop the Exodus of God's people to journey to His sanctuary, so neither could any human strength stop the restoration (:16,17).

Psa 33:7 He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses- David's response to his experience of grace was to commit himself to teaching others God's ways (see on Ps. 32:1). And perhaps his idea of building a temple was an outflow from that. As God gathered the waters together, so David responded by

gathering together the Gentiles within Israel ("the waters of the sea") to construct a temple (s.w. 1 Chron. 22:2). And in the restoration context, God was likewise willing to gather together the exiles from the seas of the Gentiles (s.w. Ps. 147:2), repeating the miracle of the Red Sea deliverance, where God's word also made the waters stand as a heap (s.w. Ps. 78:13). As God "lays up... in storehouses", so David laid up all the required materials with which Solomon was to build the temple.

Psa 33:8 Let all the earth fear Yahweh, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him- David's vision was of all the people within the *eretz* promised to Abraham coming to fear the God of Israel- all because he had sinned grievously and had been forgiven.

Psa 33:9 For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood firm- As noted on :4,6, the word of Yahweh which David initially had in view was the message from Nathan the prophet which condemned him for his sin with Bathsheba. But just as that one prophetic word had produced a new creation within David, so that same word called into existence all of creation. David likewise was made to 'stand firm' despite his sin (s.w. 2 Sam. 22:34; Ps. 30:7; 31:8).

Psa 33:10 Yahweh brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the thoughts of the peoples to be of no power- Perhaps a reference to how by grace God gave David victory over the Ammonites straight after his receipt of forgiveness over the matter of Bathsheba. He saw in that victory an assurance of God's acceptance of him.

Psa 33:11 The counsel of Yahweh stands fast forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations- David likewise was made to 'stand firm' despite his sin (s.w. 2 Sam. 22:34; Ps. 30:7; 31:8). See on :9. God's word reflects His thoughts and intentions. David felt he was to become part of that eternal purpose, and his kingdom or "mountain" would stand fast as part of that (Ps. 30:7). He perceived that his kingdom was to be God's Kingdom.

There is a contrast in :10,11 between the counsel / plans of the Gentile world, and those of God:
"The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nought;
He frustrates the plans of the peoples.
"The counsel of the LORD stands for ever,
the thoughts of His heart to all generations".

"Plans" and "thoughts" are the same Hebrew word. In an exilic context, the connection is clearly with Jer. 29:10,11: "For thus says the LORD: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope". And yet these plans went largely unimplemented, because the exiles acted and thought like the Gentile nations.

Psa 33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is Yahweh, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance- As noted on Ps. 31:6,14, idolatry was prevalent in the Israel of David's time. But their God was to be Yahweh exclusively, for He had exclusively chosen Israel as His people.

Psa 33:13 Yahweh views from heaven; He sees all the sons of men- As will be noted on :14, God was seen as looking *down* here, yet His dwelling place was also seen as being in Zion.

Psa 33:14 From the place of His habitation He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth- That place of habitation may refer to Zion rather than Heaven Himself. For the idea is of God looking *out* from there upon the peoples of the *eretz*, rather than looking *down* upon them.

Psa 33:15 He who fashions all of their hearts; and He considers all of their works- We have here two apparently contradictory ideas; works reflect thoughts / hearts. Yet God fashions or directs human hearts, and yet He judges their works. Yet from this dialectic comes the conclusion that God indeed works directly upon human hearts, but only in confirming their freewill decisions. And therefore He can legitimately judge their works. In the restoration context, this refers to how God was prepared to fashion or create out of the exiles a new people with new hearts (s.w. Is. 43:1,21; 44:2; 64:8). The word is also used in the Hezekiah context (Is. 37:26). David realized that as God fashioned the earth (Ps. 95:5), so He can fashion human hearts (Ps. 33:15). His word and Spirit work in doing both things, with the same boundless possibility and power. David after repenting of his sin with Bathsheba begged God to "Create in me a pure heart" (Ps. 51:10) and he is saying the same here. His repentance and restoration was intended to be a template for the exiles. The idea that God forms hearts is found also in the title "the Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9). Psalm 139 marvels that God knows every movement and thought of every man, before it even is thought or done. He also sees all the possible outworkings of every man's freewill. The amount of 'data' is beyond us to even conceive of. And yet for the believer, this creates transparency before God and is a huge comfort.

Psa 33:16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an army; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength- The numbering of Israel was a weak moment for David (note 2 Sam. 24:3,4,10), leading to suffering for others. Yet this same David had written that “there is no king saved by the multitude of an host” (Ps. 33:16). David apparently wrote this before that realization. He knew the theory, but failed to apply it in reality.

Psa 33:17 A horse is a vain thing for safety, neither does he deliver any by his great power- David was carefully obedient to the Mosaic legislation about not using horses, but instead trusting in the cherubim horses of God's salvation (Dt. 17:16; 20:1). Solomon his son totally ignored all this, having so many horses he had to build cities to house them all. And yet Solomon was quite obsessed with "David my father"; but when it came to real issues, he ignored David.

Psa 33:18 Behold, Yahweh’s eye is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His grace- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. Our eye is upon Him (Ps. 25:5; 69:3; 123:2), as His eye is upon us (Ps. 32:8; 33:18). The Lord stresses, with apparently needless repetition, that to the man who responds to His word, "I will sup with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). And David took this mutuality even further; for in Ps. 32:8 David says that in response to his experience of forgiveness regarding Bathsheba, "I will counsel you with my eye on you".

We hope for God's grace, but the earth is now full of His grace if we look for it (:5). These evidences of grace are all guarantees of the great grace to be brought to us at the Lord's return.

GNB gives "constant love" in :18,22. Constant love is hard for us to believe, because all the human love we were ever shown blew hot and cold. There were disagreements and even arguments, something got jaded over the years, there were peak expressions of love and then long periods of passion less co-existence together. The constant nature of God's love is hard for us to believe and feel because our love for Him is not constant. But we are to meditate on the unfailing and ever present intensity of His love for us individually, and to let ourselves be persuaded by it to the point we feel it constantly.

Psa 33:19 to deliver their soul from death, to keep them alive in famine- Under the old covenant, famine was not supposed to come if the people were obedient. Remember that the context is about his experience of forgiveness regarding the Bathsheba incident. So the idea is that even when suffering the punishment for sin, God will still show grace and keep His repentant people "alive in famine".

Psa 33:20 Our soul has waited for Yahweh; He is our help and our shield- As explained

on Ps. 32:1, David was resolved to make his experience of salvation by grace the pattern for all men. And so the Psalm concludes by emphasizing that David's path is "ours".

Psa 33:21 For our heart rejoices in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name- These words could have been part of David's original Psalm, as suggested on :20; or they could have been added under inspiration by those who later perceived that indeed David's forgiveness and restoration was to be programmatic for all God's people.

Psa 33:22 Let Your grace be on us, Yahweh, according as we have hope in You- There was no sacrifice prescribed for David's sins with Bathsheba and Uriah; the death penalty was required. But David's vision of God's grace was large enough for him to ask for forgiveness, and his hope for it was not disappointed. But it all depends upon the breadth of our vision. Perhaps the most telling example is in Abraham's request that God would spare Sodom for the sake of fifty righteous men there. He then lowers the number to 40, and then finally to ten, assuming that surely Lot's family were righteous and would comprise ten righteous. If Abraham had left off praying at, say, forty… then this would have been the limit God set. If there were ten righteous there, the city wouldn't have been saved. But Abraham went on to set the limit at ten. But we wonder, what would have happened if he had gone further and asked God to save Sodom for the sake of one righteous man, i.e. Lot? My sense is that the Father would have agreed. But the city wasn't saved for the sake of the one man Lot, because Abraham limited God's desire to save by the smallness of his vision. This principle can possibly be extended even wider.

In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. David's view of God's mercy was that it would be only according to, proportionate to, our hope in God (Ps. 33:22)- it was only through his Bathsheba experience that David came to know that grace is simply not proportionate to any human virtue. And yet it is also true that the man who asked the Lord to help if He were able is almost rebuked- for the Lord replies that if *he* believed, all things were possible. It is we and not the Lord who limit things. We think of Ps. 81:10, "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it"; or Ps. 37:4, "delight yourself in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart". We are to "hope in You" but in :18 "Hope in His grace". God and His grace are paralleled. He is grace. He will save us. To trust in Him is to trust that.

PSALMS CHAPTER 34

Psa 34:1 By David; when he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed- This Psalm is based around the alphabet. But the letters *beth* and *vav* are omitted, instead of *koph* there is *resh*; and the *he* section is doubled at the end. This isn't careless construction or corruption, but rather does Hebrew poetry function through such intentional omissions or departures from an expected pattern.

I will bless Yahweh at all times; His praise will always be in my mouth- We are to imagine David leaving Gath, which had seemed like a trap in which he would certainly die, and then feeling the words of this Psalm- and then writing them down for others to sing with him (:3).

Psa 34:2 My soul shall boast in Yahweh. The humble shall hear of it, and be glad- David was not going to brag that he had slipped out of encirclement in Gath (see on :1) by his own strength and initiative; rather would he boast in Yahweh's salvation of him. Others who were humbled by their situations would be glad, because David's salvation would be perceived by them as programmatic for them too.

Psa 34:3 Oh magnify Yahweh with me, let us exalt His name together!- We can "magnify" God! We can make God greater by praising Him in humility. Given God's essential greatness, this is an amazing conception. The same idea is found in the idea of 'extolling' God (Ps. 30:1); likewise Dt. 32:3 "I will proclaim the name of Yahweh. Ascribe greatness to our God". Constantly we see David's earnest desire to reach out to others, so that they would make his feelings and essential experiences their own, and also magnify Yahweh. 'Magnify' or 'making great' is a theme of God's relationship with the patriarchs. Abraham's seed was to be magnified / made great (s.w. Gen. 12:2), with His grace magnified toward them (Gen. 19:19). And in response, David wants to magnify Yahweh with the other members of the seed.

Psa 34:4 I sought Yahweh and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears- The allusion is clearly to 1 Sam. 21:12 "David took these words to heart and was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath". Those fears were that he was in an enclosed Philistine city, and they had recalled his slaughter of Goliath and many other Philistines whose relatives were in the city. And yet because of that deliverance, David knows that God will likewise save others amongst His people from their difficult situations. “The righteous cried, and the Lord heard”, he could write, with easy reference to his crying to God when with Abimelech [see Psalm title]; but he goes straight on to say that God delivers *all* the righteous out of all their troubles (Ps. 34:4,6,17 RV).

Psa 34:5 They looked to Him, and were radiant; their faces shall never be covered with shame- "Radiant" is the word used of the restoration of the exiles (Is. 60:5; Jer. 31:12; Mic. 4:1). David's restoration is used as a pattern for the exiles, but the reality was that they didn't repent as he did. His salvation from the Gentiles by grace was a pattern for them. Beaming faces are unashamed; this is how David felt as he reflected on his otherwise very low point, spiritually and personally, there in Gaza. Or we can read this as an imperative, as LXX, "Look to Him!". Looking within ourselves all the time is miserable, looking around at the situation all the time is terrible. Look to Him and your face becomes radiant.

Psa 34:6 This poor man cried, and Yahweh heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles- "Troubles" is the word used about Jacob, whose cry from exile was heard and he was delivered from his troubles (Gen. 35:3). And the theme of Jacob continues later in the Psalm.

David had called himself a "poor man" in 1 Sam. 18:23. He would pray in 1 Sam. 26:24 Heb. "save me from all distress". David here reflects in Ps. 34:6 that he, the poor lowly man, has indeed been saved from all his distress. But Ps. 34 is titled as having been written after David escaped from Gath the first time, in 1 Sam. 21. It seems David rewrote his Psalms, tweeking them as new experiences occured which confirmed his earlier deliverances. And so he now makes this edit to Ps. 34 after his deliverance from Saul and his realization that his prayer of 1 Sam. 26:24 "Save me from all distress" had been answered.

Or we can read this another way. David was confident after his deliverance from Gath that Yahweh "heard [me] and saved [me] out of all [my] troubles". But he prays later in 1 Sam. 26:24 Heb. "save me from all distress / troubles". He was taught here, after the Gath deliverance, that Yahweh would deliver him from troubles. But that faith and confident statement in this prayer / hymn of praise was then put to the test later. Just as we may confidently sing the words of a hymn in church- and then have to show that faith or attitude in real life alone, some time later in the week.

Psa 34:7 The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear Him, and delivers them- "Encamps" could imply that the Angel circles around us like a watchman on guard- whereas David at the time in Gath was encircled by all his enemies. Or it could suggest more 'to settle down'- the Angel does not rush into our lives at our frantic behest when we are in a sudden crisis, but has settled down around us for a long time in preparing that trial. This promises that the Angel of the Lord will encamp /Mahanaim around *all*

His servants, just as the Angel did at Mahanaim for Jacob. The allusion is to Jacob. His struggle at [or with] Penuel strikes a chord with each of us. Frank Lake has pointed out that each person struggles to find peace in their relationships with others and also with their God- whether or not they are conscious of those struggles. Jacob's experience is clearly set up as representative of our own.

Although this Psalm was written about the deliverance from Gath (:1), I suggest it was later edited to also reference how David approached Saul's sleeping body with his soldiers "encamped around" him (1 Sam. 26:5), and was preserved by an Angel encamping around *him*. We think of how the Angels were encamped around Dothan to protect Elisha (2 Kings 6:16).

Psa 34:8 Oh taste and see that Yahweh is good. Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him- This is the idea of 1 Jn. 5:9,10: "This is the witness of God... He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness *in himself*... the (i.e. this) witness of God is greater" than that of men. The ultimate proof that the Truth is the Truth is not in the witness of men- be they archaeologists, scientists, good friends or who. The real witness of God is deep in yourself. "Taste and see, that Yahweh is good" is the most powerful appeal. David is here referencing how he had tried to take refuge in Gath [Heb. 'flees for refuge'], and accepting he should have taken refuge in Yahweh and not gone there. This is a psalm of repentance by him after he had been saved by grace from the situation in Gath. The Hebrew for "man" is *gibbor*, not the usual word for "man". It specifically means a mighty warrior. Again we see the relevance to David; the mighty warrior who lost his nerve and fled to Gath, who ought to have fled to Yahweh instead. So the challenge is that the man who has human advantage and strength will be blessed if he doesn't trust in it, but flees for refuge to God. The idea is continued in :10, where the strong lions actually suffer want and cannot find enough meat for themselves.

The words of Ps. 34:8 "taste and see that the Yahweh is good" are alluded to in 1 Pet. 2:3 "If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good". There is some evidence that the early church quoted these words at the breaking of bread. As discussed on :13, Peter will quote several more verses from this Psalm 34 in 1 Peter 3. He sees David's situation as similar to those of his audience- a Jew under persecution and in exile at the hands of his own brethren. And a Jew who had slipped back, and was now repenting of lies and wrong behaviour, albeit as a result of the pressures of a life on the run. The 'goodness' is of the good life of living spiritually and truthfully now; for that is what the eternal life will be about (:13). But Peter wonders if his readers have in fact acquired this taste; whether they really get it, that we are living now the 'good' life we shall eternally life, we love that life and want to eternall live it.

Psa 34:9 Oh fear Yahweh, you His saints, for there is no lack to those who fear Him-

David predicates "no lack" upon fearing Yahweh and simply trusting in Him (Ps. 34:8,9). Solomon picks up the idea of the righteous experiencing "no lack" but instead claims it is a reward for generosity (s.w. Prov. 28:27). This is a parade example of the difference between David and Solomon. Solomon picks up his father's words and conclusions, but reframes them to justify himself and works rather than faith. Again I suggest that although the Psalm began as a reflection on David's salvation from Gath (:1), he reapplied it to how Abigail met his every need when just prior to that, he had been desperately in need of all things (1 Sam. 25). We too learn God's grace from one experience, and see it repeated later in life's experiences. Like David, we are to edit and reapply and enforce the lessons learned.

Psa 34:10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger, but those who seek Yahweh shall not lack any good thing- See on 9. This is the phrase used of how the Israelites "lacked nothing" in the desert (Ex. 16:18; Dt. 2:7; Neh. 9:21), although they thought they lacked about everything, and neither would they in the promised land (Dt. 8:9). The contrast is how the lions lacked, but David the sheep shepherded by Yahweh did not lack / want (Ps. 23:1 s.w.). But now David extends that sense to *all* "who seek Yahweh". His experience was to be theirs. And the phrase is used of how the restored exiles would likewise not lack (Is. 51:14).

Clearly David alludes to how those remaining in the covenant "lack no good thing" (Dt. 2:9; 8:9; 26:11). Although he was weak in entering Gaza and had to lie his way out of the situation, he felt he had still remained within the covenant. Covenant relationship with God is time and again shown to not be the same as not sinning, nor the same as being perfectly obedient. Without justifying nor minimizing sin, to remain in the covenant is perfectly possible even whilst sinning. The OT idea of remaining in the covenant is taken over by the Lord in His teaching about 'abiding' in Him, and by Paul in his theme of being and living "in Christ".

Psa 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me. I will teach you the fear of Yahweh- Although the Psalm began at the time of David's deliverance from Gath, he edited or rewrote it to teach to his children later. David had taught his children with these words. Did David say this to his children every evening? And Solomon uses just the same words, even whilst disobeying God's law at the same time in his own life: "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father... I give you good doctrine... for I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live" (Prov. 4:1-4). And so Solomon taught *his* kids with the same outward form of words, although the personal reality of wisdom was lost on him. He repeats these very words of David when teaching his own son: "My son, keep [retain] my words... keep my commandments and live" (Prov. 7:1,2). The idea of keeping

commandments in order to live is a reference back to the many Deuteronomy passages where Moses pleads with Israel to keep *God's* commands and live. But Solomon came to perceive his father David's commands as those of God, and in his generation he watered this down in his own mind until he assumed that *his* commands to his children were to be treated by them as the law of God- no matter how far he had strayed himself from God's law.

Psa 34:12 Who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?- The prerequisite is to 'desire life… many days', to actually want to live for ever. And to this day, this is actually lacking in the majority- for all their interest in healthy living and extending lifespans. But the opportunity of eternity is actually not attractive- because their lives are not actually fulfilling because God and His Spirit is not in first place. The idea of the Hebrew seems to be that we desire eternal life because in that life we will "see good": "who loves days to see the good". And the "good" we will eternally experience is defined in the following verses. We are to live the Kingdom life now; in that sense we can "have eternal life" now, as often recorded in John's Gospel. Or as C. S. Lewis put it in *Mere Christianity,* "very often the only way to get a quality is to start behaving as if you had it already". And our desire for eternal days is not to be simply because we fear death, and share the fear of endings which is built in to the human nature. Rather the issue is the quality of the life to come, the "good" we will see / experience, rather than the simple eternity of the life.

Psa 34:13 Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking lies- We note that in first place was keeping the tongue from evil. David perceived the critical importance of control of our words. But he himself has been noted for how many lies he told, not least in this context both to Ahimelech [resulting in his flight to Gath] and then in Gath (:1). So here we have some kind of repentance for his behaviour in Gath. And this leads to his higher point of faith as discussed on 1 Sam. 22:23.

Ps. 34:12-16 LXX are quoted in 1 Pet. 3:10-12. The context here of Ps. 34 is David's reflection upon how he had been saved by grace from Gath, by pretending to be mad and thus being cast out of the city he was trapped in. He fled there at a time of low faith (see on 1 Sam. 21), in trouble because of lying to Ahimelech. So his warning against telling lies is self critical. We who read the letter of Peter are therefore encouraged to identify with David in his weakness and repent as he did.

Speaking truth and not lying was seen by David as the epitome of righteousness. He sees the wicked as characterized by sins of the tongue (Ps. 5:10; 10:17; 12:4,5; 15:3; 31:19; 52:4–6; 64:4; 109:2) and sins of the lips (Ps 12:3–5; 17:1,4; 31:19; 59:13; 140:4,10). Lying or deceitful words are likewise seen as the great sin (Ps. 5:7; 10:7; 17:1; 24:4; 35:20; 36:4; 38:13; 43:1; 50:19; 52:6; 55:12,24). This is quite some emphasis- at

least 25 references. The Lord and the later New Testament likewise see the words of man as the basis of his condemnation or salvation.

Psa 34:14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it- David several times speaks of the need to fear God and 'depart from evil', and the blessedness of the man who does so (Ps. 34:14; 37:27); and Solomon repeats his father repeatedly on this point (Prov. 3:7; 4:27; 13:19; 14:16; 16:6,17). Yet they are surely alluding to Job, who feared God and "eschewed" [s.w. 'depart from'] evil (Job 1:1). Without doubt, these allusions indicate that they saw Job as symbolic of all the righteous. And this is no mere piece of painless Bible exposition; Job in all his turmoil really is the pattern for each one of us, the path through which we each must pass.

"Depart from evil" is 'turn [or, be turned] away from evil". Although this Psalm was written originally after his deliverance from Gath (:1), David has edited it, it seems, in reflection on how Abigail had turned him away from evil towards peace: "He has kept back his servant from evil" (1 Sam. 25:39). "Seeking" and "pursuing" peace are the words used of Saul seeking and pursuing David (1 Sam. 23:25), whereas David sought to live at peace with Saul; "there is no evil in my hand", he assured Saul (1 Sam. 24:12). We are to "pursue" the better spiritual life; just as we "seek" God. Perfectionism isn't in view. Rather a desire for it. That is what characterizes the personality of the righteous.

Psa 34:15 Yahweh's eyes are toward the righteous, His ears listen to their cry- Whilst pretending to be mad in Gath (:1), David was in fact crying out to God. Or perhaps his cries of feigned madness were treated by God as cries to Him. Because God sees situations as prayers; the efficacy of prayer isn't a function of our ability to verbalize. Although "the righteous" here is originally David, his whole idea in the Psalm is that he and his answered prayer is representative of all believers. And this is confirmed by the fact that this verse is quoted about all believers in 1 Pet. 3:12. It could be that Yahweh's "eyes" have special reference to the Angels who operationalize His response to prayer.

These very words are those used by Solomon when he asks for these things to be so on behalf of the temple he has built (2 Chron. 6:40). But David knew that it happens anyway without any temple. So we see the slide from personal spirituality to mere religion over a generation.

Psa 34:16 Yahweh's face is against those who do evil, to cut off their memory from the earth- In the context of :15, the sense would be that He does not answer the prayers of evildoers. Which means that our experience of answered prayer is therefore a premonition of our ultimate acceptance at the last day.

Psa 34:17 The righteous cry, and Yahweh hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles- These are past tenses... cried, heard, delivered. The historical reference is to David crying to God to save him in Gath. As discussed on :16, the implication is that the experience of answered prayer is therefore a premonition of our ultimate acceptance at the last day. The allusion is to how Israel in Egypt cried and were heard by the God who delivered them from their troubles (Dt. 26:7 s.w.). And yet Israel were hardly "righteous". They took the idols of Israel with them through the Red Sea, carrying the tabernacles of their gods through the desert along with that of Yahweh. Again, as so often, David seems to assume that God's activity depends upon personal righteousness; when after his failure with Bathsheba he came to see that this is not necessarily the case. Because God's grace is different to that.

Psa 34:18 Yahweh is near- Literally, 'next to', 'neighbour / relative to'. This is how close God feels to the broken hearted and crushed; and conversely, how far He is from the self satisfied and self congratulatory, 'the strong' in secular terms. It is this feature of Yahweh which makes Him unique; no other God has this characteristic of 'nearness' (s.w. Dt. 4:7).

To those who have a broken heart, and saves those who have a crushed spirit- This was how David felt as he pretended to be insane (:1) in order to escape. He was driven so low that his spirit was crushed and broken. We note the parallel between the heart and the spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit therefore speaks of a new heart being given.

The heart was broken but not the bones (:20). His experience at the time of his salvation from Gath here in Ps. 34 was going to help him when he was entrapped and shut in by his own sin regarding Bathsheba. For in his repentance, he had a broken heart and spirit (Ps. 51:19). And again when his heart was broken by reproach at the time of Absalom's rebellion (Ps. 69:21 "reproach has broken my heart"). Truly we can trace how his spiritual progress built upon previous experiences, just as our lives do also. And not only did David grow within his own life, building from experience to experience. This Psalm, like many others, was also rewritten and reapplied [under Divine inspiration] to the exiles. For their hearts were broken (Jer. 23:9) but the broken and crushed in heart were revived and brought back from exile (Is. 57:15; 61:1)- the bones were dry (Ez. 37) but not broken (:20).

Psa 34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but Yahweh delivers him out of them all- Total deliverance will only be at the last day, and maybe David has this in view.

Psa 34:20 He protects all of his bones; not one of them is broken- The prophecy of Ps.

34:20 about not a bone of the Lord being broken is clearly applied to Him in Jn. 19:36. But the context is clearly about all of us- any righteous man. The preceding verse speaks of how the Lord delivers the righteous man out of all his tribulations- and this verse is applied to other believers apart from the Lord Jesus in Acts 12:11 and 2 Tim. 3:11,12. The chilling fact is that we who are in the body of the Lord are indeed co-crucified with Him.

Psa 34:21 Evil shall kill the wicked; those who hate the righteous shall be condemned- This is true so far as it goes, but David and Solomon both had a tendency to eagerly condemn their enemies. It was said almost on the eve of Saul's death (see on :1) and indeed it did come about for Saul. Perhaps David's idea was that the wicked would be killed in this life, as he knew Saul would be; but also condemned at the last judgment. David has his mind on Saul here, but the Psalm is initially about his salvation from the Philistines in Gath. He surely saw that he was there because of Saul. He focuses on the real cause of things rather than those who ended up being his opponents because of Saul driving him there.

Psa 34:22 Yahweh redeems the soul of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him shall be condemned- David had taken refuge in Gath and was suffering because of it (see on :1). Perhaps here is a tacit recognition that he should have made Yahweh his city of refuge rather than Gath. But his thought develops to consider that Yahweh not only gives safety in this life, but the greatest salvation is to be saved from condemnation at the last day. That is the ultimate safety and assurance. This is alluded to by Paul in Rom. 8:33,34 and maybe by the Lord in Jn. 5:24. Our redemption means that we will not be desolate [AV] / held guilty [Heb.] / condemned [NEV]. Those whom God has redeemed He justifies, and saves from all condemnation. They are "passed from death unto life" (Jn. 5:24).

PSALMS CHAPTER 35

Psa 35:1 By David- Like many of the Psalms, this appears to have begun as a reflection upon Saul, and was then used again by David at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

Contend, Yahweh, with those who contend with me; fight against those who fight against me- These were exactly David's words about Saul (1 Sam. 24:15). David

imagined the court of Heaven to be permanently sitting, and he invites God to enter into legal judgment with Saul and then carry out an appropriate judgment.

Psa 35:2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for my help- The 'standing up' continues the legal allusions of :1. We may enquire why God is bidden take hold of defensive things like shield and protective armour. Perhaps the idea is that God was to show to David's enemies that all their offensive weaponry was nothing compared to His defense.

Ps. 35:2,3 present God as our armour bearer- if we do His will. He carries our shield and draws out and gives us the spear or weapon we need in whatever conflict, 'With us wherever we go'. Armour bearers were seen as totally loyal- as Jonathan's was to him, and as Saul's was to him. We are therefore given the impression of God's total loyalty to us wherever we go on our initiative in His service.

Psa 35:3 Brandish the spear and block those who pursue me- GNB "Lift up your spear and war ax against those who pursue me". If we stick with "block [the way]", we can think of Saul being turned back from pursuing David by news of a Philistine incursion, or Absalom being persuaded not to follow the advice of Ahithophel in immediately pursuing David.

Tell my soul, I am Your salvation- David is asking God to persuade him, to tell him in his soul, deep within him. This is another of the frequent indications in the Psalms that David believed God was capable of talking directly to the human heart over and above His written word; for as we see from Ps. 119, David had access to that word anyway. But he asks God to write the reality of salvation deeper in his own soul.

Psa 35:4 Let those who seek after my soul be disappointed and brought to dishonour. Let those who plot my ruin be turned back and confounded- Saul *sought* to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved. The words of this prayer are also in view in Ps. 44:7, where David considers them to have been answered.

The words are repeated in Ps. 40:14. That Psalm appears to have some reference to David's sin with Bathsheba, which provoked the plotting against David's life referred to here. And yet we wonder as to how David could so bitterly wish the destruction of his opponents, when he himself had been saved by grace.

Psa 35:5 Let them be as chaff before the wind, Yahweh's angel driving them on- David wishes that those who chased him (:6) be chased by God's Angel in the condemnation process of the last day (see on :6). "Chaff before the wind" recalls the destruction of the image representing worldly empires in Dan. 2. This continual wishing of condemnation upon enemies is certainly out of step with the love and prayerful pity for enemies inculcated in the spirit of Christ and specific New Testament teachings.

The idea of threshing is often associated with the judgement; the unworthy will be as chaff chased by the Angels. The Angels are made spirit (the same word Hebrew word as 'winds') and are being likened to the wind in this threshing process, driving the unworthy away; as Adam, typifying the rejected, was chased out of Eden by the Angels. "As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation" (Prov. 10:25) appears the basis of the parable of the house on the rock, making the whirlwind correspond to the second coming in judgement. "The whirlwind" is Angel cherubim language; as if it is by that means that the wicked will be destroyed.

Psa 35:6 Let their way be dark and slippery, Yahweh's angel pursuing them- See on :6. Again we have to reflect that this willing of men into condemnation is so different to the spirit of the Christ whom David saw in spirit always before his face. The language here is used of God's confirmation of Judah in their sinful way (Jer. 23:12 = Ps. 35:6); whichever path we choose, we are confirmed in. Those who are of a slippery tongue (Ps. 55:21 s.w.) will be confirmed in this; they will, as it were, slip headlong into condemnation. Their own chosen way is their judgment.

Psa 35:7 For without cause they have hidden their net in a pit for me, without cause they have dug a pit for my soul- The continued emphasis in David's psalms upon "without cause" surely reflects a self righteousness (Ps. 35:19; 69:4; 109:3; 119:161). For David's righteousness was only impressive relative to the wickedness of his enemies; before God, it was filthy rags. It was true that Saul persecuted David "without cause" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5), but the experience of "without cause" persecution can lead us to an inappropriate self-righteousness. This is what happened to Job, who also suffered "without cause" (s.w. Job 2:3), and had to be convicted of self-righteousness at the end of the story. And it seems this happened to David. David himself intended to shed blood "without cause" and was only saved from it by grace (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:31).

Psa 35:8 Let destruction come on him unawares. Let his net that he has hidden catch himself; let him fall into that destruction- This death wish seems to have come true of Absalom rather than Saul; for Absalom's death by his hair catching in a tree and literally falling to his death after being struck dead there would be more appropriate to these words than Saul's death. And David was to bitterly mourn Absalom's death. We need to ask ourselves how we would really feel if our bitter feelings were actually fulfilled by God.

Psa 35:9 My soul shall be joyful in Yahweh, I shall rejoice in His salvation- When David's great enemies (Saul and Absalom) did fall, David mourned and didn't rejoice.

Psa 35:10 All my bones shall say, Yahweh, who is like You, who delivers the poor from him who is too strong for him; yes, the poor and the needy from him who robs him?- Just as the description of Absalom's death in :8 didn't exactly come true for Absalom, so we wonder how David was robbed by his enemies. However he may have in view the fact that Saul and Absalom abused the poor generally, as was foretold of Saul by Samuel. It was this, rather than Saul's actual persecution of David, which David sees as the prime example of Saul's wickedness.

Psa 35:11 Unrighteous witnesses rise up; they accuse me of things that I know nothing about- Again we struggle to find much evidence of this in the historical records; but the intrigues after the sin with Bathsheba may well be what is in view. And Saul likely mobilized support for his anti-David campaign by a slander campaign, saying things such as those willingly believed by Nabal (1 Sam. 25:10).

Psa 35:12 They reward me evil for good, to the bereaving of my soul- This is exactly the language of how Saul treated David, who showed him "good" in preserving his life, and was rewarded for it with "evil" by Saul (1 Sam. 24:17). This injustice bereaved David, he was deeply hurt by the injustice of it all. We only sense this here in the Psalms; the historical record gives little indication of the psychological trauma David experienced because of it.

Psa 35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I afflicted my soul with fasting- Saul is in view (see on :12). The sickness of Saul was psychological, and David not only played the harp for him but also prayed and fasted in sackcloth for him. This again is something we don't see in the historical records.

My prayer returned into my own bosom- GNB "I prayed with my head bowed low", ESV "with head bowed on my chest". But it could also be an idiom implying his prayer had gone unanswered (as in Mt. 10:13; Ps. 79:12). Or he could mean that although the prayer was unanswered, a blessing still returned to him because he had prayed (as in Jer. 18:20).

Psa 35:14 I behaved myself as though it had been my friend or my brother. I bowed down mourning, as one who mourns his mother- This is one verse which to me is a cameo of the extent of the victory which David won against the mind of the flesh, against our massive tendency to repay sin with sin, bitterness with bitterness, anger with anger. If we take nothing else away from this, please focus your mind on this, and keep the memory: Here David protests his love for the one who was persecuting him (:12) and is reflecting upon his attitude to Saul's death. "As one who mourns for his mother". This is surely one of the most powerful figures that could be employed. Picture a young man of say 24, in a dark blue suit, kneeling down at the graveside of his mother, surrounded by friends and relatives, bowing down heavily in his grief. Or picture a man of 34, 44, 54, hair greying and receding now, bowing himself down heavily. Or even 64, 74, alone in his grief, bowing down heavily to the green turf, muttering words about mum. Perhaps some of us haven't yet experienced this; many have. If you haven't, just imagine it. Surely it brings a lump to your throat. Now it was with this intensity of grief that David mourned the death or sickness of his persecutor. This is a wondrous reflection of his devotion, his true love, his triumph over bitterness and anger, over all the human actions that had been directed against him. The heavy bowing down of the Lord Jesus as he wept over Jerusalem, the city that hated and rejected him, whose leaders slew him, whose people screamed for his blood. David wept for Saul as if he was his friend or brother. Who was David's friend and brother? Surely Jonathan his brother-in-law. But he wept for Saul, David says, as he wept for Jonathan. This is testified to historically by David's lament of 2 Sam. 1. And still David sought out the house of Saul, “that I may shew the kindness of God” unto them (2 Sam. 9:3). It was the experience of Divine kindness that motivated David. As he hoped for fellowship at the King’s table in the future, so David delighted in inviting his former enemies to partake of his table, now *he* was king (2 Sam. 9:7,11,13). And if we hope to share the Lord’s table in the Kingdom, we must share it with our weaker brethren now. I see in all this such a triumph for David, that a man should reflect the love of God to such an extent, to love in the face of such hatred, to not just love those who loved him.

The deep sorrow of the Lord Jesus for Judas and all those who turn away is surely typified here. Right at the bitter end, the Lord still referred to him as His friend (Mt. 26:50), even though a few hours before He had been speaking of how the faithful few were His friends, and how He would give His life for His friends (Jn. 15:13-15). Throughout His ministry, the Lord had spoken of the faithful as His friends (Lk. 14:20;

11:8; 12:4). This was the spirit of the Lord Jesus in His time of dying, this is what enabled Him to go through the mock trial, the intense degradation, the bitter pain of rejection, without bitterness and the sin of unholy anger. To be like David to Saul, like Paul to Corinth, like Christ to the Jews, like God to us, really is possible. If that's how we can live, we will truly be in the new life.

Psa 35:15 But in my adversity- Literally 'limping', a strange term to use, until we perceive yet another allusion to Jacob limping home from exile (s.w. Gen. 32:31). The same word is used of the exiles who were to be regathered and reestablished as a kingdom in the face of all opposition (Mic. 4:6,7).

They rejoiced, and gathered themselves together. The attackers gathered themselves together against me, and I didn't know it. They tore at me, and didn't cease- This may refer to Saul's various secret plans to kill David, hidden from him even by those supposedly close to him.

Psa 35:16 Like the profane mockers in feasts, they gnashed their teeth at me- These feasts may be a reference to idol worship, which was prevalent in Israel at David's time and amongst his enemies (see on Ps. 31:6). There may also be reference to Absalom's deceitful feasts of 2 Sam. 13:24; 15:7-10. Gnashing of teeth is the language of condemnation at the last day (Mt. 8:12 etc.). But those thus condemned will have gnashed their teeth at their brethren in this life. By doing so, they are living out their own condemnation.

Psa 35:17 Lord, how long will You look on? Rescue my soul from their destruction, my precious life from the lions- "Precious life" is literally 'my darling', 'my only one'. I suggest this isn't narcissism, but rather a rightful appreciation of the value and meaning of our own life; which we want preserved so that we can use it for God.

Psa 35:18 I will give You thanks in the great assembly, I will praise You among many people- David's vision was to take the good news of God's grace to the assembly of God's people and also to the "many people" of the Gentiles. David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish

(1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps. 71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

It is the struggle of every spiritually minded and righteous man to humble himself to accept he is only part of a far wider congregation, comprised of believers who may frankly be less spiritually minded than himself (Ps. 26:12; 35:18; 68:26). David and the Lord Jesus are parade examples of achieving this sense.

Psa 35:19 Don't let those who are my enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; neither let those who hate me without a cause wink their eyes- For "without a cause", see on :7. "Wrongfully" reflects again David's deep sense of injustice (see on Ps. 35:7). He uses the word for "false witness", as if they were breaking one of the ten commandments; and he uses it often, heaping condemnation upon any who dare lie / bear false witness about him (Ps. 38:19; 52:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:29,69,86,118; 120:2; 144:8,11). And yet David lied and deceived in order to get Uriah killed so that he could take his wife for himself. Surely reflection upon that sin made him realize that his zeal to condemn dishonesty was at best misplaced; to lament it is one thing, but David was to be taught that he had himself done the very thing he so condemned.

Psa 35:20 For they don't speak peace, but they devise deceitful words against those who are quiet in the land- The devising of words reflects David's deep sense that the essence of spirituality is deep in the mind or heart; words issue from the heart.

Psa 35:21 Yes, they opened their mouth wide against me- The allusion to lions or wild animals is so frequent in David's thinking. His victories over wild animals in his youth remained an abiding memory.

They said, Aha! Aha! Our eye has seen it!- The weakness they thought their eyes had seen was nothing compared to the way Yahweh's eye had seen them (:22).

Psa 35:22 You have seen it, Yahweh. Don't keep silent. Lord, don't be far from me- See on :21. The plea for God not to "be far from me" is common (Ps. 22:11,19; 35:22; 38:21;

71:12). The emphasis perhaps is to be placed upon David not wanting *God* to be far from him, seeing that he felt others were 'far' from him (s.w. Ps. 88:8,18). He accepted his social and psychological isolation from others, but he didn't want God to be likewise far off from him. In the context of the exiles, God was willing to not be 'far off' from the exiles if they repented (Is. 46:13).

Psa 35:23 Wake up! Rise up to defend me, my God! My Lord, contend for me!- A window on what communication can be with our creator is provided by considering the 'imprecatory Psalms' like this one; where the writer wishes terrible judgments upon his enemies. It is possible to understand these Psalms in terms of the promises to Abraham- that God will curse those who curse the true seed of Abraham. They can therefore be seen to be merely asking for the promises to Abraham to be fulfilled against God's enemies. But another angle on this problem is to consider how the Psalmists talk to God in a far 'rougher' way than we do. They pour out their feelings, their anger and frustration with their enemies, their inability to understand how God is working... and they let it all hang down. They seem to have no reserve with God; they talk to Him as if He is their friend and acquaintance. David pleads with God to 'avenge my cause' (Ps. 35:23), he protests how he is in the right and how he longs for God to judge him. And so do the prophets, in the interjections they sometimes make in commentary on the prophecy they have just uttered. The emotion which David often seems to have felt was "Damn these people!", but he pours this out to God and asks *Him* to damn them. When we like David feel our enemies are unjust, we can:

1. Seek revenge. But this isn't a response we can make, Biblically.

2. Deny the feelings of hurt and anger. And yet, they surface somehow. And we join the ranks of the millions of hurt people in this world, who 'take it out' in some way on others.

3. Or we can do as David seems to have done. Take these feelings, absolutely as they are, with no rough edges smoothed off them...to God Himself. Pour them all out in prayer and leave Him to resolve the matter. In passing, this fits in with the conclusions of modern psychiatry- that we can't eliminate our feelings, so we must express them in an appropriate way.

This latter option is how I understand the imprecatory Psalms.

Psa 35:24 Vindicate me, Yahweh my God, according to Your righteousness. Don't let them gloat over me- Time and again in the Psalms, David expresses his good

conscience in terms of asking God to come and judge him (e.g. Ps. 35:24). Was this not some reference to the future theophany which David knew some day would come?

Psa 35:25 Don't let them say in their heart, Aha! That's just the way we want it! Don't let them say, We have swallowed him up!- The reference may be to Ahithophel's plan to swallow up David at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 17:12,16 s.w.). David's prayer of Ps. 35:25; 69:15; 124:3 not to be swallowed up / destroyed was answered, but he was devastated at the answer- for it meant the death of his son Absalom. Again David has Job in mind, who had his 'brethren' arguing that he should be swallowed up / destroyed without cause (Job 2:3 s.w.).

Psa 35:26 Let them be disappointed and confounded together who rejoice at my calamity. Let them be clothed with shame and dishonour who magnify themselves against me- The only other occurrence of the phrase "rejoice at my calamity" is in Prov. 2:14, where David's son Solomon condemns those who "rejoice to do evil" (s.w.). He is quoting these reflections of David upon the coalition of haters who joined Absalom in trying to overthrow him. Solomon speaks the truth, but he does so with an eye on justifying himself against his brother Absalom and those who had followed him. Always Solomon is harnessing 'truth' to an agenda of self-justification; and we must be warned by this.

Psa 35:27 Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favour my righteous cause. Yes, let them say continually, Yahweh be magnified, who has pleasure in the prosperity of His servant!- David's desire for the glorification of God rather than himself is always to be noted and commended. His own name had been magnified (1 Chron. 11:9), by God's grace; but he wanted Yahweh's Name to be magnified by as many as possible, as well as by himself.

Psa 35:28 My tongue shall talk about Your righteousness and about Your praise all day long- Although David asks for *his* "righteous cause" to be favoured (:27), he rejoices not in his rightness, but in God's righteousness.

PSALMS CHAPTER 36

Psa 36:1 For the Chief Musician. By David, the servant of Yahweh.
An oracle is within my heart about the disobedience of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes-

GNB is about right: "Sin speaks to the wicked deep in their hearts". The essence of sin is in the self talk of the heart; and that is the real satan or adversary to every believer.

Saul was characterized by disobedience, and it was specifically for this that he was rejected by God and replaced with David. But David seems overly focused upon the disobedience of others, when he himself was also a sinner. Therefore Rom. 3:18 quotes these words about all men, including those like David who are saved by grace through faith. Paul is applying the descriptions of the very worst of humanity and admitting that in essence, this is what is going on within *his* heart and within the heart of every man. Truly, bad man only do what good mean dream of. We may well enquire how David thought he knew the state of heart [AV "inward part"] of his enemies (Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11; 62:4; 64:6). Perhaps it was a result of his reflection upon how he had only had a right spirit or heart given by God "within" him as a result of his repentance (Ps. 51:10 s.w.). His enemies were impenitent, and so perhaps on that basis he knew what was in their hearts.

Psa 36:2 For he flatters himself in his own eyes, too much to detect and hate his sin- As discussed on :1, we may wonder how David can be confident he knows so much about the state of Saul's heart. He had been summoned to play the harp for Saul so that the "evil spirit" or depressed attitude of mind would leave Saul. He was therefore working as an amateur psychologist; his work was not merely to play a harp, but to lift Saul's depression. And this Psalm is as it were his case report on Saul's heart. Self flattery is indeed the reason why personal sin cannot be detected in self examination. And depression, such as Saul suffered, is not of itself humility; it can be, as with Saul, self flattery.

Psa 36:3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit; he has ceased to be wise and to do good- Saul initially wisely refused to go after those who opposed his kingship, and is presented as thoughtful for his father's feelings (1 Sam. 9:5). But from there he embarked upon a downward spiral of self deception which resulted in being deceitful to others, not least to his servant David. Solomon may allude here in saying that we are to cease (s.w.) from our own wisdom (Prov. 23:4). Saul went the other way; he ceased from God's wisdom and turned to his own wisdom. His access to Divine wisdom was surely through Samuel's prophetic words to him.

Psa 36:4 He plots iniquity on his bed- David rightly perceived that what a man thinks alone on his bed is a litmus indicator of his essential spirituality (Ps. 4:4; 149:5), and he condemns Saul for plotting sin on his bed (Ps. 36:4). And yet the same phrase "on his bed" is used for how David plotted the sin with Bathsheba on his bed (2 Sam. 11:2). David was surely taught by his sin that he had been too quick to condemn others for their wicked thoughts upon their beds.

He sets himself up in a way that is not good. He doesn't hate evil- To omit to hate evil is the same as to commit it. The Messianic king was to "hate evil" (s.w. Is. 7:15,16), just as Job did. But Saul precluded all the possibilities to be the anointed / Messianic king by loving evil.

Psa 36:5 Your grace, Yahweh, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the skies- This understanding of "mercy and truth", a phrase often used about the promises to Abraham, was what sustained David when he realized he had sinned with Bathsheba and Uriah. He perceived God's grace was infinite, and this faith was put to the test by his sin. It's amazing how God works even through human failure to lead us further along the path of knowing His grace.

Psa 36:6 Your righteousness is like the great mountains; Your judgments are like a great deep. Yahweh, You preserve man and animal- The infinite height of God's grace (:6) is compared to the height and depth of His rightness and justice. His grace isn't cheap, neither does it infringe His holiness and righteousness. This is the infinite wonder of it all. Some reverence God's physical power and majesty rather than His moral majesty. David got the balance right when he reflected that God's righteousness "is like the great mountains". He saw God's moral strength reflected in the massive physicality of God's creation. Job had to be taught this lesson.

Psa 36:7 How precious is Your grace, O God!- Even before his sin with Bathsheba, David talks much about God's grace. But clearly he never appreciated it fully until after he was personally thrown upon it in moral terms; and the same can be true of us. For who can say they have fathomed God's grace. There are rungs up the ladder in appreciating it.

The children of men take refuge under the shadow of Your wings- David often says that this is where he personally feels located, under the cherubic wings overshadowing the mercy seat, with the shekinah glory above him and the blood of atonement beneath

him. But he invites all God's people to share his experience; that is the purpose of his Psalms.

Psa 36:8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the abundance of Your house- Although exiled from the sanctuary whilst persecuted by Saul, David knew that finally he would return to it. And he saw himself as representative of all God's people; which made his Psalms so relevant to the exiles. Perhaps "house" was inserted when the psalms were rewritten for the exiles; for there was no "house" of God in David's time.

You will make them drink of the river of Your pleasures- God will "make us" partake of the blessings of the Kingdom of God. It reminds us of how the Lord Jesus said that in His Kingdom, He will "make us" sit down at a table, and He will come and serve us (Lk. 12:37), knowing full well that he who sits at meat is greater than he who serves (Lk. 22:27). It isn't so difficult to imagine this scene: the Lord of glory wanting us to sit down to a meal, and then *He* comes and serves us. He *will* have to "make us" sit down and let ourselves be served. Perhaps "*Come*, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom" (Mt. 25:34) likewise suggests a hesitancy of the faithful to enter the Kingdom, seeing they have had such doubt about salvation. Perhaps this is typified by Joseph's revelation to his brethren; they slink away from him, and he has to encourage them: "Come near to me, I pray you" (Gen. 45:4).

"River" can as well mean "spring" (see :9), and may refer to the Gihon spring near mount Zion; David understood this as representative of God's eternal blessings which the righteous will partake of. "Pleasures" is related to the word for Eden; David envisaged Eden restored, based around the sanctuary in Zion. He was looking very much ahead; for at that time, Zion was not under Israelite control nor had David yet moved the sanctuary there.

Psa 36:9 For with You is the spring of life; in Your light shall we see light- David saw the spring in Zion (see on :8) as a symbol of eternal life, and the day when God's light would be the light of all His people. No longer would the shekinah glory be just over the ark, but would be global. And perhaps he looks ahead to the Lord Jesus, who was to be God's light (Jn. 1:4,9). In that light do we understand all things.

Psa 36:10 Oh continue Your grace to those who know You, Your righteousness to the upright in heart- David is seeing himself and the righteous as Job, and he here continues that connection, seeing that Job is described likewise as "upright in heart" (Job 1:8; 2:3).

David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

Psa 36:11 Don't let the foot of pride come against me; don't let the hand of the wicked drive me away- Foot and hand are paralleled, as are "pride" and "the wicked". David rightly saw pride as the epitome of wickedness. "Drive away" is s.w. "vagabond" (Gen. 4:12,14). He didn't want to permanently be like Cain, exiled from the sanctuary. His love of the sanctuary is repeated throughout the Psalms, and came to full term in his plans to build the temple; his exile from it was perhaps to teach him that God really doesn't live in structures, and is equally present in human hearts wherever they are. Perhaps we all too have David's tension between his love of the structure on one hand, and his personal spirituality on the other.

Psa 36:12 There the workers of iniquity are fallen, they are thrust down, and shall not be able to rise- "There" appears to refer to David's imagination of the outcome of the day of judgment. He sees the punishment of the wicked as being put down permanently into the grave, suffering "the second death"- and not eternal torment.

PSALMS CHAPTER 37

Psa 37:1 By David- This psalm of David has clear relevance to the exiles, awaiting a "soon" restoration to the land of Israel. It appears to have been rewritten, under inspiration, with reference to them. The Psalms of David are typically about his own personal desires and hopes for restoration, but this Psalm is solely an encouragement to others.

Don't fret because of evildoers, neither be envious against those who work unrighteousness- Those who "work unrighteousness" is a phrase frequently used of the apostate amongst the exiles in Babylon (e.g. Ez. 18:24; 33:13 cp. Zeph. 3:13). The faithful were not to be envious of their apparent success in Babylon but instead to focus upon the hope of restoration to the land.

Psa 37:2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green plant- The language of how things were to be at the restoration (Is. 40:7,8).

Psa 37:3 Trust in Yahweh, and do good. Dwell in the land, and enjoy safe pasture- In the restoration context, this could be similar to Jeremiah's message for the exiles to dwell in Babylon and establish themselves, but in hope of eternal inheritance of the land of Israel. Or the idea could be that by a return to faith and good behaviour, the flock of Judah would be restored to their land and find safe pasture there, a figure used like this in Ez. 34.

The believing life affects every part of human existence. Thus Psalm 37 parallels those who have faith, who do good (:3), who hope (:9), who are meek (:11), pure (:18), generous (:22), just (:28), wise, speakers of truth (:29), waiting for the Lord (:34), peacemakers (:37). It's not that some of us have faith and another, e.g., is generous. We may be better at some aspects of the Christ-life than others, but our model is Him, as a total person. The image of slavery suggests a total devotion of life to our Lord's cause. Just as every part of the animal had to be offered, so we as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1) cannot just offer certain aspects of our lives to the Lord.

Psa 37:4 Also delight yourself in Yahweh, and He will give you the desires of your heart- The desires of the heart is paralleled in this Psalm with inheriting the land eternally. If this is our greatest desire, we shall receive it. This is a sublime truth. All those who truly love the Lord's appearing as the master passion of their lives- will be acceptable to Him (2 Tim. 4:8). This is why the hope of the Kingdom can never be a mere hobby, but is by its very nature the all consuming passion of human life. Perhaps David alludes to his own overriding passion and desire for relationship with God and salvation in Ps. 38:9.

Psa 37:5 Commit your way to Yahweh. Trust also in Him, and He will do this- What He will "do" is to grant the desire of our heart (:4), which is defined in this Psalm as eternally inheriting the land. And this will be achieved by imputing righteousness to us (:6). We are to commit our life's way to Yahweh, knowing that it is His desire to grant us our heart's desire- a place in His Kingdom. David speaks of committing our life's way to Yahweh and then trusting that He will bring us to His Kingdom; Solomon tweaks this into "Commit [s.w.] your *works* unto Yahweh" (Prov. 16:3). We see here Solomon's works-based approach.

Psa 37:6 He will make your righteousness go forth as the light, and your justice as the noon day sun- In the immediate context, this refers to righteousness being imputed as the basis upon which believers can eternally inherit the land; see on :4,5.

David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her… will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and *felt* this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to " every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. See on Ps. 41:12.

Psa 37:7 Rest in Yahweh, and wait patiently for Him- He delays the second coming because He waits and hopes for repentance and spiritual growth from us. But He praises the faithful for patiently waiting for Him (Is. 30:18; Ps. 37:7). Here we see the humility of God's grace.

Don't fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who makes wicked plots happen- In the restoration context, this clearly applies to the "wicked Haman" (Esther 7:6), who apparently prospered and made wicked plots.

Psa 37:8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Don't fret, it leads only to evildoing- God's anger was to cease in the salvation of the exiles (Ps. 85:4; Is. 10:25; 54:8; 60:10), as it has towards us. And if we believe this, then we too are to cease from anger and wrath, seeing every provocation of our wrath as an opportunity to live out how God has ceased from wrath with us.

Psa 37:9 For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for Yahweh shall inherit the land- Those who wait for Yahweh are clearly the faithful amongst the exiles, waiting for the prophetic word of restoration to come true. These thoughts had their genesis whilst David was on the run from Saul, encouraging those with him that one day soon they would rule the Kingdom which would fall to David.

Psa 37:10 For yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more- The expectation of restoration and salvation from the wicked in "a little while" is very relevant to the exiles. Our sufferings now are only for a moment compared to the glorious eternity of the

Kingdom (Ps. 37:10; 2 Cor. 4:17), and yet the language of the Bible also expresses God's appreciation that from our perspective, our time of probation is "a long time" (Mt. 25:19).

Yes, though you look for his place, he isn't there- Solomon in his collapse of faith appears to allude here; but he considers that not finding the place of the deceased is just an example of life's vanity (Ecc. 8:10 s.w.). David his father saw it is a triumph of good over evil and a foretaste of how things shall be eternally put right at the last day. But Solomon lost the kingdom perspective, using the words of David his father simply in a secular sense.

Psa 37:11 But the humble shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace- This "abundance of peace" is the language of the restored Kingdom of God upon earth (Ps. 72:3). The Lord quotes this in Mt. 5:5. The potential possible for the exiles was precluded by their lack of repentance; but the prophecies of eternal restoration are reinterpreted and reapplied to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus which is to be established at His return.

Psa 37:12 The wicked plots against the just, and gnashes at him with his teeth- Just as they will at the last day (Ps. 112:10). Gnashing of teeth is the language of condemnation at the last day (Mt. 8:12 etc.). But those thus condemned will have gnashed their teeth at their brethren in this life. By doing so, they are living out their own condemnation.

Psa 37:13 The Lord will laugh at him, for He sees that his day is coming- The Lord laughing at the wicked is the language of Ps. 2 about the final day of judgment, and also has relevance to the situation in Jerusalem at Hezekiah's time (Is. 37:22).

Throughout David's Psalms in Ps. 1-72, he repeatedly asks for torture upon the sinners and blessing upon himself as the righteous. He speaks of how sinners should be "contemned" in the eyes of the righteous (Ps. 15:4), the gatherings of sinners should be "hated" and sinners should not be fellowshipped (Ps. 26:4-6; Ps. 31:6) and how God's uprightness is shown to the upright and His judgment to the judgmental (Ps. 18:25,26; Ps. 33:22). He invites God's judgment upon himself and others according to their and his works (Ps. 28:4). Frequently he alludes to Saul as "the violent man"- even though David committed his share of violence- and asks judgment upon him (Ps. 18:48). Only those with clean hands and pure heart like himself could have fellowship with God (Ps. 24:3,4). Psalm 37 doesn't indicate any desire to convert the sinners but rather an expectation of their judgment and destruction. God and David laugh at the wicked because their day is coming (Ps. 37:13). There's no spirit of grace here at all- perhaps

that's why Zech. 12:10 specifically says that the spirit of grace will have to be poured out upon the house of David in the last days. This attitude changed after the sin with Bathsheba, but still something of the old self righteousness and judgmental attitudes are to be found in David in Psalms written after that.

In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Psalm 37 speaks of the wicked without any apparent interest in their conversion, but rather is there an emphasis upon their condemnation, even a gloating over it, and the [surely incorrect] fantasy that God laughs at the thought of how He will punish the wicked in future (Ps. 37:13).

Psa 37:14 The wicked have drawn out the sword and have bent their bow to cast down the poor and needy, to kill those who are upright in the way- Language used about the oppressors of Judah in exile (Is. 5:28; 21:15). David sees uprightness as characteristic of all God's people (Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But all men, God's people included, are not upright (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

Psa 37:15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart. Their bows shall be broken- Language relevant to the death of Absalom. But when David's imprecations against his enemies such as Saul and Absalom came true, he was mortified with grief. We must be careful what we desire, for God reads our desires as prayers. David considers that it is his Divinely given strength which will break the bows (Ps. 18:34).

Psa 37:16 Better is a little that the righteous has, than the abundance of many wicked- The Hebrew seems to mean that the small numbers of the righteous are better than the great numbers of the wicked. David foresaw that even amongst God's people, both of his time and amongst the later exiles, only a minority would be truly spiritual.

Psa 37:17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but Yahweh upholds the

righteous- As we will see on :24, David feels he is the one who has been 'upheld' despite his sin with Bathsheba. He sees himself therefore as "the righteous", but only because he deeply believed in imputed righteousness.

Psa 37:18 Yahweh knows the days of the perfect. Their inheritance shall be forever- To 'know the days' of someone can be read as an idiom for "takes care of" (as GNB). The idea of eternal inheritance alludes to the promises to Abraham. But as the New Testament makes clear, the "seed" died without receiving the fulfilment of the promises; eternal inheritance can only come when the Kingdom is established upon earth. And there was the potential that this could have happened had the exiles been repentant and desirous of participating in such a restored Kingdom; but they weren't, and so the Kingdom promises have been rescheduled and reapplied.

Psa 37:19 They shall not be disappointed in the time of evil; in the days of famine they shall be satisfied- Under the old covenant, famine was not supposed to come if the people were obedient. So the idea is that even when suffering the punishment for sin, God will still show grace and keep His repentant people "alive in famine".

Psa 37:20 But the wicked shall perish, the enemies of Yahweh shall be like the passing beauty of the fields. They will vanish-- vanish like smoke- LXX "the enemies of the Lord at the moment of their being honoured and exalted have utterly vanished like smoke". This could refer to the destruction of Haman, in the context of the exiles. But consumption into smoke is the language of sacrifice. The sacrifices taught Israel that God especially valued the fat- the best parts of their lives were to be freely offered to Him. But the wicked at judgment day will be as the fat of lambs, consumed upon the altar (Ps. 37:20). We either give our best to the Lord's service now, or He will ultimately take it from us anyway. Cars, houses, flats, valued jewelry, banknotes stashed away, bank accounts, our innermost emotions, jealousy, love… we either give them now, or He will take them from us in the day of judgment.

Psa 37:21 The wicked borrow, and don't pay back, but the righteous give generously- The idea may be that the righteous forgive. They give out, whereas the wicked effectively steal.

Psa 37:22 For such as are blessed by Him shall inherit the land. Those who are cursed

by Him shall be cut off- Another allusion to the blessing associated with the Abrahamic promises. We note that the opposite of blessing is the curse of permanent death- not eternal conscious punishment. "Cut off" is the same word for the cutting of the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15:18). The idiom was to emphasize that those who rejected the covenant would be "cut off" (Gen. 17:14); blessing and life eternal were only available through the covenant.

Psa 37:23 A man's goings are established by Yahweh; He delights in his way- If a man prepares his way after God's principles (2 Chron. 27:6; Prov. 4:26), then God will 'prepare' that man's way too (Ps. 37:23; 119:5), confirming him in the way of escape. God "delights in every detail of their lives" (Ps. 37:23); and the more we perceive that interest, the more we will live the purpose driven life. Yet the tendency is to just assume these gifts from God as what we have almost by right, and that He is willing for us to live the life He has given us without deeply analyzing our choices and decisions; that our talents are things we can use as we wish because they are what life dished up to us. But they have been granted by an eager Father, anxiously watching how we will use them in *His* service, not our own. Life is a test, a trust, rather than a few decades pursuing our own happiness. We have been made unique, with unique thumbprints, eyes, voices, and each heart beats to a different pattern. And of course all this is reflected in our unique emotional makeups. All these things are given us to fulfill our unique role in the body of Christ- a part only we can play. We have a huge personal responsibility to use our lives for the God who gave them to us. What is made in His image- i.e. our bodies- must be given back to Him.

When Solomon teaches that God must be allowed to establish or direct our way (Prov. 4:26; 16:29), he is using the same Hebrew words as in Ps. 37:23 and Ps. 119:5, when David says the same. It's as if he was given God's truth and yet he never quite made it his very own- he still articulated it in terms of the faith of his fathers. And thus he lost it in the end.

Psa 37:24 Though he stumble, he shall not fall, for Yahweh holds him up with His hand- As this was written at the end of David's life (:25), he had in view his sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 37:25 I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his children begging for bread- Yet the exiles and their children did "beg bread" (s.w. Lam. 1:11). The implication therefore is that they did so because they were not righteous.

Psa 37:26 All day long he deals graciously, and lends. His seed is blessed- We will always be given enough to give to others- if that is what we want to do. The Lord's parable of the friend at midnight seems to be teaching the same (Lk. 11:5-9). This is quite a challenging idea, in an age when masses live on minimum wage. The idea that 'If I get wealthy, I'll be generous' is quite different to God's approach. If we see *others'* need, and we genuinely wish to meet it, then the resources to meet it will be provided- whether through our own hands or by other means.

Psa 37:27 Depart from evil, and do good. Live securely forever- "Depart from evil" could be read as an appeal to repentance; and this was especially relevant to the exiles. If they truly repented and did good, then they would receive eternal inheritance of the land. It is the phrase used to describe how Job hated evil (Job 1:8); and the exiles were bidden follow his pattern.

Psa 37:28 For Yahweh loves justice, and doesn't forsake His saints. They are preserved forever- Eternal preservation is surely appropriate to the idea of eternity at the Lord's return.

But the children of the wicked shall be cut off- The wickedness of the wicked is that they influence their children to live in a way which will also merit condemnation.

Psa 37:29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and live in it forever- This is in direct allusion to the promises to Abraham, and is quoted by the Lord in Mt. 5:5. I noted on :4-6 that David may have in view 'imputed righteousness' when he speaks of "the righteous". He is writing this after his sin with Bathsheba, from which he had learned that lesson (:25). And yet it is possible that he reverted to his previous black and white view of God's people as divided into sinners and righteous, with no attention paid to the fact that the righteous sin and things are not so black and white.

Psa 37:30 The mouth of the righteous talks of wisdom, his tongue speaks justice- The words of the righteous are connected with what is in their heart (:31); a fundamental connection repeated by the Lord in His teaching. The only other parallel between wisdom and justice is found in the description of David's son Solomon (1 Kings 3:28). But I have elsewhere suggested that even this was Solomon merely living out parental expectation, and finally he turned away from the way of wisdom and justice.

Psa 37:31 The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide- See on :30. David recognized elsewhere that his steps had slid (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). But at the end of

his life, he reflects that the steps of the righteous don't slip (Ps. 37:25,31). Perhaps David came to minimize his earlier slipping, especially in the matter of Bathsheba, in his old age. Or perhaps he was able to look back and see that despite temporary sliding of steps, ultimately the steps of the righteous don't slide in the overall path of their life.

Psa 37:32 The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to kill him- But the eyes of God also watch the righteous, as David often comments; indeed He "watches the nations" (Ps. 66:7). And His Divine watching seeks to save us. In this contest between God and man, God will ultimately win.

Psa 37:33 Yahweh will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged- The hand of the wicked does at times triumph over the righteous in this life, as David himself experienced. But the ultimate perspective is that at the last day, God will not condemn the righteous. This is to be the final perspective on all suffering of the righteous at the hand of the wicked.

Psa 37:34 Wait for Yahweh, and keep His way- The righteous are to commit their way to Yahweh (:5). But by doing so, their way becomes His way.

And He will exalt you to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it- The point of eternal inheritance of the land was to be at the same time as the righteous see the cutting off of the wicked. This implies the resurrection of both categories amongst God's people to face judgment, and the righteous witnessing the condemnation of the wicked- which will not be to eternal punishment, but to the cutting off in "the second death".

Psa 37:35 I have seen the wicked in great power, spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil- LXX "like the cedars of Libanus", perhaps a reference to the pride of the kings of Babylon, who are likened in the prophets to a tree being cut down.

Psa 37:36 But he passed away, and behold, he was not. Yes, I sought him, but he could not be found- The language of the passing away of Babylon and all her pomp (Dan. 2:35). This was particular comfort for the exiles.

Psa 37:37 Note the perfect man, and see the upright, for there is a future for the man of peace- The Hebrew appears to be similar to the LXX: "Maintain innocence, and behold uprightness: for there is a remnant to the peaceable man". Again this has particular

comfort for the exiles, the remnant of Judah who were to be restored to the land- if they were upright.

Psa 37:38 As for transgressors, they shall be destroyed together. The future of the wicked shall be cut off- This continues the connection with the images of all Judah's enemies being destroyed together (Dan. 2:35; see on :36).

Psa 37:39 But the salvation of the righteous is from Yahweh; He is their stronghold in the time of trouble- Although exiled from the stronghold of Zion, Judah would be saved by Yahweh being their stronghold. He could be a stronghold for His people far from Zion, as David learned in his times of exile. Yah's salvation is ultimately Yeshua, the Lord Jesus.

Psa 37:40 Yahweh helps them, and rescues them. He rescues them from the wicked, and saves them, because they have taken refuge in Him- The idea seems to be that they are rescued at some point *after* they have chosen to take refuge in God. "Saves" is the word commonly used in the restoration prophecies for the salvation of the exiles from Babylon (e.g. Is. 60:16). But to make that great salvation operational, they needed to consciously take refuge in Yahweh. Is. 57:13 appears to allude to Ps. 37: "He who puts his trust (s.w.) in Me shall inherit the land".

PSALMS CHAPTER 38

Psa 38:1 A Psalm by David, for a memorial- Psalm 38 appears to be David's lament of his bad conscience, some time before he makes his confession of Ps. 51. But he wishes his situation then to be remembered, to be memorialized, perhaps because he perceived that so many sinners remain in that limbo position for too long, and need to move forward from a niggle about sin towards the full repentance which David came to. In the context of the exiles, they needed to also make this move; and the same word for "memorial" is used often of how they were intended to "remember" (Is. 44:21; 46:8,9). "For a memorial" can be rendered "for the memorial offering" [LXX "for the sabbath", referencing some weekly memorial offering?], as if this Psalm was to be recited along with the memorial offering. And the equivalent for us is the breaking of bread. The idea of a memorial is not simply that our memory is jogged; it is also that God will be reminded, or 'rememberanced', hence those who pray are called God's rememberancers. He is put in mind of our plea for help in dealing with our sins and their consequences.

Yahweh, don't rebuke me in Your wrath, neither chasten me in Your hot displeasure- The chastening or "discipline" is the word used for David's experiences after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 6:1; 39:11). David had been open to Nathan's "rebuke" (Ps. 141:5), which was not given in God's wrath so much as in His appeal for David to accept His grace. But this verse is quoted in Heb. 12:5,6 about *all* of God's children, who have to go through David's basic experience in order to become the accepted sons of God. We *do* all have to be rebuked and chastened, even if like children, like David, we so fear it.

"Rebuke" is the word translated "chasten" in the promises of 2 Sam. 7:14: "If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men". Nathan's words to David in 2 Sam. 12 were clearly enough this "rebuke". We enquire whether David asks to be rebuked but not in God's wrath; or whether he asks overall not to be rebuked. We note his identical request in Ps. 6:1. The Hebrew word is sometimes translated 'to correct' (Hab. 1:12 "You established them for correction"), even 'to plead with'. David knows he has sinned, but fears the rebuke. Yet elsewhere in the Psalms he urges men to accept the rebuke / chastening / correction of Yahweh. The parallel seems to be in the way that David never rebuked his son Adonijah ["His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so?", 1 Kings 1:6]. This Psalm 38 features David crying out because of physical and mental affliction; and in later Psalms he says that this is how he was before he confessed his sin. So this Psalm is written before the rebuke from Nathan. David didn't want it, because he suspected it would involve judgment of his "house" or family. He knew he had 'committed iniquity' but didn't want the threatened 'chastening with the rod of men'. And therefore he delayed his confession of 'committing iniquity'. He said "I will [in future] declare my iniquity" (:18). He didn't do it immediately because he feared the consequences, and here in Ps. 38:1 he appears to be trying to cut a deal with God ahead of his intended confession, asking for the 'rebuke' not to come. But he is eventually overpowered by Nathan's rebuke and confesses- and receives the 'chastening' / rebuke he so feared. He acted in many ways like a child. Wanting to confess but fearing the promised consequence. We marvel at the detailed picture of David's psychological state; we could call it his psycho-spiritual state. For there is in every man such a struggle to confess sin as intended.

David clearly knows he's sinned and God is angry, and he has been struck with some illness- although as discussed later, this could be a stress induced episode rather than some Divine stroke. He begs for salvation from consequences, but there appears no focus upon his confession of sin and true repentance.

These words however reflect David's great fear of the consequences of his sin. I suggest on Ps. 51 that his strong urge for his sin to be entirely obliterated is because he feared taking the promised consequences for it. He was obsessed with building up his "house" physically and in terms of his family, disregarding the promises to him in 2 Sam. 7 that

his Messianic seed was the one who would have and build an eternal house. So the consequences threatened- that evil would arise from his own house and that his house would thereby be judged and self destroyed- were almost a fate worse than death for him. His prayer here is that of Ps. 6:1 "Rebuke me not in Your anger, nor discipline me in Your wrath". He didn't want Divine discipline, and reflects this by refusing to discipline his sons. Especially Adonijah: "His father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why have you done so?" (1 Kings 1:6). This desire for consequence of sin to be removed is a major theme with David: "Consider my affliction [i.e. remove it] and forgive all my sins" (Ps. 25:18); "Remove Your scourge away from me" (Ps. 39:10); "Innumerable evils have surrounded me. My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head. My heart has failed me. Be pleased, Yahweh, to deliver me. Hurry to help me, Yahweh" (Ps. 40:12,13). He asks for help and deliverance from the consequences, more than forgiveness. David clearly associates his sins with the consequences for them; and therefore, as discussed on Ps. 51, he seems to want the total eradication of his sin because he wants to be free of the consequences. Especially as those consequences meant that his "house" was not going to be as he planned. In the bigger picture, God was trying to get David to refocus away from any hope that his "house" would be the eternal fulfilment of God's promises, and rather onto the promised Messiah whose "house" would be eternal. So the judgments were not God lashing out in anger, but rather seeking to educate David. His final words possibly reflect how he did on one level 'get there': "Most certainly my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure, for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He doesn’t make it grow", i.e. right now in my lifetime (2 Sam. 23:5).

Psa 38:2 For Your arrows have pierced me, Your hand presses hard on me- Soon after the sin with Bathsheba, David was struck with an apparently terminal disease. He realized this was from God's hand. His sense of being "pierced" means that the language becomes relevant to the piercing of the Lord Jesus on the cross. The Bathsheba psalms are so often those most relevant to the crucifixion experience; because there the Lord achieved total identity with sinful, condemned humanity. He felt exactly as David did- even though He was personally sinless. Solomon seems to comment upon God's arrows piercing or 'entering' (s.w.) David when he wrote that "A rebuke enters deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred lashes into a fool" (Prov. 17:10). True as this is, Solomon was all the same justifying his father's response to the rebuke of Nathan and the Divine arrows which 'entered deep' to David.

This pressing of God's hand is what he mentions as happening before he confessed his sin before Nathan: "When I kept silence, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy on me, my strength was dried" (Ps. 32:3,4). We get the impression David is saying 'Enough judgment and consequences!'.

We have the same in Ps. 39:8-12: "Deliver me from all my transgressions. Don't make me the reproach of the foolish [but his sins obviously made him a reproach and laughing stock, and God had said "by this deed you have given great occasion to Yahweh's enemies to blaspheme" 2 Sam. 12:4]... Remove Your scourge away from me; I am overcome by the blow of Your hand [as if God's hand was too heavy on him, in his view]. When You rebuke and correct man for iniquity, You consume his days like a moth... Hear my prayer, Yahweh". David's repeated requests to have his prayer heard suggests he was praying for the consequences to be taken away. He had already been assured of forgiveness. So what is he now pestering God to give him? He had forgiveness, he had assurance of final salvation in the promises of 2 Sam. 7. But he wanted more- he wanted a great life now free of consequence. All this suggests to me that he still failed to really register the depth of his sins, despite his repentance. For it's quite possible for man to repent and yet still not appreciate the dimensions of what he has done to others.

Psa 38:3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your indignation, neither is there any health in my bones because of my sin- The same language is used in the description of sinful Judah in Is. 1:6. David is used as a role model for their repentance. "Soundness" is literally *shalom*. David's lack of peace with God resulted in his body feeling physically not at peace and out of step with itself. David apparently had it in mind to make a full confession of sin (:18 "I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin") but it seems he doesn't quite get to it because he is distracted by the fear of consequence and immediate suffering ("But my enemies are vigorous", :19). He could have fast tracked all this personal pain and suffering by making the confession.

Psa 38:4 For my sins have gone over my head; as a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me-

It should be noted that the sin of adultery is not highlighted in Nathan's rebuke of David, but rather that David had "killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife". This is twice emphasized in 12:9,10. This is not to say that the sin of weakness, of the moment, was irrelevant in God's sight. But the emphasis on how he had taken Bathsheba as his wife hints that this had been his long term intention, further suggesting that his sin with her was the end result of much prior meditation. This further illuminates the way in which David speaks of his sin with Bathsheba as if it comprised a whole multitude of other sins: "I acknowledged my sin (singular) unto You... I said, I will confess my transgressions (plural)" (Ps. 32:5 cp. 38:3,4,18). Ps. 25:7 also occurs in a Bathsheba context: "Remember not the sins of my youth..."; as if facing up to his sin with Bathsheba made David face up to sins of years ago, possibly also in a sexual context.

Psalm 38 speaks of how the guilt of his sin weighed so heavily upon him (Ps. 38:4 NIV), whereas Ps. 32:5 ["I acknowledged my sin to You, I didn't hide my iniquity. I said, I will confess my transgressions to Yahweh, and You forgave the iniquity of my sin"] describes how the guilt of sin has now been lifted from him- implying that he wrote Ps. 38 some time after the sin, but before repenting properly. The point is, he didn't crash completely, he didn't turn away from God in totality- he was still writing Psalms at the time!

We must bear the burden either of our sins (Am. 2:13; Is. 58:6; Ps. 38:4) or of the Lord's cross (Gal. 6:4 etc.). We will experience either the spiritual warfare of the striving saint (Rom. 7:15-25), or the lusts of the flesh warring in our members, eating us up with the insatiability of sin (James 4:1; Ez. 16:28,29). Either we will mourn now in repentance (Lk. 6:25; the Greek for "mourn" is often in a repentance context), or we will mourn at the judgment (Mt. 8:12 etc.).

This complaint that his judgment is too heavy for him to bear is very much the spirit of Cain, complaining his punishment greater than he could bear and asking Him to lighten it, which God did (Gen. 4:13). LXX "my transgressions have gone over mine head: they have pressed heavily upon me like a weighty burden" connects with the reference to God's hand likewise "pressing" upon David (:2). His sins press down upon him, and so does God's hand- and David asks God to remove His hand. He fails to perceive that the problem is with his sin, which he needs to seriously deal with instead of bemoaning the results of it. The Lord Jesus clearly alludes to this in inviting men who are heavy laden to come to Him, because He will make the burden light. He thus presents every man as David.

Psa 38:5 My wounds are loathsome and corrupt because of my foolishness- David clearly directly connected his illness with his sin. There was likely no medical truth in this; but God worked through his misunderstanding, just as He did through similar misunderstandings about demons in the first century. We may well enquire whether "foolishness" is not rather a mild term for what he had done (also used in Ps. 69:5); surely "wickedness" would have been more appropriate. "Foolishness" is often used in Proverbs to refer to unwisdom and even silliness. But what David did surely requires more extreme language. We note that David has been quick to use a wide range of harsh adjectives and ideas in describing the wickedness of others like Saul who had tried to murder the innocent. And David had actually done so.

Psa 38:6 I am pained- "My iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Ps. 38:4) was spoken before David's frank confession of Ps. 51. It

therefore reveals how David felt swamped by his sense of sin; whilst recognizing it, he couldn't come to terms with explicitly confessing it. Every child of God must have come somewhere near to this feeling. The flesh can deceive us that just *recognizing* our sin somewhere in our consciousness is all that is needed. The lesson taught by David is that there is the need for frank and total confession; otherwise, the bad conscience will only deepen. "I am pained" (Ps. 38:6) uses Hebrew which is elsewhere translated 'to commit iniquity' (Ps. 106:6), 'to be crooked'. This is David recognizing 'I *am* a sinner'- but still this did not help him. Specific, uninhibited confession was still not forthcoming.

And bowed down greatly- The word can mean 'to humble'; and this is the required response to sin. David was representative of Israel in their sinfulness (s.w. Ps. 107:39); they were intended to follow his path of penitence.

I go mourning all day long- Evidence of a psychological and emotional breakdown. David's mourning is stressed in his Psalms regarding Bathsheba. But his lack of mourning for the child who died is also strongly noted in the record. I suggest his mourning therefore was in order to beg God to relent of His judgments against him- he was worried about himself and not others whom he had hurt. He had been forgiven so the relenting he sought was, again, from the consequences of his sins. It was customary for the accused to appear before a court in mourning and David feels he is still before God's court and can somehow change the verdict a bit. “Whosoever comes before this court of the Sanhedrin to take his trial, presents himself in the guise of humility and fear, appealing to your compassion, with hair neglected, and clad in black garments.” (Josephus, A*ntiquities of the Jews*, 14.9.3).

Psa 38:7 For my waist is filled with burning- AV "a loathsome disease". Earlier David had used the word in describing himself as "lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 18:23). What had been mere words expressing theoretical humility were now translated into actual ownership. Our expressions of humility likewise are brought into reality by God's hand, often working through our own sins. "Waist" is AV "loins". Although a different Hebrew word is used, the idea is as in 2 Chron. 6:9; David had been promised a son that would come from his "loins". "Of the fruit of your body will I set upon your throne" (Ps. 132:11). But now his body has no soundness in it, and his loins / waist area / private parts are "filled with a loathsome disease" (AV) / "burning". Again we see David's concern that the promises to him of a "house" and eternal seed would not be immediately fulfilled. But this was all a misunderstanding by him of the promises; for they concerned a future Messianic seed who would be God's Son, who would build a house of people for God's Name. So much of David's concern about the consequences of his sin relates to his effort not to relinquish his preferred interpretation of God's words of promise- rather than focus quietly and gratefully upon the future work of the Lord Jesus, the promised seed.

There is no soundness in my body- The word used for Judah's woeful condition in Is. 1:6. It should be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7 = Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7 = Is. 1:18; Ps. 65:2 = Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

Psa 38:8 I am faint and severely bruised; I have groaned by reason of the anguish of my heart- "I have roared by reason of the disquietness (bad conscience) of my heart" (Ps. 38:8 AV). This helps us locate this Psalm at the time when he "kept silence" in not confessing his sin, before Nathan's rebuke. For "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring" (Ps. 32:3) must refer to David's roaring to God in prayer (Ps.22:1) before David's repentance, whilst keeping silent about his sin. In the same context he laments: "I have roared by reason of the disquietness (bad conscience) of my heart" (Ps. 38:8 AV). His very separation from God made him pray to God the more, pleading for some form of spiritual healing. But without realistic confession of sin, such prayer was shouting out words into the darkness. David found that attempting to have a relationship with God in such bad conscience only adds to the pain.

So many of the phrases in the Bathsheba penitential psalms are used elsewhere about the Lord's sufferings. "I am faint and sore bruised" (R.V., as Ps. 51:8) is Is. 53:5,10 about the Lord's sufferings; David's silence before his accusers (:14) is also that of the Lord in His sufferings (Is. 53:7). So in His sufferings for sin on the cross, the Lord was totally identified with sinners and even felt as we do in sin's separation from God. Thus He felt forsaken even though only sinners are forsaken by God (:20).

Psa 38:9 Lord, all my desire is before You; my groaning is not hidden from You- All his desire was for forgiveness and salvation; and this was granted. At the end of his life (Ps. 37:25), David reflected that if we "delight yourself in Yahweh… He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). The desires of the heart is paralleled in Psalm 37 with inheriting the land eternally. If this is our greatest desire, we shall receive it. This is a sublime truth. All those who truly love the Lord's appearing as the master passion of their lives- will be acceptable to Him (2 Tim. 4:8). This is why the hope of the Kingdom can never be a mere hobby, but is by its very nature the all consuming passion of human life.

Psa 38:10 My heart throbs, my strength fails me. As for the light of my eyes, it has also left me- This could refer to heart problems and failing eyesight, perhaps suggesting David had suffered a stroke soon after sinning with Bathsheba. The language however seems tailored by him to allude to Job, whose sufferings he often feels he fellowships. And this is how we should be- seeing precedent in Biblical characters for all our experiences. And yet as ever, we wonder at David's continued allusion to Job- an innocent man falsely accused of sin, who suffered despite his innocence. David likes to think of himself this way, but actually he was absolutely guilty, unlike Job.

Psa 38:11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my plague, my kinsmen stand far away- It is possible to infer that David and Bathsheba experienced a falling out of love immediately after the incident- as with many cases of adultery and fornication. In contrast to their previous close contact, she had to *send* to tell him that she was pregnant. In addition, before David's repentance he appears to have suffered with some kind of serious disease soon after it: "My loins are filled with a loathsome (venereal?) disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh" (:7 AV). It is even possible that David became impotent as a result of this; for we get the impression that from this point onwards he took no other wives, he had no more children, and even the fail safe cure for hypothermia didn't seem to mean much to David (1 Kings 1:1-4). Therefore "My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore" (Ps. 38:11) must refer to some kind of venereal disease. The Hebrew word translated "lovers" definitely refers to carnal love rather than that of friendship. It may be that an intensive plural is being used here- in which case it means 'my one great lover', i.e. Bathsheba. We have commented earlier how Amnon's obsessive love for Tamar was an echo of David's relationship with Bathsheba. There may be a parallel in the way in which afterwards, "Amnon hated her exceedingly; so that the hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love wherewith he loved her" (2 Sam. 13:15). All this would have been yet another aspect of the emotional trauma which David went through at this time; to fall out of love with the woman for which he had almost thrown away his eternal salvation. And in addition to this, all Israel would have got to know about what had happened- with a fair degree of exaggeration thrown in, we can be sure.

The fact that the Father and Son right now accept us should strengthen against the pain of rejection both from the world we preach to, and from our brethren. Thus in Ps. 38:11-15 David laments at how rejected he is by all, and yet takes strength from God's acceptance of him. Our conviction that we are accepted of Him should enable us to overcome the waves of rejection that inevitably accompany the preaching of the Gospel, and which discourage so many would-be preachers. We simply must believe that we will be there. David so often looks forward to the day of judgment with

eagerness. David's enthusiasm for the coming of judgment reflected his understanding that it will be a day of the display of Divine mercy.

The Bathsheba Psalms all have special relevance to the Lord on the cross. His lovers, friends and kinsmen stood far off from Him, perhaps in a literal sense, perhaps far away from understanding Him. "All his acquaintances stood afar off" (Lk. 23:49). If Mary wasn't initially at the cross, John's connection between the dividing of the clothes and her being there would suggest that she had made the clothes. In any case, the four women at the cross are surely set up against the four soldiers there- who gambled over the clothes. Perhaps the other women had also had some input into the Lord's clothing. "*But* there stood by the cross..." makes the connection between Mary and the clothes. It seems that initially, she wasn't there; He looked for comforters and found none (Ps. 69:20- or does this imply that the oft mentioned spiritual difference between the Lord and His mother meant that He didn't find comfort in her? Or she only came to the cross later?).

But "from my plague" uses the word specially used of leprosy (Lev. 13:3 etc.). His friends treat him as a leper, standing within sight but at a distance. His "close ones" (LXX "nearest of kin") were now no longer close but stand "afar off". This would suggest that leprosy was not Hansen's disease but a specific judgment by God- from which David was healed and cleansed by hyssop (Ps. 51). His "friends and neighbours" (LXX) would surely refer to his neighbour Bathsheba and her family; and that would also be the reference of MT "lovers and friends".

It seems from Psalm 32 that David's illness was in the period between the sin regarding Uriah, and his repentance: "While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD", and you forgave the guilt of my sin". It would be fair to assume that he was struck with leprosy [or something that felt like it] at this time. We wonder therefore why he didn't repent earlier, when this was the obvious thing to do. The delay in repentance is significant- despite the prodding of his conscience by his illness and leprosy. The delay in such circumstances reflects David's proud stubbornness and refusal to openly repent. Even when Nathan prods his conscience with the parable, David initially still doesn't make the obvious connection to himself, and considers it a real situation rather than a parable aimed at himself. In all this we see his major problem with accepting personal sinfulness.

Looking at all the symptoms described in this Psalm, it seems we have here an episode of psychotic depression. David may well have felt this as being "leprosy" even though it may not have been: depressed mood (:6), despair and anxiety (:8), tachycardia [heart throbbing], anergy, anhedonia (:10); and his deafness and muteness in :13,14 would

refer to "sensory inattention, inability to concentrate, with depressive mutism or psychomotor retardation".

Psa 38:12 They also who seek after my life lay snares, those who seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and meditate deceits all day long- It seems that there were plots against David immediately after his sin with Bathsheba- although the historical records don't appear to mention them. Bathsheba's grandfather, Ahithophel, later sided with Absalom against David. But the language here is relevant to Saul's persecution. David perhaps rewrote a wilderness Psalm with relevance to his later situation, perceiving that circumstances repeat in the life of the believer, and what he had learnt from one situation was to be applied to later ones in our lives.

Psa 38:13 But I, as a deaf man, don't hear. I am as a mute man who doesn't open his mouth- This could refer to how David didn't hear or see the plans to overthrow him- because he didn't want to. Just as Samson chose not to perceive in reality that Delilah was going to betray him despite knowing she would, and as the Lord knew Judas would betray Him, but trusted him as His own familiar friend. David likewise must have known the deceit of Ahithophel and Absalom; but he chose not to see it, for love's sake. See on Ps. 41:9.

Or we can read this as meaning that he didn't pay attention to the bad things said about him at this time. Maybe he was alluding to how Saul, when likewise criticized by "sons of belial", "was as though he had been deaf" to their words (1 Sam. 10:27 RVmg.). He saw the good in Saul, he remembered that one good example he showed- and it empowered him to follow it.

Psa 38:14 Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs- See on Ps. 51:4. We along with all the righteous ought to "shout for joy" that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David's repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no rebukes" (Ps. 38:14 AV). The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others.

Possibly David later bitterly resented the rebuke of Nathan. And this was why he refused to rebuke his son Adonijah: "His father had never rebuked him by asking, 'Why do you behave as you do?' He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom" (1

Kings 1:6). Possibly this was because he didn't appreciate the seriousness of sin. The usual line of interpretation is of course that David felt unable to rebuke anyone because of his sin, and he became willfully naive and deaf to political intrigue against him, and generally uncritical of others: "I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs" (Ps. 38:14). That would be an understandable psychological reaction to his sin and the consequences.

Psa 38:15 For in You, Yahweh, do I hope. You will answer, Lord my God- David's Psalms written before the sin with Bathsheba reflect a profound sense of God's grace. Now this theoretical awareness is tested in practice. David knows he is guilty of death under the Mosaic law; there is no sacrifice prescribed for his gross sins. And yet he appears so positive of being answered by God. It's wonderful how God uses sin and all manner of human dysfunction in order to help us actualize our previously theoretical understandings of His love and grace.

Psa 38:16 For I said, Don't let them gloat over me, or exalt themselves over me when my foot slips- David recognized that his steps had slid (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). But at the end of his life, he reflects that the steps of the righteous don't slip (Ps. 37:25,31). Perhaps David came to minimize his earlier slipping, especially in the matter of Bathsheba, in his old age. Or perhaps he was able to look back and see that despite temporary sliding of steps, ultimately the steps of the righteous don't slide in the overall path of their life.

Psa 38:17 For I am ready to fall; my pain is continually before me- "In mine adversity (Heb. *tsela*, limping) they rejoiced" (Ps. 35:15), "I am ready to halt (*tsela*) and my sorrow (repentance) is continually before me" (Ps. 38:17) uses a word which occurs elsewhere mainly in the context of Jacob limping after the night of wrestling (Gen. 32:31). This is one of many of David's allusions to Jacob.

Many of the Psalms understood by the Jews as relevant to the Nazi holocaust are Bathsheba Psalms. "Out of the depths" they cried like David; and at the entrance to Bergen-Belsen it stands written: "My sorrow is continually before me" (Ps. 38:17), in recognition of having received punishment for sin [note how these kind of plaques contain no trace of hatred or calling for Divine retribution upon the persecutors]. See on 2 Cor. 7:7-11.

David's genuine sorrow for his sin during this period is still a powerful exhortation to us, whose every sin must be repented of and forgiven after the pattern of David's repentance. The extent of his sorrow is heavily stressed: "My sorrow is continually before me... my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 38:17; 51:3). How much sorrow is there for

our sins? Have the years mellowed our terror at sin? Things which once appalled us can so easily become sins of habit, the real sorrow we once experienced on committing them can be watered down to just a vague tickle of conscience. The significance of David's sin and repentance being held up as an example of our own should be a good antidote against such problems. The chilling thing is, despite all this awareness of his sin during the nine month period, when he was told the parable by Nathan- he just didn't see it. Every part of the story had such relevant application, but David was blinded to it. He knew he had sinned, but this was only on a surface level. "Thou art the man" was still news to him. We have commented that "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (Ps. 119:176) was likely written by David with his mind on his follies relating to Bathsheba. The point, is in the 'lost' state, he still remembered the commandments. He didn't turn his back on God; and neither do we, in our semi-spiritual unspirituality. We can likewise be blinded to true, personal understanding of God's message because of our refusal to *truly* repent. Corinth and the Hebrews could not understand the strong meet of the word because they were divided; their divisiveness hindered their understanding. Husbands and wives find their prayers hindered unless they are themselves united.

Psa 38:18 For I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin- We can read this as David resolving to in the future declare his sin to God. But he is distracted in the next verse by his fear of the consequences for his sin, and it was this which delayed his repentance.

Or we can read this as meaning that David through his Psalms was publically declaring his sin. "For I *will* declare mine iniquity; I *will* be sorry for my sin" (Ps. 38:17,18) may mean that David was so swamped by the trauma of the sin and the distancing from God which he was experiencing, that he could only vaguely resolve that some time in the future he would get down to a serious prayer session, in which he would analyze and confess his sin. But instead he goes on desperately pleading "O my God, be not far from me. Make haste to help me...". Our own sins so often gives us a nagging conscience; not because we are consciously trying to pretend that we never sinned, but because we will not make the effort to overcome the circumstances which stop us making the mental effort necessary to put ourselves straight with God.

"Declare" is the word used for David's declaration of praise after his forgiveness concerning Bathsheba (Ps. 51:15). The "truth" which David declared after his forgiveness (Ps. 30:9) was the ultimate truth, of God's forgiveness of him by grace; a 'declaring' of his sin (Ps. 38:18 s.w.) and God's forgiveness.

Psa 38:19 But my enemies are vigorous and many. Those who hate me without reason are numerous-

David apparently had it in mind to make a full confession of sin (:18 "I will declare my iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin") but it seems he doesn't quite get to it because he is distracted by the fear of consequence and immediate suffering ("But my enemies are vigorous", :19).

"Without reason" reflects again David's deep sense of injustice (see on Ps. 35:7). He uses the word for "false witness", as if they were breaking one of the ten commandments; and he uses it often, heaping condemnation upon any who dare lie / bear false witness about him (Ps. 38:19; 52:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:29,69,86,118; 120:2; 144:8,11). And yet David lied and deceived in order to get Uriah killed so that he could take his wife for himself. Surely reflection upon that sin made him realize that his zeal to condemn dishonesty was at best misplaced; to lament it is one thing, but David was to be taught that he had himself done the very thing he so condemned. We sense that he has not yet come to full recognition of the enormity of his sin; for to complain that his sufferings are "without reason" is inappropriate given what he did. The implication is that he feels that their hatred is based on misconception and misrepresentation. He appears to have no real sense of the dimensions of his sin and how the punishments are just and appropriate. This is finally true of all who lament that their sufferings are unfair.

Psa 38:20 They who also render evil for good are adversaries to me, because I follow what is good- As noted on :19, we sense that David's sense of outrage and injustice, insisting he has done "good", is inappropriate considering the enormity of his sin. He still has to come to a fullness of repentance; and indeed it could be argued from some of the post Bathsheba Psalms that he perhaps failed to have the depth of repentance he might have done, or at least rationalized his behaviour over the years. What clearly irks David is his sense of injustice done to him, and their ingratitude. David appears to just not get it, that he has sinned and is spared death only by grace. His sense is "Those repaying evil instead of goodness act as adversaries (against me) because of my pursuing good". But David... you are suffering for your sin of presumption, murder of your own faithful men and adultery. And lying through your teeth about it all. But you say that you suffer because of your doing good? We have no alternative than to conclude David really doesn't register the full dimensions of his sins. I doubt he ever did, but still God forgave him. Just as we are to accept the "Sorry about all that..." from people who clearly have no real conception of what damage their actions caused- or just don't wish to try to fully perceive it.

Throughout this Psalm, and many of David's penitential Psalms [are they really that, we ask...], the language without doubt alludes to Job. The descriptions of the physical and mental sufferings are all taken from Job. David clearly saw Job as his hero- a righteous man who suffered not because he had sinned, and who lost his wife and friends and

standing in society because of it. But this wasn't the case with David- he was suffering a very light form of judgment for behaviour which deserved instant death. But he likes to see himself as Job the innocent sufferer...

What should David have done, instead of just desperately trying to remove the consequences of his sin and bemoaning the unfairness of his punishment? Surely he should have resigned as leader of the army and as king, asked Nathan and Gad to ask God to find another king, resign from being king, and live in humble awe at the promises made to him. And perhaps focus on his music ministry and fulfilling his promise to teach others about morality. But he clung on to power as men tend to. And it was all a misery for him and all concerned.

David is not alone in chafing under the consequences of sin. We are often so hurt by the misbehaviour of others toward us but this is because we fail to appreciate that we ought to be dead, and are alive by grace alone. Likewise we like David may repent but without appreciating the huge dimensions of our sins and their impact upon others. Or others may apologize to us for sinning against us, yet we know they have absolutely no idea of the damage caused. Yet God accepted David's repentance. He accepts ours and that of others who sinned against us...

Psa 38:21 Don't forsake me, Yahweh. My God, don't be far from me- David prayed at the time of the Bathsheba incident for God not be far from him nor forsake him (Ps. 38:21). But in Ps. 22:1,19 he feels he has been forsaken and that God is "far off". But Psalm 22 is absolutely the feelings of the Lord Jesus on the cross- because He was so intensely identified with sinners. I noted on Ps. 22:3 that the historical context of that Psalm was the sin with Bathsheba. The plea for God not to "be far from me" is common (Ps. 22:11,19; 35:22; 38:21; 71:12). The emphasis perhaps is to be placed upon David not wanting *God* to be far from him, seeing that he felt others were 'far' from him (s.w. Ps. 88:8,18). He accepted his social and psychological isolation from others, but he didn't want God to be likewise far off from him. In the context of the exiles, God was willing to not be 'far off' from the exiles if they repented (Is. 46:13).

Psa 38:22 Hurry to help me, Lord, my salvation- David repeatedly asks God to "hurry to help me" (Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 141:1). But David had hurried (s.w.) to be obedient to God, always wanting to 'say yes straight away' (Ps. 119:60). Our response to God's voice is therefore related to His response to our voice; if His words abide in us, then we experience positive experience in answered prayer (Jn. 15:7).

Psalm 38 appears to be David's lament of his bad conscience, some time before he makes his confession of Ps. 51. Psalm 38 shows that David certainly had some faith in God before his confession: "Forsake me not... make haste to help me, O Lord my

salvation" (Ps. 38:22). Yet it is possible to intensely believe in the mercy of God, His ability to save, and yet not have the real faith- which is to believe that this mercy and salvation really can still apply to us personally. Thus he prays "Make me to hear joy and gladness" (Ps. 51:8). His introspective world of sin and self-hate found joy a paradigm impossible to relate to; as with mercy and salvation, he knew spiritual joy existed, but seemed unable to make this apply to him personally.

We note all the personal pronouns now used in his relationship with God. "My God… God of my salvation". David had been excluded in shame from society and suffered loss of relationships because of his sin. But this actually brought him closer to his only friend- God. Against whom he had sinned.

PSALMS CHAPTER 39

Psa 39:1 For the Chief Musician. For Jeduthun. A Psalm by David- The Psalm is similar to Psalms 38 and 40, and they all appear to be David's reflections upon his sin with Bathsheba and his sufferings and resolutions which arose from that. Jeduthun was perhaps "the chief musician" who was to perform the Psalms or teach them to others (1 Chron. 16:41,42,44; 25:3-6).

I said, I will watch my ways, so that I don't sin with my tongue. I will keep my mouth with a bridle while the wicked is before me- Through David's repentance he obviously learnt from his sin, as we can from each of ours. Ps. 32:9 comments that men ought to learn from David's example, and *not* be as horses who must have their mouths kept in with a bridle. In Ps. 39:1 David reminisces how he had earlier said [before his sin with Bathsheba] that he would stop himself sinning by restraining himself with a bridle. He learnt that sheer will power is not enough; blind resolution to simply 'obey' will fail. Instead, it is a living relationship with the Father, a deep sense of His glory, that creates an environment of life where we just won't do what David did with Bathsheba. This was what he learnt, and this is what he was so eager to pass on to us in the post-Bathsheba Psalms of David's repentance.

Psa 39:2 I was mute with silence; I held my peace, even from good. My sorrow was stirred- This clearly connects with Ps. 38:14. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord's grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). In describing his feelings after the Bathsheba experience, David comments that he was "as a man that hears not [the taunts of others against him], and in whose mouth are no

rebukes" (Ps. 38:14 AV), as if he was "mute". The pre-Bathsheba Psalms present David as a man who was so easily hurt by the taunts of others, and whose mouth was indeed full of rebuke of others. Or we can read this as meaning that he didn't pay attention to the bad things said about him at this time. Maybe he was alluding to how Saul, when likewise criticized by “sons of belial”, "held his peace" and “was as though he had been deaf” to their words (1 Sam. 10:27 RVmg.). He saw the good in Saul, he remembered that one good example he showed- and it empowered him to follow it.

It's hard to get the sense of the argument in the early verses of this Psalm. David appears to be saying that he had decided to adopt a neutral position, saying nothing under provocation, but also not responding to good. But he finds himself forced out of that position by a strong sense of his mortality and inevitable death. Just as should happen to us. The GNB perhaps brings this out: "I kept quiet, not saying a word, not even about anything good! But my suffering only grew worse, and I was overcome with anxiety. The more I thought, the more troubled I became; I could not keep from asking: "LORD, how long will I live? When will I die? Tell me how soon my life will end"" (Ps. 39:2-4). The fire burning within his apparently passive soul was the question of when would he die... CEV brings this out: "I kept completely silent, but it did no good, and I hurt even worse. I felt a fire burning inside, and the more I thought, the more it burned, until at last I said: "Please, LORD, show me my future. Will I soon be gone? You made my life short, so brief that the time means nothing to you" (Ps. 39:2-5). That same fire will burn today even in the most passive of people. For "the fear of death" is natural to every man; and only, solely, exclusively "in Christ" can that fear be dealt with. Because He as our representative died and conquered death, and by faith and baptism we are "in Him".

Psa 39:3 My heart was hot within me. While I meditated, the fire burned: I spoke with my tongue- This again alludes to some of the scenes in the book of Job, where the friends and Elihu feel an answer brewing up within them, and eventually they let their tongues speak out the thoughts which were boiling up within them.

Psa 39:4 Yahweh, show me my end, what is the measure of my days. Let me know how frail I am- David was so sick and depressed that he felt he only had some days left to live, and he asked to be told how long he had left. Or we could read somewhat deeper; as if David recognized his sin, but had not yet come to the full repentance required (see on Ps. 38:1). He realized that, and asked to be taught his frailty.

Psa 39:5 Behold, you have made my days mere handbreadths. My lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely every man stands as a breath. Selah- This is effectively the answer to his prayer in :4 to be shown his frailty. So often in the Psalms, the answer appears to

come during the prayer. I doubt this was because of a flash of supernatural revelation. Rather, as is so true in our own prayer lives, the answers to our questions become apparent within our prayer, as we pray on and remain in God's presence. We note that Moses in Ps. 90 had this same feeling in his depression, that God somehow doesn't 'get' our mortality and the brevity of our lives- seeing He is from eternity to eternity. But this depressed moment led him to the wonder of the fact that through forgiveness of sin [seeing that death is the wages of sin], we have "hope". Of life eternal, by implication (:7,8). In David's context, these may be his thoughts as he assumed he would have to die for his sin regarding Bathsheba; but he realizes that even if he does, forgiveness of sin means hope for life eternal.

Psa 39:6 Surely every man walks like a shadow. Surely they busy themselves in vain. He heaps up, and doesn't know who shall gather- The references to "every man" (:5 also) are typical of the Bathsheba Psalms; David on one hand could be accused of rationalizing his great sins by arguing that he is only human, like other men. Or we could more generously argue that he saw the grace poured out to him as programmatic for all men, seeing all are serious sinners.

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon comes to conclude that although he had heaped up riches, his life was vanity- indeed, all is vanity, because one doesn't know how wise will be the person to whom one leaves their life achievements. And yet one of David's songs which Solomon must have sung went like this: "Surely every man walks in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heaps up riches, and knows not who shall gather them" (Ps. 39:6). Solomon didn't think about the implications of the words of his dad's hymns. It took him a lifetime to learn the truth of them for himself, and by then it was too late (so it seems to me). So with us, to learn and heed wisdom rather than have to learn it all again by experience- this is one of the hardest things for us, especially if our background was in a home of truth and wisdom.

Psa 39:7 Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You- David's hope was simply "You", God; by which he surely means, relationship with God restored. David was waiting for nothing else apart from that. This is the equivalent thought to that in Ps. 38:9 "Lord, all my desire is before You; my groaning is not hidden from You". All his desire was for forgiveness and salvation; and this was granted. At the end of his life (Ps. 37:25), David reflected that if we "delight yourself in Yahweh… He will give you the desires of your heart" (Ps. 37:4). The desires of the heart is paralleled in Psalm 37 with inheriting the land eternally. If this is our greatest desire, we shall receive it. This is a sublime truth. All those who truly love the Lord's appearing as the master passion of their lives- will be acceptable to Him (2 Tim. 4:8). This is why the hope of the Kingdom can never be a mere hobby, but is by its very nature the all consuming passion of human life.

Psa 39:8 Deliver me from all my transgressions- At this point, David doesn't feel totally delivered from his sins. He has still to come to the total assurance of repentance and forgiveness, whereby in later Psalms he can describe himself as "righteous", so confident was he of imputed righteousness by faith through grace. "Redeem / deliver me from the hand..." is again a quotation from Jacob's words when he found his relative Esau barring his path back home (Gen. 32:11,30). And the word is used of David's desire for deliverance from Saul (1 Sam. 26:24); and yet this was a redemption unappreciated by him as it ought to have been (2 Sam. 12:7). Finally David recognized that this prayer was answered (2 Sam. 22:18,49). As David had earlier prayed for redemption / deliverance from Saul and his enemies (Ps. 31:15; 59:1; 144:7), he would later pray for redemption / deliverance from his sins (Ps. 39:8; 79:9).

Don't make me the reproach of the foolish- Despite claiming to have forgiveness as his only hope and desire (see on :7), his fear of shame before others clearly remains.

Psa 39:9 I was mute. I didn't open my mouth, because You did it- This could refer to how David suffered a stroke after his sin with Bathsheba, and for some time couldn't speak. See on :2. Another explanation of his silence could be to how David didn't hear or see the plans to overthrow him- because he didn't want to. Just as Samson chose not to perceive in reality that Delilah was going to betray him despite knowing she would, and as the Lord knew Judas would betray Him, but trusted him as His own familiar friend. David likewise must have known the deceit of Ahithophel and Absalom; but he chose not to see it, for love's sake. See on Ps. 41:9.

Psa 39:10 Remove Your scourge away from me; I am overcome by the blow of Your hand-

"Remove" is the word used for how violence would never depart from David because of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:10). David prayed for this to "depart" ['be removed'] but it never did. David was open to the possibility that through prayer, God can remove the consequences of sin in this life; but such prayer is not always answered. But the "scourge" more comfortably refers to David's illness. It has been observed that the Psalms contain several usages of language which is specifically related to leprosy. It could be that David was struck with some form of leprosy after the sin. See on :11.

Psa 39:11 When You rebuke and correct man for iniquity, You consume his days like a moth- The correcting or "discipline" is the word used for David's experiences after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 6:1; 38:1; 39:11). "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth:

because You did it… when You with rebukes corrects man for iniquity, You make his beauty to consume away like a moth" (Ps. 39:9,11) may all suggest David suffered some kind of stroke, leaving him dumb and without his legendary beauty. In all this he was brought to know the spirit of Christ crucified, in whom there was no beauty that he should be desired, and who was dumb as a lamb before her shearers. The links between the Bathsheba Psalms about David's repentance and the crucifixion are copious. The Lord on the cross came to know the feelings of David after his sin, He felt a leprous sinner although He never committed sin, so that even when we sin we are not in that sense separated from our Lord. He even then has a fellow feeling with every failure.

Surely every man is but a breath. Selah- Constantly in the Bathsheba Psalms, David sees his experience as that of every man. The same radical grace is available to us all. The "Selah" in this Psalm is clearly the equivalent of breaking the Psalm into stanzas, even if they are of differing lengths; in this Psalm the divisions are clearly marked by the "Selah". From :1-5, then :6-11, and now :12 to the end.

Psa 39:12 Hear my prayer, Yahweh, and give ear to my cry. Don't be silent at my tears- Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer", although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point.

For I am a stranger with You, a foreigner, as all my fathers were- Again David pleads his connection with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He too has had no continuing city, has been treated as a foreigner, and thereby he feels he is one of the seed of Abraham, and appeals for the same grace to be shown to him what had been shown to the fathers.

Psa 39:13 Oh spare me- As David respected God's words (Ps. 119:117), so he asks God to spare or respect him (s.w.). This is not to be read as meaning that Bible study assures a man of salvation; but rather that there is a mutuality in relationship between God and man. Our respect of His words is reflected in His saving respect of us.

That I may recover strength, before I go away, and exist no more- Clearly enough, David saw death as unconsciousness and non-existence; rather than envisaging an immortal soul going to heaven after death. David concludes his prayer with a stubborn refusal to accept the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba, asking to be restored from the stroke he had suffered. And by grace God heard this, because he apparently did recover

from the stroke. The next Psalm, Ps. 40, appears to be his thanksgiving for this. We would rather have this psalm / prayer concluding with a joyful acceptance of God's grace and his sure hope of eternal life. Instead he concludes by harking back to his basic desire for the consequences of his sin to be lifted.

PSALMS CHAPTER 40

Psa 40:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David- The Psalm is similar to Psalms 38 and 39 [and parts of it are repeated in Ps. 70], and they all appear to be David's reflections upon his sin with Bathsheba and his sufferings and resolutions which arose from that. Jeduthun was perhaps "the chief musician" (Ps. 39:1) who was to perform the Psalms or teach them to others (1 Chron. 16:41,42,44; 25:3-6).

I waited patiently for Yahweh. He turned to me, and heard my cry- David now emerges from all his desperate prayers in Ps. 38,39 whilst sick after the sin with Bathsheba. He triumphs in total rescue from the situation because he presumably was feeling better. But we know that the consequences of the sin were to continue for him. His cry was not completely heard, and his cries of the previous two Psalms were hardly 'waiting patiently for Yahweh'. Like us, he imagines total answer to prayer when in fact things are not that simple. And he has failed in appreciating that the essential desire he had was for forgiveness (see on Ps. 38:9; 39:7). He recognizes later in this Psalm that the consequences of his sin continue, and he asks for them also to be removed, despite Nathan's words to him to the effect that they would continue. See on :17.

Psa 40:2 He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay. He set my feet on a rock, and gave me a firm place to stand- He likens himself to Joseph in the pit, who was saved from it. But Joseph was innocent; David wasn't. And again we get a hint that his repentance was not as total as it might have been. His later Psalms continue to present himself as righteous and suffering "without a cause". When there was a cause.

Psa 40:3 He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise to our God- Is. 42:9,10 says that we sing the “new song” now, because we sing / meditate of the “new things” which will be in the Kingdom. In that day, we will “sing a new song” (Rev. 5:9; 14:3). And yet this is undoubtedly picking up on the way in which we can *now* sing the ‘new song’, every morning (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1). This was how David felt after receiving God's grace over the Bathsheba incidents. Likewise, all things will be made new at the Lord’s coming (Rev. 21:5), and yet those in whom the new creation is worked out already have all things made new in their spiritual experience (2 Cor. 5:17,18). The life that the Lord Jesus had and now lives is the essence of the Kingdom life. Who He was and is, this

is the definition of the Kingdom life. It's why one of His titles is "the kingdom of God" (Lk. 17:21). And it's why it can be said that we 'have' eternal life now, in that we can live the essence of the life we will eternally live, right now.

Even in the Old Testament, the idea of living in a spirit of newness of life is to be found. David six times invites us to sing with him "a new song" (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1 cp. Is. 42:10). Invariably these songs are associated with the experience of God's redemption (cp. Rev. 5:9). Obviously those 'new songs' were intended to be repeatedly sung. Our regular experience of forgiveness and redemption should urge us onwards in the spirit of 'newness of life'. Like Paul we die daily with the Lord, and the power of His resurrection life likewise daily breaks out in us.

David felt able to praise God despite having many of his prayers and issues still unanswered (:14-17). The experience of forgiveness was enough for him, as it should be for us.

Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in Yahweh- Again we see David convinced that his judgment and forgiveness would lead others to trust in God's grace, just as he had done. This is critical in coping with suffering- to perceive that whatever we suffer is not simply for ourselves, but so that we might share the comfort we receive with others likewise suffering (2 Cor. 1:4-7). This was why David wrote these Psalms and handed them to the chief musician for mass distribution (see on :1).

Psa 40:4 Blessed is the man who makes Yahweh his trust and doesn't respect the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies- Even in apparent contrition and joy at grace received, David seems unable to rejoice in it without a sideways swipe at others. He considers his enemies proud, and to be serving idols- for that is the sense of "turn aside to lies". And indeed idolatry was prevalent in Israel, and amongst David's enemies. Again we have the hint that his repentance was not as thoroughgoing as we might have expected. Note that 'trusting Yahweh' is the antithesis of 'respecting the proud'. We trust that which we respect. It concerns me that some professed believers in God show huge respect to the idols and iconic people of this world, who are nothing but proud and idolatrous. If we respect the modern day idols, we will trust in them. If our respect for God is so great that we respect nobody and nothing else, then we will trust in Him.

Psa 40:5 Many, Yahweh my God, are the wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us. They can't be declared back to You. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered- As we also find in Ps. 139, David perceives that God thinks more about us than we can ever possibly understand, seeing our thoughts afar off before they come into our minds, seeing our downsitting and uprising. This is a profound truth and comfort. Especially when we

connect God's untellable thoughts toward us with the fact that we have sinned more times than we can number (:12,13). He 'thinks' about each of those sins and forgives. Yet through these Psalms, David is indeed declaring God's grace to him (see on :10). But he says he does so with a great sense of inadequacy; for he cannot render back to God according to the grace shown him. Hezekiah is condemned for this (2 Chron. 32:25). And yet David admits this is how man is, faced with the extent of God's grace to him. We have here another example of how two men may do the same thing [here, not rendering back according to God's grace], and yet be judged differently according to their attitude of mind.

Psa 40:6 Sacrifice and offering You didn't desire. You have digged my ears. You have not required burnt offering and sin offering- David was aware that God didn't really want sacrifice, or else he would so eagerly have offered it (Ps. 51:16,17). But there were no sacrifices prescribed for his sins of adultery and murder. Instead, David perceived that what God wanted in essence was a broken and contrite spirit. The Bathsheba incident was programmatic for David's understanding of God, and his prayers and psalms subsequently can be expected to have constant allusion back to it. We meet the same idea of God not ultimately wanting sacrifice in Ps. 40:6-9: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire [but instead] mine ears hast thou opened [Heb. 'digged'- a reference to a servant being permanently committed as a slave to his master]: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come... to do thy will... thy law is within my heart". In Ps. 51:17, David had reasoned that instead of sacrifice, God wanted a heart that was broken and contrite. Here he reflects that instead of sacrifice, God wants a heart that has the law of God within it. This ultimately is the effect of God's law being in our heart- it creates a broken and contrite heart. But how? In the experience of most of us, the law does this through convicting us of our inability to keep the it. And so we see how guilt and grace work so seamlessly together. David's broken heart was a heart which knew he had sinned, sinned irreversibly, and condemned himself. But this, he perceived, was the result of God's law being within his heart. But the words of Ps. 40:6-9 are applied in the New Testament to the Lord's death upon the cross. What's the connection, and what's the lesson? In essence, through David's experience of sin, and the work of God's law upon his heart, he came through that sin to have the very mind of the Lord Jesus as He hung upon the cross, matchless and spotless in His perfection, as the Lamb for sinners slain. Again and again we see the lesson taught- that God works through human sin, in this case, in order to bring us to know the very mind of Christ in His finest hour of glory and spiritual conquest. We must not only let God's word work its way in us; but we need to recognize when dealing with other sinners that God likewise is working with them. He doesn't shrug and walk away from sin; He earnestly seeks to use our experience of it to bring us closer unto Himself.

As noted on Ps. 20:13, success in war and answer to prayer was thought to depend upon the offering of sacrifice. After the sin with Bathsheba, David now matures in his understanding- that salvation and God's operation with His people is by grace and not because He desired sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; 51:16,17).

This passage is quoted of the Lord Jesus in Heb. 10:5-12. It was the Lord's love of the word which made Him endure the cross and obtain that great salvation, both for Himself and for us. His crucifixion was likened to His ear (His hearing of the word) being nailed to an upright piece of wood (cp. the cross; Ex. 21:6 = Ps. 40:6-8 = Heb. 10:5-12). Paul perceives that firstly, there was the statement that God did not desire animal sacrifices of themselves in order to remove sin; and secondly, the Lord Jesus came to do God's will, in a way which animals simply could not do. This division into first and second is pressed into a similarity with the first and second covenants, as noted on Heb. 9:1. God's desire was that sacrifice should be offered under the Old Covenant, but this could not take away sin of itself. What He desired far more ['not A but B' can mean 'not *so much* A as B'] was the sacrifice of the One who did His will perfectly.

"You have digged my ears" is quoted differently in Heb. 10:5 as "a body did You prepare for me". God did want sacrifices, but not for the sins David had committed concerning Uriah and Bathsheba. The Greek word "body" is also translated "slave" (Rev. 18:13). The idea cannot be that a body was prepared on earth, and some Divine Spirit incarnated it and the body became known as 'Jesus of Nazareth'. As noted above, the primary reference of the Psalm 40 quotation is to David after his sin with Bathsheba reflecting that sacrifices were not appropriate, and all he could do was to offer himself as the humble servant of Yahweh for the rest of his days. In any case, reading this as meaning that the 'Spirit Jesus' came down from Heaven and lived inside a specially prepared body is reading too much in to the words. Jesus began as an egg within Mary, which divided and re-divided until it became a fetus, then a child and thence "the man Christ Jesus". Jesus 'was' the body; He didn't somehow enter into a body which was prepared somewhere on earth. I therefore suggest that we read "body" as "slave" or "servant". And this is in fact what the Hebrew text implies in Psalm 40; Paul is quoting here from the Septuagint, but the Hebrew reads: "My ears You have digged / bored" (Ps. 40:6). The allusion is to how a servant could choose to remain within his master's house as a permanent slave because he so loved his wife and family and his master; and in this case his ear was bored through and nailed to an upright piece of wood (Ex. 21:6). This clearly hinted at the crucifixion. The Lord Jesus was the slave who willingly decided to devote Himself permanently to the service of the Master's household, demonstrating it by His crucifixion; His ministry for us is therefore eternal, unlike that of the Levitical priests. Paul nearly always quotes the Septuagint rather than the Masoretic text, but the sense here is essentially the same, although the readings differ. The idea is that God didn't want dead animals, but a totally dedicated servant / slave who would perfectly do His will and devote himself to the permanent service of His household. And that person

was the Lord Jesus, typified by the repentant David. Phil. 2:7,8 along with the prophecies of the suffering servant makes it clear that the Lord was supremely a slave / servant in His death on the cross.

Psa 40:7 Then I said, Behold, I have come- We must remember that these words were first spoken and felt by David, reflecting upon God's grace which he received after his sin with Bathsheba; and his desire to respond to that grace practically. Although they are applied to the Lord Jesus in Heb. 10:5-12, it would be a totally false step of logic to assume that "I come..." means that the Lord Jesus 'came' from heaven to earth at His birth or supposed 'incarnation'. That is clearly not what David intended when he spoke these words about himself.

The quotation from Psalm 40 is of words first thought and spoken by David in reflecting that there was no sacrifice which could be offered to deal with his sin in effectively murdering Uriah and committing adultery. All he could offer God was a broken heart, and a desire to humbly serve Him in whatever days he might be given by grace. The Bathsheba Psalms all have further reference to the attitude of the Lord Jesus on the cross; the brokenness of David at that time, physically and psychologically, pointed forward to that of the Lord in His time of dying. The purpose of this is to teach us to what extent the Lord Jesus identified with hopelessly fallen man especially at the time of His dying; whilst Himself never having sinned. The reference to David is evidence enough that the words of this passage do not demand an incarnation of some Divine Spirit into a body waiting on earth to receive it, as Trinitarians claim. The language of Psalm 40 originally applied to David's feelings after his sin with Bathsheba. It is interpreted as being appropriate to the Lord's feelings when He "came into the world".

"Came into" in Heb. 10:5 is the very word which has been used in that section of Hebrews about the Lord's coming into the Most Holy, representing Heaven itself (Heb. 6:20; 9:12,24,25). The reference could be to the Lord's beginning of His priesthood in Heaven, rather than having any reference to His birth or death on earth. But "into the world" is the phrase so often used in John's Gospel for the Father sending His Son into the world at the start of His ministry at age 30 [not necessarily at His birth]. And the same phrase "came into the world" is used of how "I am come a light into the world" (Jn. 12:46) and how the Lord "came into the world that I should bear witness unto the truth" (Jn. 18:37). That witness began to be given at age 30, which was when the Lord "came into the [Jewish] world". "The world" in John's Gospel nearly always refers to the Jewish world, as it does in this context in Heb. 9:26; and the Lord came into that world when His ministry to them began at age 30. We would therefore interpret this as meaning that the Lord began His ministry with the understanding that God had never wanted the animal sacrifices of themselves, but rather required a representative human being to perfectly do God's will. And this He dedicated Himself to doing in the ministry which

culminated in the final doing of God's will by dying on the cross. The death of the cross is so often spoken of as the Father's "will".

It is written about me throughout the book in the scroll- David understood that the law of Moses which condemned him actually spoke (between the lines) about desperate sinners like himself who were condemned by that law. Within that same law were continual hints of God's grace outside of that law. And these words came to comfortably apply to the Lord Jesus in that He was foretold through the Old Testament.

Psa 40:8 I delight to do Your will, my God. Yes, Your law is within my heart- David knew he was condemned by the law as an adulterer and murderer. And yet he was confident of acceptance in that the spirit of the law was truly in his heart, as Ps. 119 demonstrates. These words naturally came true in the Lord Jesus to a far greater extent.

The will of God is specifically associated with the Lord's death on the cross (e.g. Mt. 26:39). The entire scroll of the Pentateuch [the "roll of the book" known to David at the time of Psalm 40] implied the death of a perfect human sacrifice who would complete God's will for human salvation in totality. And Paul is applying these thoughts of David to the Lord Jesus as He began His ministry [or perhaps specifically when He died, or when He began His priestly service on entering Heaven; see on :5].

This is quoted and interpreted in Heb. 10:9 as: "Then he said: Behold, I come to do Your will. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second". As noted on Heb. 10:8, the "first" statement is associated with the first covenant, the law of Moses. The doing of God's will by the perfect sacrifice establishes "the second", i.e. the new covenant; and by doing so, the first covenant is made old (Heb. 8:13), or as stated here, 'taken away', or literally 'slain / killed'. This is how totally the old covenant had been taken away. The second or new covenant was "established" in that as explained above, it was based upon the promises to Abraham which already existed, but which were mediated or brought into operation by the Lord's sacrifice. Thereby, men and women could become "in" the seed of Abraham, and the promises which were originally to only Abraham and his singular seed thereby were made to all within the One Messianic seed. These promises, this second or new covenant, was 'established' by the Lord's death; and thereby the "first", Mosaic covenant was done away. To return to that was therefore to reject the Lord's work and to shy away from the wonder of salvation now made so sure and established. This Psalm would have been so relevant to the exiles, who had been told by Jeremiah and Ezekiel that they had broken the old covenant and were urged to accept the new covenant. They are being reminded that king David actually had the same choice and was forced to accept the new covenant. Or face death.

Heb. 10:10 interprets further: "By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all". The "will" of God refers to God's will that none should perish but all should be saved (Mt. 18:14; Jn. 3:16; 6:40). That will lead to the giving of His Son; and yet the Son had to freely fulfill that will of His own volition. The incredible will of God for human salvation was demonstrated publically by the offering of the Lord's body. This "once and for all" declared the will of God to save us, ending for all time any doubt or niggling suspicion that He is somehow indifferent to human salvation and is simply leaving us to make our own decisions without any passion or will from His side. The Lord's death was therefore His "will" (Mt. 26:42). The doing of God's will by His Son is parallel with the finishing of His work (Jn. 4:34), coming to a climax in His last words from the cross: "It is finished". Yet we too are to play our part in the doing of that will- in reaching out to save others by the grace of the Lord Jesus (Heb. 10:36; 13:21). "The offering of the body of Jesus" alludes to how the offering of animal bodies could not save of itself; but again it was the life and person of the Lord Jesus which saves, rather than simply His body, which was like any other human body.

Psa 40:9 I have proclaimed glad news of righteousness in the great assembly. Behold, I will not seal my lips, Yahweh, You know- Through his Psalms, David was proclaiming to all that God was right and he was wrong, and yet thereby he had been saved by grace outside of the Mosaic system of sacrifices. The verse also describes how the Lord Jesus accomplished God's will as the ultimate sacrifice, through the death of the cross. That death is foretold by the Lord, in the prophetic perfect, as 'preaching righteousness to the great congregation' [LXX *ekklesia*]. In living out the dying of the man Christ Jesus in our daily lives, we are making the witness of Christ. This and :10 speak of how the Lord Jesus would proclaim righteousness to the *ekklesia* and declare God's faithfulness and salvation, i.e. the things of His Name. Yet this passage is quoted in Heb. 10:5-7 about the cross. It was there above all that "Your law is within my heart" and He "preached righteousness". This is why Paul can talk of "the preaching [which is] the cross". He as He was there is the ultimate witness. And this was why the Yahweh Name was written up over Him.

Psa 40:10 I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart. I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation. I have not concealed Your grace and Your truth from the great assembly- Ps. 39:9,11 seems to describe an illness with which David was afflicted after his sin with Bathsheba. Psalm 40 then seems to be giving thanks for David's cure and receipt of forgiveness; and it is replete with reference to David's desire to spread the word: "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit... he has put a new song in my mouth... many shall see it, and fear, and turn to the Lord [alluded to in the way the Acts record accounts for the many conversions after the death of Ananias and Sapphira]... blessed is that man [cp. Ps. 32:1)... I have preached righteousness [a 'prophetic perfect', meaning 'I will do this...'] in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips... I

have declared (LXX *euangelizesthai*- evangelized) Your faithfulness and Your salvation [unto]... the great congregation" (Ps. 40:2-5,9,10 AV). All desire to evangelize must likewise be based in a marvel at God's grace to us despite our sins.

There is a connection between our preaching and salvation, because salvation depends upon faith; and if we believe, if we have drunk the living water, it will spring up in us and bubble over to others. Because David did not conceal God's mercy and truth [a phrase often referring to the Gospel covenant to Abraham] from others, therefore God would not conceal His mercy and truth from David (Ps. 40:10,11). The farmer who sows seed is likened to every preacher of the Gospel; and yet his own life and the lives of others depends upon the sowing of the seed. This is how vital preaching is; it isn't the only virtue which the redeemed believer is expected to demonstrate, but it is one of them.

Psa 40:11 Don't withhold Your tender mercies from me, Yahweh; let Your grace and Your truth continually preserve me- David appears both confident of having received God's mercy (see on :1), and yet also asking for those mercies. Perhaps he speaks earlier in the prophetic perfect, certain of receiving what is yet future. Or perhaps he believes he has received forgiveness, but wants help dealing with the consequences. Or perhaps his faith in the receipt of forgiveness is oscillating. "Grace / mercy and truth" is a term often used about the promises to Abraham. David rightly perceived that the essence of the blessing promised was forgiveness, as does Paul in Gal. 3 and Peter in Acts 3:24-27- and not just eternal inheritance of land on earth.

Psa 40:12 For innumerable evils have surrounded me- David sees his sins and their consequences as "without number", but he uses the same word for God's "infinite" or "without number" "understanding" (s.w. Ps. 147:5). God understands better than we do the nature of our sins and their consequences. The connection is with how :5 speaks of God's thoughts about us as innumerable. He thinks over each of our sins- and forgives. They aren't forgiven as it were by some autopilot mechanism.

My iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not able to look up. They are more than the hairs of my head- The same word is used of Laban's overtaking Jacob (Gen. 31:25); again he takes comfort from the precedents in the story of Jacob. It is the same word for the Egyptians overtaking the Israelites before the Red Sea deliverance (Ex. 14:9; 15:9). He was like the man guilty of blood whom the avenger of blood had overtaken (Dt. 19:6), and he was desperately seeking a city of refuge in Yahweh. 2 Sam. 15:14 uses the same word for "overtaken". The way he was saved from being overtaken by Absalom in judgment for this was perhaps an answer to his prayer of Ps. 40:12. In the context of the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba, David says that his sins and their consequences are "more than the hairs of my head" (Ps. 40:12). But he uses the same phrase in saying that his "without a cause" enemies are "more than the hairs of my

head" (Ps. 69:4). But again we note that he considers those consequences of his sin to be "without cause", and we wonder at the depth of his repentance and sense of culpability.

My heart has failed me- This continues to reference David's emotional and psychological breakdown after the sin with Bathsheba; the same phrase is in Ps. 38:10. The reference may also be to literal cardiac issues connected with a stroke which temporarily left him dumb and deaf.

Psa 40:13 Be pleased, Yahweh, to deliver me. Hurry to help me, Yahweh- David repeatedly asks God to "hurry to help me" (Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 141:1). But David had hurried (s.w.) to be obedient to God, always wanting to 'say yes straight away' (Ps. 119:60). Our response to God's voice is therefore related to His response to our voice; if His words abide in us, then we experience positive experience in answered prayer (Jn. 15:7).

Psa 40:14 Let them be disappointed and confounded together who seek after my soul to destroy it. Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour who delight in my hurt- Saul *sought* to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved. These words perhaps originated in the wilderness Psalm of Ps. 35:4. But David repeats them here, in this Psalm which appears to reference to David's sin with Bathsheba, which provoked the plotting against David's life referred to here. And yet we wonder as to how David could so bitterly wish the destruction of his opponents, when he himself had been saved by grace.

Psa 40:15 Let them be desolate by reason of their shame that tell me, Aha! Aha!- David's repeated desire to see the condemnation of those who were judging him seems inappropriate for a man saved by grace; for they were the vehicles for receiving the consequences of his sins.

Psa 40:16 Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You. Let such as love Your salvation say continually, Let Yahweh be exalted!- Again we query why and how David continues to see people in such black and white terms, divided between the righteous

and unrighteous, when he himself had been revealed as a righteous man who had sinned seriously.

The faithful are described as "those that *seek* (God)… such as *love* Your salvation". But there are none who truly seek God (Rom. 3:11- the context concerns all of us, believers and unbelievers); and yet we are those who seek Him. We must be ambitious to do the impossible. Those who truly *love* righteousness and the Kingdom will be rewarded with it. Likewise Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2,3 describes the faithful man as one who accepts he knows nothing as he ought to know, but truly loves God. Heb. 9:28 is clear: "Unto them that look for (Christ) shall He appear the second time… unto salvation". Those who truly look for Christ will be given salvation.

David responded to their seeking of him by seeking God more. He uses the language of the hunt and chase to describe how he was drawing closer to God: "My soul follows hard after You" (Ps. 63:8; Ps. 63 is a wilderness psalm, see title). “Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul… let all those that seek You rejoice" (Ps. 40:14,16). In this sense, David felt he wasn't fleeing *from* his enemies as much as fleeing *to* God: "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies (from whom he was running): I flee unto You to hide me" (Ps. 143:9). This fleeing *to* God didn't mean that David and Jesus didn't respond or retaliate verbally; both of them, especially the Lord Jesus, did. They both pleaded their innocence, and accused their enemies of being unfair and hypocritical. Yet this must have been done from a genuine motive of love; as David loved Saul, as the thought of Saul's death must have torn at his heart, so the Lord Jesus loved Israel, weeping over Jerusalem, wishing to himself like a child for the impossible: that they would know him as their Saviour. Both David and Jesus had a real sense of direction, they could see that their mental, emotional and physical sufferings were leading them towards an altogether higher relationship with the Father. They took those sufferings as an almost welcome push towards the Father. They had a sure sense of spiritual direction in all their afflictions; this accounts for the human loneliness which they both felt.

Psa 40:17 But I am poor and needy. May the Lord think about me. You are my help and my deliverer. Don’t delay, my God- He recognizes towards the end of this Psalm that the consequences of his sin continue, and he asks for them also to be removed, he is "needy" for answers, despite Nathan's words to him to the effect that they would continue. Yet in :1 he triumphs that his prayers have been heard and all is well; he has come up out of the pit (:2). This could therefore be read as assuming that because he was over his sickness, all his other issues were resolved. Or those earlier statements could be read as faith that he would be ultimately delivered from all the problems which his sin had caused.

"May the Lord think about me" isn't the strongest spiritual ending to the prayer. For in :5 David has rejoiced that God's thoughts about him are more numerous than he can ever count; and his sins are likewise innumerable (:11,12). God has thought with grace about each one. And in :5 he has effectively says that his brain trips at trying to conceive how much God thinks about him. But now he begs God to have a thought for him. In the Psalms we see spirituality at its most real and raw. This is indeed how it is with man; we perceive truth about God on one level, and extol and praise it. But then we so easily disbelieve it and fail to experience and personally feel it in reality.

PSALMS CHAPTER 41

Psa 41:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David- Jeduthun was perhaps "the chief musician" (Ps. 39:1) who was to perform the Psalms or teach them to others (1 Chron. 16:41,42,44; 25:3-6).

Blessed is he who considers the poor. Yahweh will deliver him in the day of evil- In the context of Ahithophel and Absalom's rebellion, David would here be asking for blessing upon those who came to his support with food and sustenance as he fled from Absalom. Barzillai and the others who were on his side are considered "blessed" by David. Or he may be reasoning that his goodness to the poor surely meant he ought to be blessed at this point, a very legalistic view. The Hebrew for "consider" really means to understand- that's how it is normally translated. To be sensitive to the poor, to understand them, to have a heart that bleeds for them- this is what God seeks in us. And yet David appears here to be justifying himself as delivered from his day of evil because he had been generous to the poor- when in fact David was saved by grace and not by such good works. Many of the Psalms are clearly relevant to David, and yet just as clearly relevant to Hezekiah and other Kings. Thus Ps. 41 is David's reflection on the situation of 2 Sam. 15- but evidently it's been re-written with reference to Hezekiah, also afflicted with an "evil disease"; and Ahithophel's part in David's life was played out in Hezekiah's life by Shebna (Is. 22:15). It seems apparent they were re-written over time, and hence have relevance to various historical settings.

Psa 41:2 Yahweh will preserve him, and keep him alive. He shall be blessed on the earth, and he will not surrender him to the will of his enemies- As noted on :1, David was preserved by grace and not by the fact he had been generous to the poor (:1), as he liked to imagine. Ps. 41:1-3 appear to be a general statement by David about how God saves those who have been generous to the poor- because he goes on to recount how at the time of Absalom's rebellion, God saved him. However, he is thus missing the point

completely. He had sinned, was worthy of death, had been saved by grace, but had agreed to take the consequences of sin in this life. He begged for some of those consequences to be removed, implying he was suffering unjustly. By doing so, he showed how over time, he had come to rationalize his sin, and had thus diluted his sense of God's grace. And yet despite this, God shows David even more grace, in that He does in fact ameliorate some of the consequences of David's sin. He does in fact restore David's physical health and gives him victory over his enemies, restoring the throne to him.

Psa 41:3 Yahweh will sustain him on his sickbed, and restore him from his bed of illness- The previous Psalms (Ps. 38-40) have described David on his bed of apparently terminal sickness after the sin with Bathsheba, being saved by grace. And he wishes to encourage all men to share in his path of healing and experience of grace.

Psa 41:4 I said, Yahweh, have mercy on me! Heal me, for I have sinned against You- "Have mercy" here and in :10 is the term used in David's plea for forgiveness in Ps. 51:1. The cry for mercy suggests the moral guilt of the sin with Bathsheba, which had its consequence in David's mortal sickness with which it seems he was stricken soon afterwards (as in Ps. 30:8).

Psa 41:5 My enemies speak evil against me: When will he die, and his name perish?- David's prayers for restoration after the crisis with Bathsheba do indeed include a bald admission of sin as in :4. But his prayers seem to spend far more time in asking for deliverance from his enemies, avoidance of personal shame, and judgment upon them- again suggesting his repentance was not all it might have been.

Psa 41:6 If he comes to see me, he speaks falsehood. His heart gathers iniquity to itself. When he goes outside, he tells it- The LXX puts this in the past tense. In the context of Absalom's rebellion, this would apply most comfortably to Absalom, who is recorded as coming to see David and then going outside the palace and slandering David to the men of Israel. This isn't recorded of Ahithophel, although it could be argued that the person in view is his "familiar friend" of :9. He doesn't perhaps name Ahithophel because these Psalms were written whilst he still felt the possibility of restoring his relationship with Ahithophel and didn't want to openly state what he knew Ahithophel (Bathsheba's grandfather) was up to. Whilst on his bed of sickness, it seems Ahithophel visited David, speaking falsehood to him, and then went outside and slandered him to the world, as in :8.

Psa 41:7 All who hate me whisper together against me. They imagine the worst for me- 2 Sam. 12:19 speaks of David's courtiers whispering about him soon after the sin with Bathsheba. So we can assume that his courtiers are in view here, caught up in the conspiracy to overthrow him, putting around the idea that he was too weak to resist any conspiracy (:8).

Psa 41:8 An evil disease, they say, has afflicted him. Now that he lies he shall rise up no more- Heb. 'a disease of Belial'. The idea was that because David had sinned, some kind of supernatural 'devil' or demons had smitten David and he would die. We notice that David didn't share this mistaken, paganic view; instead he repeatedly attributes his disease to Yahweh, and believed that therefore Yahweh could lift it. There is plenty of evidence that David was sick when fleeing from Absalom. Beds were brought out for him (2 Sam. 17:28) and three times it is stated that David was "weary" at this time (2 Sam. 16:14; 17:2,29). Barzillai "had provided the king of sustenance while he lay at Mahanaim" (2 Sam. 19:32). It seems David's condition was known, hence Ahithophel's advice to come upon David and kill him whilst he was "weary" (2 Sam. 17:2).

Psa 41:9 Yes, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, who ate bread with me- The person in view is clearly Ahithophel, David's counsellor, the "man of my peace" (2 Sam. 15:12), referenced also in Ps. 55:13,14. The king's counsellor in oriental courts always ate at his table. The Lord's invitation to all, sinners included, to eat at His table... is therefore a sublime insight into how radically inclusive He was and is. But David just doesn't get it, that his "friend" is no longer going to be his friend if he sleeps with their granddaughter and murders her husband.

The verse is quoted specifically about Judas in Jn. 15:18. The Lord knew beforehand that Judas would betray Him, just as Samson knew surely that Delilah would; although neither man could admit it to himself. This is just a psychological condition typical of human beings. It helps explain why the Lord Jesus knew from the beginning that Judas would betray him (Jn. 6:64), and yet how He could really trust in Judas as his own familiar friend, confide in him (Ps. 41:9), tell him that he would sit with the other eleven on thrones in the Kingdom (Mt. 19:28). This was ever a serious contradiction for me, until considering the Samson : Delilah relationship in depth. A man can know something about someone on one level, but act and feel towards them in a quite different way than this knowledge requires.

Has lifted up his heel against me- Apparently an allusion to how the seed of the woman would strike the seed of the serpent with his heel (Gen. 3:15). Ahithophel was treating David as the seed of the serpent, rather than realizing that a member of the seed of the

woman can still sin, be forgiven and remain on the Lord's side rather than that of the serpent.

Psa 41:10 But You, Yahweh, have mercy on me, and raise me up, that I may repay them- As noted on :4, the cry for mercy and being raised up from the bed of sickness was primarily in the context of David's sin with Bathsheba. But even in that dire situation, David is still thinking of repaying his enemies. Grace is such a difficult concept to totally grasp, and the old ways of behaviour-based judgment die so hard. There is no surprise therefore that Ahithophel kills himself rather than fall into David's vengeful hands. There is no grace at all in David despite all the grace shown him.

Psa 41:11 By this I know that You delight in me, because my enemy doesn't triumph over me- Tenses in Hebrew aren't exact (unlike in Greek). Seeing this is a prayer for help (:10),, the idea may be 'I will now that You delight in me if you save me from my enemies'. This would be manipulative. David has previously claimed that his only desire is for forgiveness; whereas here he reveals how desperately he wanted to be saved from the consequences of those sins. And Nathan's prophetic word had made it clear that God intended him to suffer those consequences.

Psa 41:12 As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, and set me in Your presence forever- He looked forward to eternity as being in God's presence eternally. His focus was not upon living on a perfected earth, true as that may be; but rather upon relationship with God.

The Bathsheba Psalms, and those written after that time, clearly reflect how David had a sense of integrity before God. Ps. 41:4,12 is a good example: "I said, Lord, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned...as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever". How could David, David the adulterer and the murderer, speak of his integrity...? Only, surely, because he truly believed in imputed righteousness. Although I have noted the possibility throughout the Psalms that David was perhaps not as repentant as he might have been for his sin. Yet forgiven sinners- and none of us are essentially any different to David- can have genuine integrity before God and men, because of this wonderful thing called imputed righteousness, justification by grace, call it by whatever theological term we like. But the bottom line in practice is that we can have genuine integrity before God and man. Yet, of course, men are no so willing to accept this... those who break that 11th commandment 'Thou shalt not be caught!' are very often treated as if they can never have any integrity, and are for ever second class citizens in their community. But this isn't the way of those who seek to reflect God's way of dealing with sin.

Psa 41:13 Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting! Amen and amen- David was bidding all people share in his experience of grace through joining in with his Psalms; he wishes them to say "Amen and amen" on a personal level, thus personalizing his experiences to themselves.

PSALMS CHAPTER 42

Psa 42:1 For the Chief Musician. A contemplation by the sons of Korah- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon. But the Psalm clearly has reference to David's time at Mahanaim, which could have been months (2 Sam. 17:24; 19:32), whilst fleeing Absalom. This was the original context of the Psalm, but David sitting by the waters in exile was obviously relevant to the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon. Hence the title in the Syriac: "A Psalm which David sung when he was an exile and desired to return to Jerusalem"; the Arabic "A Psalm for the backsliding Jews".

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after You, God- The theme of water in this Psalm (:7 too) is appropriate to David being by the waters of the Kidron and then the Jordan as he fled from Absalom. David sitting by the waters in exile was obviously relevant to the captives sitting by the rivers of Babylon.

Psa 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?- This reveals David's special longing for the sanctuary in Zion, where he 'appeared before God' to keep the Mosaic feasts (Ex. 23:17). But the application to the Lord Jesus is very clear- His was the ultimate, actual appearance before God in Heaven. Although David decided not to take the ark with him, he clearly still hankered for being in its presence at this time; he had not retained his earlier understanding that he was in the very presence of God even in the desert far from any physical symbol of God's presence.

Psa 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they continually ask me, Where is your God?- This would imply that David's enemies had access to him whilst he lay at Mahanaim in exile from Absalom; we recall how Shimei followed David on the route, cursing him as he went. Or perhaps his own supporters were saying this. The exiles were likewise mocked in Babylon; and the Lord Jesus likewise on the cross.

Psa 42:4 These things I remember and pour out my soul within me, how I used to go with the crowd, and led them to God's house, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day- This is David recalling how he used to lead the people towards the sanctuary on Zion on feast days. "God's house" however suggests the temple, and this was not built in David's time. So this may well have been added under inspiration when the Psalm was used by the sons of Korah in the Babylonian exile; see on :1.

Psa 42:5 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God!- This kind of self-talk should characterize all of God's true people. For this is the very essence of spiritual mindedness. Psalm 42 has many echoes of the cross, although primarily it refers to David's longing for the tabernacle whilst exiled by Absalom. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" (:5 AV) is the same in the Septuagint as Mt. 26:38 "Now is my soul troubled". But these may not be merely rhetorical questions. David on the run from Absalom frequently asks and laments "Why?". When the answer surely was clear- he was taking the consequence for his sins. But he just refuses to accept that.

For I shall still praise Him for the saving help of His presence- Perhaps applicable to a vision of glory appearing to the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane, transferring some of the glory of His countenance to Jesus as He did to Moses, so that the Lord's arresters initially fell down when they saw Him. David spoke of praising God for the health of His face; and then talks of how God is the source of the health of *his* face (Ps. 42:5,11 RV). It's as if the glory of the invisible God rubbed off upon David, as it did literally for Moses, whose faced became radiant with the glory of the Angel who spoke to him.

Psa 42:6 My God, my soul is in despair within me- Despite his undoubted physique stamina, David was a broken man, depressed, and even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam. 24:14 with 1 Sam. 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps. 75:10 and the whole of Ps. 101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast

when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam. 11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom. He had a heart cruelly torn so many ways. All these traits are amply reflected in the Psalms: Ps. 6:7; 31:10; 42:3,6; 38:8; 55:4; 56:8; 69:3,29; 88:3,9; 94:19 (what introspection!); 102:4; 116:3; 143:4.

Therefore I remember You from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon, from the hill Mizar- This may have been the area of Mahanaim, where it seems David remained whilst in exile from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:24). "The heights of Hermon" is literally 'the Hermons', LXX "the Hermonites", perhaps referring to the mountain range which began at Mount Hermon and continued to the Mahanaim area. "Mizar" is unknown, but could be read as "the little hill" (LXX). However, this interpretation of the geography could appear forced, especially with the reference to "cataracts" in :7. Hence Ray Stedman suggested that David was recalling "an experience that he had when he was in the northern part of Israel near Mount Hermon, at the head of the Jordan River, on a little peak of the range where Mount Hermon is located, called Mount Mizar (which, incidentally, means "little mountain"). On that occasion he could hear the waterfalls of that mountainous region, the thundering cataracts. He became aware of how they seemed to be calling to one another, "deep calling unto deep", and it reminded him that the deeps in God call out to the deeps in man".

GNB "Here in exile my heart is breaking, and so I turn my thoughts to him. He has sent waves of sorrow over my soul; chaos roars at me like a flood, like waterfalls thundering down to the Jordan from Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar". The language of exile indicates yet again that David's psalms when in exile were adapted, under inspiration, for the exiles in Babylon.

Psa 42:7 Deep calls to deep at the noise of Your waterfalls. All Your waves and Your billows have swept over me- Waterfalls" is better "cataracts", perhaps referring to the spot on the Jordan River where he was sitting as he composed this Psalm. See on :6. David like Jonah feels he has drowned and is in a living death.

Psa 42:8 Yahweh will command His grace in the daytime. In the night His song shall be with me: a prayer to the God of my life- Yahweh's song connects with how the exiles also by the waters (of Babylon) were asked to sing Yahweh's song, the Psalms used in temple worship. David says that he will sing Yahweh's song, the temple liturgy, even though in exile from the temple. For he realizes that God's presence is not limited to the sanctuary. GNB may be correct in suggesting: "May the LORD show his constant love during the day, so that I may have a song at night". "The God of my life" could mean the God who alone could preserve David's life; or the God who was the focus of David's life.

Psa 42:9 I will ask God, my rock, Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?- Again we see David at a loss to understand his sufferings, when the answer was obvious- they were the agreed consequence for his sins. His repentance was more from a fear of consequence. "I have sinned" was on his lips, yes, but it was also on the lips of Pharaoh and Judas. The prototype of Christ feeling forsaken was in David feeling forsaken by God when he fled from Absalom (Ps. 42:9; 43:2; 88:14); but clearly he was not actually forsaken. Despite these feelings, David was spiritually mature enough to still consider God as his "rock", even though he felt God wasn't coming through for him as he expected. He expresses the same in Ps. 43:2. "Oppression" was what God's later people were to suffer at the hands of their enemies (s.w. Is. 30:20; Dt. 26:7); David's suffering was seen as that of God's later people, and so his Psalms were reused in this context.

Psa 42:10 As with a sword in my bones, my adversaries reproach me, while they continually ask me, Where is your God?- David was sensitive to words; whilst in exile from Absalom, his enemies clearly had access to him and were communicating with him "continually". And he felt those words as swords. The sword that pierced Christ's soul on the cross was the sword of the abuse which was shouted at Him then (Ps. 42:10); and the piercing of Christ's soul, Simeon had said, was the piercing of Mary's soul too. In other words, they were both really cut, pierced, by this mocking of the virgin birth. Neither of them were hard and indifferent to it. And the fact they both stood together at the cross and faced it together must have drawn them closer, and made their parting all the harder. She alone knew beyond doubt that God was Christ's father, even though the Lord had needed to rebuke her for being so carried away with the humdrum of life that she once referred to Joseph as His father (Lk. 2:33). For everyone else, there must always have been that tendency to doubt.

Psa 42:11 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him, the saving help of my countenance, and my God- "Despair" is the word used of David's feelings after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 38:6). It is the word for bowing down, for humility. But nobody likes being bowed down in humility, and David likewise wriggles against it. But we see here the kind of self-talk which is characteristic of all those who are truly spiritually minded. This 'bowing down' was to characterize the sufferings of Judah for their sins (s.w. Is. 2:11; 5:15; 26:5). David was possibly asking himself a rhetorical question- Why was he bowed down? Because God wanted to humble him so that He might restore him. But "help" is the usual word for 'salvation', and "countenance" is the usual word for 'face'. 'Save my face' would be a fair translation. And here again we encounter our concerns as to whether David's repentance was as thorough as it might have been. He did indeed confess his sin and

seek forgiveness. But so much of his praying at this time is for God to save him from shame, and to judge and destroy and eternally condemn those at whose hands he was receiving judgment for his sins. And this was the problem with the exiles whom he later came to represent.

PSALMS CHAPTER 43

Psa 43:1 Vindicate me, God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation. Oh, deliver me from deceitful and wicked men- Many Biblical characters worked their way through this problem of being distracted by others in their community. Ps. 43:1 begins with David lamenting how he had been unfairly judged by an “unmerciful nation” of Israel, but concludes with him focusing back on his personal relationship with the Father: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul?... hope thou in God... who is the health of my countenance and my God” (:5 AV). David felt that his judgment by his nation in the wake of his sin with Bathsheba was unjust, and he asks God to legally plead his case against them. But before the court of Divine justice, David had been verily guilty. Again we sense that his desire for forgiveness was genuine enough, but the extent of his penitence was continually limited by his abiding sense that he was better than his nation, and his fear of shame in their eyes.

In the context of the exiles, the "ungodly nation" was Babylon; the "wicked men" were initially the supporters of Saul and Absalom, but then became the Babylonians.

Psa 43:2 For You are the God of my strength. Why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?- Despite these feelings, David was spiritually mature enough to still consider God as his "strength", even though he felt God wasn't coming through for him as he expected. David of all people appeared confident in his relationship with God and his personal hope of salvation. And yet he frequently felt at times “cast off” (Ps. 43:2; 44:9; 60:1; 74:1; 77:7; 88:14; 89:38; 108:11), using a Hebrew word elsewhere commonly used about God’s final rejection of sinners. David genuinely felt a condemned man- and yet he rejoiced in God’s salvation. Few of us get the balance so right. The prototype of Christ feeling forsaken was in David feeling forsaken by God when he fled from Absalom (Ps. 42:9; 43:2; 88:14); but clearly he was not actually forsaken. "Oppression" was what God's later people were to suffer at the hands of their enemies (s.w. Is. 30:20; Dt. 26:7); David's suffering was seen as that of God's later people, and so his Psalms were reused in this context.

Psa 43:3 Oh, send out Your light and Your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to

Your holy hill, to Your great tent- David sees himself as Israel in the wilderness, being led by the light of the shekinah glory in the cloud and fire. So often we have noted that David felt the presence of God in exile just as much as he did in the sanctuary in Zion; thus he often comments that he is under God's wings, as if he felt located on the mercy seat with the blood of atonement beneath him and the cherubic wings and shekinah glory above him. But still he is so desperate for the sanctuary in Zion, as if he maybe hadn't quite learned the lesson; and maybe this was why he was so insistent upon building a physical temple there, even though God had said this was not in fact what He wanted. "Your light and… truth" may refer to the Urim and Thumim within the breastplate, which flashed out guidance to difficult questions. On the run, David was without this. But he asks for God's guidance all the same. He was being led by his circumstances to personal spirituality rather than the things of religion; yet he still struggles with his strong desire to be back at the tabernacle with all the visible signs of religion around him.

Psa 43:4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy. I will praise You on the harp, God, my God- We again note that the literal altar in Zion was David's greatest joy; see on :3. He seems to equate "God" with "the altar of God"; as many do today, he failed to separate religious externalities from God. But then we can also note that as we go through the life of David, it is evident he went along roads few others have travelled. For example, who else would offer his sacrifice upon the altar and then start strumming his harp in praise as he watched the animal burn (Ps .43:4 Heb.)? This was a new paradigm in Israelite worship. It speaks in this case of his feeling of joy at the same time as sacrificing. For to sacrifice is frequently associated with joy. There is no joy in anything that doesn't involve personal sacrifice in some way.

Psa 43:5 Why are you in despair, my soul? Why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God! For I shall still praise Him: my saviour, my helper, and my God- "Despair" is the word used of David's feelings after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 38:6). It is the word for bowing down, for humility. But nobody likes being bowed down in humility, and David likewise wriggles against it. But we see here the kind of self-talk which is characteristic of all those who are truly spiritually minded. This 'bowing down' was to characterize the sufferings of Judah for their sins (s.w. Is. 2:11; 5:15; 26:5). David was possibly asking himself a rhetorical question- Why was he bowed down? Because God wanted to humble him so that He might restore him.

AV has as in Ps. 42:11 "Praise Him who is the health of my countenance". But "health" is the usual word for 'salvation', and "countenance" is the usual word for 'face'. 'Save my face' would be a fair translation. And here again we encounter our concerns as to whether David's repentance was as thorough as it might have been. He did indeed

confess his sin and seek forgiveness. But so much of his praying at this time is for God to save him from shame, and to judge and destroy and eternally condemn those at whose hands he was receiving judgment for his sins. And this was the problem with the exiles whom he later came to represent.

PSALMS CHAPTER 44

Psa 44:1 For the Chief Musician. By the sons of Korah. A contemplative psalm- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

The Psalm appears to be reflection upon Israel's defeat, at least temporarily. This isn't recorded in the historical records of David's life. But the Psalm has many connections with Psalm 60, which is Davidic Ps. 60:1,10 = Ps. 44:9,10; Ps. 60:11 = Ps. 44:26 etc.). So it appears to be a comment upon a temporary set back and defeat during this campaign against Edom. See on 2 Sam. 8:1 and Ps. 60. Much of Psalm 60 is repeated in Psalm 108 as a victory song. Likewise in Psalm 44. The war with Edom clearly had a far larger dimension than the simple note in 2 Samuel 8 that David defeated Edom. He did, but after a stunning defeat, and an amazing victory by God's grace alone, for which David gave ample thanks in at least three Psalms, 44,60 and 108.

We have heard with our ears, God; our fathers have told us, what work You did in their days, in the days of old- In the times of mass illiteracy, the history of Israel would have been repeated orally. This was not to be just the job of the priests, the teachers of Israel, but of the "fathers" of all the tribes. The emphasis in the Psalm is upon *God's* work being greater than any human work.

Psa 44:2 You drove out the nations with Your hand, but You planted them. You afflicted the peoples, but You spread them abroad- The "them" is Israel, contrasted with "the nations / peoples". "Drove out" is the word for "inherit" in the promises that Abraham's seed would "inherit" the land (:3; Gen. 15:7,8; 28:4). As in our experience, there is

always a primary fulfilment of God's promises and eternal covenant, which was based around the promises to Abraham. This was of particular comfort to the exiles (s.w. Ps. 69:35). Although God appeared not to be coming through for them at the time (see on :1), they were to take comfort in the covenant with Abraham; God's hand had worked in the past and would do so again, and the land was ultimately theirs. Even if at the moment their enemies were in the ascendancy.

Psa 44:3 For they didn't get the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them; but Your right hand, and Your arm, and the light of Your face, because You were favourable to them- This contrasts with how Jacob's final words were to the effect that he had carved out his own inheritance at Shechem by his sword and bow (Gen. 48:22). David is recognizing that this attitude was wrong; and yet the spiritually weak "Jacob" was still to be saved by God's grace (:4).

Psa 44:4 You are my King, God. Command victories for Jacob!- David the king repeatedly calls God his "king". His exaltation didn't lead him to pride, as he was always under the deep impression that he was not the ultimate king (Ps. 5:2; 10:16; 29:10; 44:4; 47:6). His personal relationship with God was, he believed, the basis for "victories for Jacob", all God's weak and wandering people.

Psa 44:5 Through You will we push down our adversaries. Through Your name will we tread them under who rise up against us- The connections with Ps. 60 (see on :1). lead us to conclude that this prayer was heard in the final victory against Edom (see on Ps. 60:1), who had 'risen up' against Israel.

Psa 44:6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me- The more closely we analyze the Bible heroes, the more apparent it is that they were shot through with weakness; and some of those weaknesses it seems they unsuccessfully battled with until the day of their death. I think of Jacob, always trusting in his own strength, being progressively taught to trust in Yahweh's strength. And yet right at the very end of his life, he lets slip a comment which would seem more appropriate to his earlier life: "Shechem... which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with *my* sword and with *my* bow" (Gen. 48:22). The wrongness of this attitude seems to be alluded to in Josh. 24:12, which says that God drove out the Amorites "but not with your sword, neither with your bow" . And here in Ps. 44:3,6 also. So Jacob, right at the end of his life, still hadn't completely overcome that besetting weakness of self-reliance. This is, of course, a dangerous road to go down. In no way can we be complacent about our urgent need for spiritual growth. But on the other hand, we will never reach the stature of Christ without righteousness being imputed to us. In this sense, true Christian believers aren't good

people. Perhaps David had learned from the demise of Saul and Jonathan, whose "bow… and sword" were used by them in the fateful battle on Gilboa (2 Sam. 1:22), yet didn't save them.

Psa 44:7 But You have saved us from our adversaries, and have shamed those who hate us- The Psalm will go on to complain that now, their adversaries were in the ascendancy (:22,23 etc.). But David refuses to thereby forget that God has indeed amazingly come through for His people in the past. So often, the sense that God is not coming through for us right now leads people to discount all His amazing historical grace. And that is one function of Biblical history.

Psa 44:8 In God we have made our boast all day long, we will give thanks to Your name forever. Selah- As noted on :7, it is quite a reflection of David's faith and spirituality that he could praise and boast of God, even when (as the Psalm goes on to state), he feels God has not come through for him as He ought to have done.

Psa 44:9 But now You rejected us, and brought us to dishonour, and don't go out with our armies- Even when feeling rejected by God, David still praised God and boasted of what He had done in the past (:7,8). This should be our attitude- that even if rejected by God, or feeling rejected, our basic love and respect of Him should continue. God not going out with Israel's armies, and their turning back from their enemies (:10), is all the language of the punishments for Israel breaking the covenant. Instead of confessing this, David instead focuses upon the sinfulness of their enemies, and asking God to reverse the situation. As in his own attitude to his sin with Bathsheba, he appears more interested in seeing the consequences of sin taken away than in actually repenting and receiving forgiveness.

Psa 44:10 You make us turn back from the adversary. Those who hate us take spoil for themselves- As noted on :9, turning backs before enemies was a curse for breaking the covenant. David should have recognized this, and confessed it and urged Israel to repent. Instead, rather like in his own difficulty in repenting over his sin with Bathsheba, he instead focuses upon the consequences for sin and begs God to remove them.

Psa 44:11 You have made us like sheep for food, and have scattered us among the nations- This was surely added, under inspiration, by the exiles using this psalm of David.

Psa 44:12 You sell Your people for nothing, and have gained nothing from their sale- This would imply that Yahweh as the seller considered His people worthless, and was pleased to get rid of them for nothing. This is far from a fair description of what happened at the captivity. The explanation as to why they were sold for nothing is given clearly in Jer. 15:13: "Your substance and your treasures will I give for a spoil without price *and that for all your sins*". Just as David struggled to accept that the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba were appropriate and just, so did the exiles. They had sold themselves into captivity, according to their own prophets. If God has as it were profited by their sale, then they would have criticized that too. In fact, Is. 50:1 presents God's lack of gain from their 'sale' as an example of His love and grace: "Thus says Yahweh, Where is the bill of your mother's divorce, for which I have put her away? Or which of My creditors is it to whom I have sold you? Behold, for your iniquities were you sold".

Psa 44:13 You make us a reproach to our neighbours, a scoffing and a derision to those who are around us- This was exactly as the prophets had warned would happen if they continued in their sins (Ez. 23:32; Hos. 7:16 etc.). To complain about it was simply refusing to accept the consequence for sin.

Psa 44:14 You make us a byword among the nations, a shaking of the head among the peoples- As noted on :13, this was exactly as the prophets had warned would happen if they continued in their sins and suffered the curses for breaking the covenant (Dt. 28:37; Jer. 24:9 etc.). To complain about it was simply refusing to accept the consequence for sin.

Psa 44:15 All day long my dishonour is before me, and shame covers my face- Verses 13 and 14 are clearly the feelings of the exiles, but they were based upon David's own feelings of shame over the sins connected with Bathsheba and Uriah. Again we note that he seems more concerned about the removal of the consequence for his sins, especially his shame, rather than in receiving forgiveness.

Psa 44:16 at the taunt of one who reproaches and verbally abuses, because of the enemy and the avenger- This is the term used of Goliath in Ps. 8:2. But the taunts of the likes of Shimei, reproaching him for being a "man of blood" (2 Sam. 16:8), were largely true. Shimei's words were painful to David, perhaps because they contained a fair amount of truth.

Psa 44:17 All this has come on us, yet have we not forgotten You, neither have we been false to Your covenant- The language now again returns to "we", the exiles. Perhaps at best they were saying '*We* have not broken the covenant, so it is unfair we are suffering the results of our fathers breaking the covenant'. Ezekiel was up against the same argument. And his answer was that indeed God punishes men for their own sins and not those of their fathers- and the new generation of exiles had indeed sinned themselves. And also to be factored in to this is the fact that sin often brings consequences to others. That is part of what sin is. Like David, they were struggling to accept consequences of sin.

Psa 44:18 Our heart has not turned back, neither have our steps strayed from Your path- To judge oneself as innocent of any sin of the heart is surely arrogance. 'Turning back' is associated with idolatry (Is. 42:17). And there is plenty of evidence within Ezekiel that the exiles were still idolatrous. We note how the names 'Mordecai' (based upon 'Marduk') and 'Esther' were reflective of idolatry.

A lack of acceptance of personal sin and its consequence is often at the root of complaints about God's supposed injustice. Several of the Psalms which lament God's inaction and judgment totally fail to make any reference to human sin (Ps. 44 especially), or tend to gloss over this factor. Thus Ps. 44:18 complains "our hearts have not gone astray" when Jer. 17:9; 18:16,17 specifically blames the tragedy of the exile on the state of Judah's heart.

Psa 44:19 though You have crushed us in the haunt of jackals, and covered us with the shadow of death- "The haunt of jackals" is likely a reference to Babylon, seen as the land of the shadow of death. David had felt "broken" (s.w. "crushed") because of his sin with Bathsheba and the consequences (Ps. 51:8). It seems the exiles edited his words and applied them to themselves- whilst missing the point, that David suffered rightly, and so did they. Their 'covering' with death was appropriate judgment (s.w. Is. 29:10).

Psa 44:20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or spread forth our hands to a strange god- Ps. 44:20 balances the sin of omission against the sin of commission: “If we have forgotten the name of our God [omission], or stretched out our hands to a strange god” [commission]. It makes a good exercise to watch for how many times the Proverbs treat sins of omission as if they are sins of active commission. "He that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (Prov. 18:9)- 'mere' laziness, as we may see it, an omission of working- is the same as the commission of a purposefully destructive person. But as noted on :18, the exiles generally were guilty of

idolatry. So even if those now appropriating David's Psalm to themselves were innocent, they needed to be far more honest and realistic about the state of their community.

Psa 44:21 won't God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart- As David confidently asked God to search his heart, so did the exiles (s.w. Ps. 139:1,23). But Judah were in captivity exactly because God had searched their hearts and found them seriously astray from Him (s.w. Jer. 17:10). It was their duty now in exile to search their own hearts and repent (s.w. Lam. 3:40).

Psa 44:22 Yes, for Your sake we are killed all day long. We are regarded as sheep for the slaughter- "For Your sake" implies God was somehow unjust in treating them as sheep for the slaughter. It was the Lord Jesus who was to save them by becoming the "sheep for the slaughter", identifying with their condemnation, so that any who identified with Him could be saved from it. But instead, the exiles here lament their situation and asked for these consequences of their sins to be removed- with no mention of repentance or guilt.

This verse is quoted in Rom. 8:36, in the context of talking about the condemnation of sin (Rom. 8:34). In the context of Romans, Paul has been arguing that we are all rightly condemned. But his final point at the climax of his argument here at the end of Romans 1-8 is that despite that, God's love is still with us and He shall by grace save His true people from that condemnation which they rightly experience (Rom. 8:37-39). This was the perspective which the exiles, and David, ought to have had; and Paul uses this verse precisely in the way I have suggested we interpret it.

Psa 44:23 Wake up! Why do You sleep, Lord? Arise! Don't reject us forever- To accuse God of sleeping seems as inappropriate as the disciples' demand for the Lord Jesus to awake from sleep because His apparent sleeping showed that He didn't care that they perished (Mk. 4:38). He did of course care for their perishing. He gave His life for that. David in better moments realized that God doesn't sleep (Ps. 121:4). Likewise it was inappropriate to claim that God was going to reject His people forever (also in Ps. 74:1). The prophets had made it abundantly plain that God would not reject forever. Israel had "the hope of Israel" as surely as the planets are in the sky.

Psa 44:24 Why do You hide Your face, and forget our affliction and our oppression?- "Oppression" was what God's later people were to suffer at the hands of their enemies for their sins (s.w. Is. 30:20; Dt. 26:7); David's suffering was seen as that of God's later people, and so his Psalms were reused in this context. But that suffering was judgment

and consequence for sin. It was the cloud of their sin which hid them from God's face, rather than Him losing interest in them and looking somewhere else.

*Psa 44:25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust. Our body clings to the earth- "*Bowed down" is used of the exiles in Lam. 3:20. But it is David who speaks of his body clinging or cleaving to the dust (Ps. 119:25). Again we have to conclude that the person feelings of David after his sin with Bathsheba are appropriate by the exiles, and his Psalm rewritten in their context.

Psa 44:26 Rise up to help us- This is the appeal of David personally (Ps. 35:2), but now appropriated to the exiles.

Redeem us for Your grace' sake- After all the insistence that they are suffering unreasonably (see on :13,14), there does come an appeal to God's grace. We would perhaps rather see confession of sin and of Divine justice; but at least there is an awareness of grace.

PSALMS CHAPTER 45

Psa 45:1 For the Chief Musician. Set to The Lilies- This is the word for "trumpets". It was a song to accompany the trumpet symphony at a wedding.

A contemplation by the sons of Korah- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

A wedding song- I suggest all of Psalms 1-72 were written by David (Ps. 72:20), so we can assume this was David's song for Solomon, as was Ps. 72. However it may well have been rewritten and used for Hezekiah's marriage to Hephzibah (2 Kings 21:1; Is. 62:4).

My heart overflows with a noble theme. I recite my verses for the king- David expected Solomon to be the next king.

My tongue is like the pen of a skilful writer- The inspired writer of Psalm 45 says that his tongue is like the pen of a writer (Ps. 45:1). The writer is God. God was using the inspired person's words as His pen, with which to communicate to men. Ezra likewise saw himself as a "scribe of the law of the God of heaven" (Ezra 7:21). The God who is in Heaven wrote through a scribe here on earth. That's the idea of inspiration.

Psa 45:2 You are the most excellent of the sons of men. Grace has anointed your lips, therefore God has blessed you forever- Men marvelled at the unusually gracious way of speaking the Lord Jesus had (Lk. 4:22). Whilst this Psalm is quoted about the Lord Jesus in Heb. 1, we must remember that the initial context was David's prayer for Solomon at his wedding. He clearly assumes Solomon's excellence above all his brothers, perhaps referred to as "the sons of men", and automatic blessing from God as the one anointed by grace to the kingship. It was exactly these parental expectations and unrealistic assumptions which were to be Solomon's undoing in later life. "Excellent" is AV "fairer" and appears to be a reference to Solomon's beauty, glorified in Song 5:10-16. Solomon seems to have proudly reflected upon this Psalm, liking to think that he was his father's beloved son because of his gracious words: "He that has gracious lips, the king shall be his friend" (Prov. 22:11). We see here the myth in human relationships: the father imagines the son is very gracious, and loves him for the image he has of his son. The son notices his father is doing this and so proudly, and wrongly, concludes that he is in fact the awesome person his father had imagined.

Psa 45:3 Strap your sword on your thigh, mighty one, in your splendour and your majesty- This appears to be David drunk with fatherly pride as it were, as he sees Solomon riding to the nuptials to claim his bride.

Psa 45:4 In your majesty ride victoriously on behalf of truth, humility, and righteousness. Let your right hand display awesome deeds- This speaks in the Hebrew text of 'meekness-righteousness', as if meekness is the very essence of righteousness; and it was this which Solomon was to fight for.

Psa 45:5 Your arrows are sharp. The nations fall under you, with arrows in the heart of the king's enemies- Solomon was envisaged as conquering the surrounding nations. David rejoices that Divine "arrows" were sent to destroy his enemies (Ps. 7:13; 18:14; 45:5; 64:7; 144:6), in fulfilment of God's promise to do so to the sinful within Israel (Dt. 32:23,42). But David was to later realize that those same arrows had been fired by God

into him in judgment for his sin (Ps. 38:2). This realization was perhaps to help David understand that his rejoicing in Divine arrows of judgment being fired at his enemies had not been mature; for he himself had to realize that he was worthy of the same.

Psa 45:6 Your throne, God, is forever and ever. A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of your kingdom- We must ever remember that this Psalm is primarily David addressing his son Solomon at his wedding. Solomon was not "God" so we can interpret this as being used in the sense of "mighty one", as in :3. The New Testament quotation of it about the Lord Jesus is not, therefore, declaring Him "God" in a Trinitarian sense; but rather emphasizing His highly exalted status. David was wrong to imagine that his son would have an eternal Messianic kingdom; although that may have been potentially possible, had Solomon been obedient. But his misplaced expectation is applied to the Lord Jesus, who will ultimately fulfil it. David imagined that Solomon's reign was to be characterized by "equity"; but in fact this didn't work out. For Solomon ended up abusing his people. And so whatever possibilities there were for him to be the Messianic ruler, they were precluded by his later unfaithfulness. And so the language is reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus.

Psa 45:7 You have loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, even your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows- The anointed of God naturally leads us to think finally of the Lord Jesus, whatever initial application there was. This is applied to the Lord Jesus in Heb. 1:9. The Lord Jesus had a wondrous mixture of "grace and truth" which has so eluded Christianity. His hating sin more than any other man was one reason for the height of his exaltation above all others by the Father. But Hebrews 1:9 understands the "fellows" as referring not only to men but Angels; for it is used in the course of arguing that the Lord Jesus although once human, is not an Angel; He is greater than or "above" Angels. This is typical of Jewish midrash (interpretation). Words are quoted not perfectly in context, and then the words are given an interpretation appropriate to the point being made. The emphasis upon "God, even your God" is evidence enough that the Lord Jesus was not God; for God the Father is His God, as He Himself said (Mt. 27:46; Jn. 20:17). This is not the only passage where there is an intentional juxtaposition of language about the Lord Jesus; He is called "God" (but see on :6), but now we read of 'his God', God the Father, as Heb. 1:9 interprets it. Out of this dialectic comes the true interpretation; the Lord Jesus was totally human, He was not God in the Trinitarian sense, God the Father was His Father and God; but because He was morally perfect, He was exalted to a status that can only be described in the highest possible terms.

It is also worth asking the question, in the context of Solomon: 'Who anointed him above his fellows to be king? Who judged him as such a spiritual person?'. The answer is

surely his father David. And "God" / "mighty one" (note the word Yahweh isn't used here) could simply be a Hebraic way of referring to David.

Psa 45:8 All your garments smell like myrrh, aloes, and cassia. Out of the ivory palaces the stringed instruments have made you glad- Having addressed the groom, the Psalm moves to address the bride, as she walks out of an ivory palace to the sound of stringed instruments. Ahab had an ivory palace (1 Kings 22:39; Am. 3:15), so it is not unthinkable that there was such a "palace" in Jerusalem at the time of Solomon's wedding. He himself made an ivory throne for himself. It would appear that this woman was a foreigner, perhaps the daughter of the queen of Sheba (:9) or an Egyptian woman. But Solomon, just like the foolish young man he later wrote about, had gone right ahead down the road to spiritual disaster he so often warned others about. He warns the young man of the dangers of the Gentile woman who perfumes her bed with myrrh (Prov. 7:16,17)- and then falls for just such a woman (Ps. 45:8).

Psa 45:9 Kings' daughters are among your honourable women- Presumably these were not David's daughters, but the bridesmaids. It seems clear that this woman was a Gentile daughter of a king and queen; probably from Egypt.

At your right hand the queen stands in gold of Ophir- Perhaps she was the daughter of the queen of Sheba, and her mother was present at the wedding. Solomon's bride was in any case the daughter of a queen, and her sisters acted as her bridesmaids; they were king's daughters. The marriage of the "son of David" to a Gentile indeed fits the type well, regarding the marriage of the Lord Jesus. But in the immediate context, David and Solomon were surely wrong to go ahead with marrying outside of the covenant. There is Hebrew tradition that Solomon married the queen of Sheba and had a child by her.

Psa 45:10 Listen, daughter, consider, and turn your ear- This may be David's desire for his new daughter in law to turn her ear to the God of Israel and convert. But this ought to have been done well before the wedding day. "Turn your ear" is a phrase used about responding to Yahweh's wisdom (Ps. 49:4; Prov. 2:2 and so often in Proverbs).

Forget your own people, and also your father's house- Separation *from* the world *unto* the things of God is brought out in the way Ps. 45:10,16 alludes to the Mosaic laws about a Gentile woman forgetting her father's house. Indeed the Psalm appears to have relevance to Solomon's marriage to a Gentile [and note the allusions to Joseph's marriage to a Gentile]: "Forget also your own people, and your father's house [this is the 'separation from' the world]... instead of your fathers shall be your children, which you may make princes in all the earth [land- of Israel]". The emotional pain of separation

from her father's world would be offset by her bringing forth Godly children within the hope of Israel. The whole process of separating from and yet also separating *unto* seems to me to create a kind of synergy from the whole dialectic. It's by separating *from* the world that we go back into this world in service and witness and caring concern. And if we don't find ourselves 'separated *unto*' those things- have we actually separated *from* this world in the way God intends?

Psa 45:11 So the king will desire your beauty; honour him, for he is your lord- David is saying that his son will be yet the more attracted to her beauty if she accepts the God of Israel (see on :10); but this of course should have all happened well before the wedding day.

Psa 45:12 The daughter of Tyre comes with a gift, the rich among the people entreat your favour- It seems David was friends with Hiram king of Tyre (1 Kings 5:1), and the court of Tyre was represented at the wedding. The Hebrew could be rendered: "O daughter of Tyre, with a gift shall the rich of the people intreat your favour", making the bride a Tyrian princess. Seeing Tyre was the closest trading partner of both David and Solomon, this would make the marriage a political alliance, although David is glossing it with spiritual allusion.

Psa 45:13 The princess inside is all glorious. Her clothing is interwoven with gold- This can easily be understood in the type as the Lord's bride being internally "glorious", with the gold of faith interwoven in her clothing. But "inside" could refer to the bride being within a building, to be brought out and led to the bridegroom as described in :14,15.

Psa 45:14 She shall be led to the king in embroidered work. The virgins, her companions who follow her, shall be brought to you- The language of embroidery, gold and the spices of :8 is that of the tabernacle and priestly garments. It's as if David wishes to present this Gentile girl as somehow connected with the external symbols of the true faith of Yahweh; even though :10 implies she was not in fact converted to Him at this point.

Psa 45:15 With gladness and rejoicing they shall be led; they shall enter into the king's palace- The idea may be that these Gentile girls (:9) would come and live with the bride in Solomon's palace. David was wishing to see in all this a foretaste of the gathering of the Gentiles to Israel's God. But in reality :10 implies she was not in fact converted to Him at this point. And Solomon would be led astray by these women in the long term. The same ultimate hollowness is to be found throughout the Song of Solomon.

Psa 45:16 Your sons will take the place of your fathers; you shall make them princes in all the land- With Solomon as king, his bride's children would be princes in the land of Israel. So David imagined. And this would take the place, psychologically, of her sacrifice of her relationship with her "fathers"; see on :10. Solomon's sons were indeed made rulers throughout the land in the new system of administration which he established.

Psa 45:17 I will make your name to be remembered in all generations. Therefore the peoples shall give you praise forever and ever- Again David comes over as somewhat arrogant and ahead of himself in thinking that this daughter in law would be made *by him* to have an eternal name in Israel, and also be the praise of the Gentiles. For :10 implies she was not in fact converted to Israel's God at this point. The mere external tokenism was to lead to this marriage going terribly wrong in spiritual terms, leading to the spiritual demise of Solomon. The name of the wicked shall perish, we are often told in scripture; the name of the righteous only endures because their character endures. David was quite wrong to think that *he* could make the name of his so to be eternally remembered.

PSALMS CHAPTER 46

Psa 46:1 For the Chief Musician. By the sons of Korah- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19.

According to Alamoth- "Virgins". This is a musical direction, perhaps implying it was to be sung on high notes, with voices like those of "virgins".

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble- In the Hezekiah context, this could be seen as the answer to Isaiah's prayer in Is. 33:2: “May You be their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble”. The Psalm appears relevant to a time when Zion was surrounded by armies, and yet God destroyed them and saved His people. This would fit the deliverance from the Assyrians at Hezekiah's time; probably a

Psalm written by David commemorating a great deliverance was edited and reapplied to this incident.

The Hebrew is "a present help in distresses has He let Himself be found". We have to seek God, but He lets Himself be found. "If you seek Him, He will be found by you" (2 Chron. 15:2). In the Hezekiah context, the Jews trusted in the "strength" of Pharaoh and "took refuge" in Egypt- these same words for "refuge" and "strength" are found in Is. 30:1-3: "Woe to the rebellious children, says Yahweh, who take counsel, but not from Me; and who make an alliance, but not with My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin, who set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked My advice; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt! Therefore the strength of Pharaoh will be your shame, and the refuge in the shadow of Egypt your confusion". So the statement in Ps. 46:1 that "God is our refuge and strength" was that of an individual or minority group, trusting in God's deliverance when the majority of God's people were trusting in the world / Egypt. The immediate reference was to Isaiah and his faithful remnant in Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian invasion. Understanding this, we could read the Psalm as meaning that the faithful would not fear if the *eretz* / land was indeed taken over and destroyed, and the great mountain, of Zion, cast into the seas of the Gentile world. Even without a temple, they trusted there was the true sanctuary of God in Heaven; and one day, His Kingdom would come and Zion would be eternally established on earth.

Psa 46:2 Therefore we won't be afraid though the earth shakes, though the mountains are shaken into the heart of the seas- "Mountains" may be an intensive plural for the one great mountain, of Zion; and it looked likely to be cast into the seas of the Gentiles, surrounded as Zion was by Assyrian troops. I have suggested on Rev. 8:8 that the mountain cast into the seas in the Apocalypse also refers to Zion. The "we" refers in the first instance to Isaiah, Hezekiah and the faithful remnant within Jerusalem.

Psalm 46 is a Korah Psalm, so we note the references to rebels falling alive into the depths with a roaring underworld beneath them (Ps. 46:2-7). The allusion is to what happened to the father, brothers, sisters and relatives of the "sons of Korah". But the Psalm goes on to talk of how "we" will not fear because ultimate salvation for "us" is certain. We have an insight into the mind of Korah's sons.

The Lord clearly alluded to this verse, in saying that the disciples could tell "this mountain"- clearly mount Zion- to be cast into the sea, if they had faith. He spoke of taking the temple to the Gentiles, the sea of nations. He understood all this figuratively, not literally. And that on one level is what the Psalmist is also saying.

Psa 46:3 though its waters roar and are troubled, though the mountains tremble with their swelling. Selah- The mountains, the great mount Zion (:2), did tremble with fear because of the roaring of the seas of nations around it. But later Isaiah was to glory in the fact that just as the waters roared at the Red Sea and God calmed them, so He came through for Judah at this time (Is. 51:15). But there was to be a time when the waters of Babylon would likewise roar, and overcome Judah (s.w. Jer. 6:23), and the latter day Assyrian confederacy against Zion will do likewise (s.w. Ps. 83:2).

Psa 46:4 There is a river, the streams of which make the city of God glad- As discussed on :1, the psalmist seems to be saying that even if Jerusalem and the temple falls and the land of Israel is destroyed- the righteous will still be "like a tree planted by the rivers of waters" (Ps. 1:3). "The city of God" is clearly parallel with "Zion", the temple mount (Is. 60:14; Heb. 12:22).

The roaring of the mighty waters of the surrounding Gentiles is contrasted with a tiny stream within Zion. Under siege, Jerusalem has no natural water supply; and so Hezekiah had built a conduit bringing a trickle of water into Zion from the Gihon (2 Kings 20:20). And the city was "glad" of that. This tiny stream kept the people alive. And the Psalmist sees in this a symbol of God's abiding deliverance of His people. The tiny Gihon stream was underground and largely invisible, emerging at the pool of Siloam. And the psalmist sees this as the preserving power and presence of God amidst the raging of the 'waters' of nations around Zion.

The holy place of the tents of the Most High- The tents of the Assyrians around Jerusalem are contrasted with the invisible tents of God's Angels camped within the besieged city. Things may appear hopeless in secular terms, but in spiritual terms God's saving power is ultimately far superior to whatever we may apparently be outnumbered by. The contrast is with how the king of Babylon wanted to sit on Mount Zion and thus declare himself as "the Most High" (Is. 14:13,14).

Psa 46:5 God is in her midst, she shall not be moved- As discussed on :1, we could read this as the Psalmist saying that even if the great mount Zion was destroyed and the land of Israel shaken… there was still God literally in the midst of His Heavenly sanctuary. He is "in the midst" of His true people, and their hearts will not be moved- the same word used of the mountains being "moved". No matter what happens around us, our heart will not be influenced by it; because the world is "moved" doesn't mean our heart is. His help for them will be "at dawn / in the morning", the ultimate morning of the Lord's coming and arising as the sun of righteousness. The fact is that Zion and Jerusalem

were moved and destroyed. The promise that "she shall not be moved" must therefore ultimately apply to the "Zion" of second Isaiah, God's true people and their unmoved hearts.

This connects with David's statement that he personally "shall not be moved" in Ps. 16:8: "I have set Yahweh always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved". The context is of David's desire to take the hill of Zion from the Jebusites, and for it to become his by conquest (see on Ps. 15:1; 16:5,6). He was confident he could do this in God's strength, and by saying "*I* shall not be moved" he identifies himself with Zion which "shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5). And indeed God came through for David. Because he put Yahweh "always before me", he was given mount Zion and established his kingdom there. This verse is then quoted about the Lord Jesus- who likewise shall establish His Kingdom upon David's throne in Zion (Lk. 1:34,35) because of His trust in Yahweh.

God will help her at dawn- A reference to how the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers were slain overnight, and their corpses discovered by the Jews "early in the morning" (2 Kings 19:35), in allusion to how the Egyptians were found dead "in the morning" (Ex. 14:27).

Psa 46:6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved. He lifted His voice, and the earth melted- Here we have made explicit that the raging waters of :2,3 represent the nations confederate with Assyria. God's lifted up voice presumably refers to the quiet prophetic words uttered by God through Isaiah, to the effect that He would deliver His people. Those quiet words were perceived by the faithful as God roaring so loud that the earth melted.

Psa 46:7 Yahweh of Armies is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah- God's "armies" are the Angels, and it was just one of them who went out and slew 185,000 of the surrounding soldiers. "The God of Jacob" is a phrase which elicits the reflection that Jacob was not spiritually strong, and his God saved him by grace; and that was indeed the case at the time of the salvation of Zion from the Assyrians.

David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2), and He was like this by grace to the Jews of Isaiah's day. David therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day. As discussed on :5, the refuge spoken of here is ultimately spiritual and not referring to some literal refuge in mount Zion. God being "with us" is likewise ultimately true in Emmanuel, God with us

(Is. 7:14). For it is simply untrue that God was "with us" in the sense of always saving Jerusalem from their attackers. It was exactly this kind of wrong understanding that led to the distress and spiritual collapse recorded in Lamentations. Lamentations alludes to psalms like this, lamenting that apparently God hasn't come through as promised. And this is the problem with all who seek immediate blessing and preservation in this life, grabbing Bible verses out of context to justify themselves. Seeing Jerusalem in ruins appeared to make a nonsense of Psalms like Ps. 46- but that was because they had imposed a literal understanding upon the Psalm which was actually what they themselves wished to be true. They wanted to understand the "high tower" or place of refuge as literally the heights of mount Zion. But David sees the high tower as God's grace and ultimate spiritual protection- and not anything nor anywhere physical (Ps. 9:9; 18:2; 20:1 etc.).

Psa 46:8 Come, see Yahweh's works- As explained on :10, the prophetic intention was that the victory over Assyria and her confederacy was to lead to Judah inviting those nations to come and "see" Yahweh's works, and therefore to accept Him as their God. But Hezekiah failed miserably in this.

What desolations He has made in the earth- "Desolations" is the word used about the threatened judgments upon Judah (Is. 5:9; 24:12; Jer. 19:8). "Made" translates a Hebrew word with a wide range of meaning, translated "change" in 2 Sam. 12:20; Job 17:12. Perhaps the idea is that the nations were to be invited to consider how the desolations threatened upon Jerusalem had been "changed"- by the repentance of a remnant. And this would have been intended to elicit repentance amongst the nations.

Psa 46:9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots in the fire- Several of the prophecies against Judah's enemies include the threat of Divine fire; it is likely that the Angel used fire to destroy the Assyrians. Remember that God makes His Angels as a flame of fire (Ps. 104:4). However this was at best only a primary fulfilment of these words. At later points, Zion was captured and the temple destroyed. Wars did not cease. These words can only finally be true at the latter day salvation of Jerusalem. Only then will Yahweh be "exalted among the nations".

Psa 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth- Being still or slack is the term used in Zeph. 3:16 for the people of Zion actively going out to war. The idea is that the Jews in Jerusalem were not to do anything, apart from trust in Yahweh. They were not to answer a word to their reproaches, but to trust in Yahweh (Is. 36:21). They were to resign all attempts at resolving the invasion in their own strength. The intention was that Israel's God would be

exalted, or accepted as alone worthy of praise, in the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham. But Hezekiah let the ball drop. The surrounding nations came and were allowed by Hezekiah to influence Judah, rather than Hezekiah and Judah bringing these nations beneath Israel's God. He was not "exalted in the earth" as was intended and as was potentially possible. Instead we read the same word of Hezekiah's heart being "exalted" or lifted up.

Psa 46:11 Yahweh of Armies is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah- See on :7, where this verse is repeated. Regardless of the fate of physical Zion, the essence is of God's presence in the hearts of His people, He with or within us, and we in or within Him. This is the priceless mutuality possible between God and His individual people. He indwells us and we locate ourselves as "in" Him.

PSALMS CHAPTER 47

Psa 47:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

Oh clap your hands, all you nations. Shout to God with the voice of triumph!- This Psalm may follow on from Ps. 46, which gives glory to God for saving Zion at the time of the Assyrian invasion. The last part of that Psalm speaks of the prophetic intention that the victory over Assyria and her confederacy was to lead to Judah inviting those nations to come and "see" Yahweh's works (Ps. 46:8), and therefore to accept Him as their God. But Hezekiah failed miserably in this. The intention was that Israel's God would be exalted, or accepted as alone worthy of praise, in the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham. But Hezekiah let the ball drop. The surrounding nations came and were allowed by Hezekiah to influence Judah, rather than Hezekiah and Judah bringing these nations beneath Israel's God. He was not "exalted in the earth" as was intended (Ps. 46:10) and as was potentially possible.

But Ps. 47 emphasizes this potential. The language of shouting and clapping alludes to the salute given to a new king on his accession (2 Kings 11:12; 1 Sam. 10:24). In Num. 23:21, “the shout of a king” refers to the shout celebrating Yahweh as king. The nations were intended to accept Yahweh as their new king. I will discuss on :5 how the Psalm may have originated in David's bringing the ark to mount Zion, hence the idea of God going up with a shout (:5). David was the human king, but he is seeking to give all glory to God as the true King of Israel.

Psa 47:2 For Yahweh Most High is awesome. He is a great King over all the earth- God is king over all the earth, and He was then specifically over the *eretz* promised to Abraham. But the peoples of the *eretz* still had to come to acknowledge Him as their king, and it was the prophetic intention that after the victory over Assyria, they would do so- in response to Judah's invitation to them. For the king of Assyria had termed himself "the great king" (Is. 36:4). This psalm was likely slightly re-written in Hezekiah's time with reference to God's victory over him. But the original Psalm had earlier reference than that. Yahweh was *elyon*, "most high". In the Ras Shamra inscriptions, this title belonged to a supreme Canaanite deity. But as victor over the Canaanite gods, Yahweh is given this title. He is awesome over all idols- that is the takeaway for His people of all generations, living as we do surrounded by the idols of this world.

Psa 47:3 He subdues nations under us, and peoples under our feet- The reference is to the subduing of Assyria and the confederacy with her, after the miraculous Angelic destruction of their army. But Hezekiah never drove home the victory; Assyria continued as a nation for some time, and instead Judah submitted themselves under their gods, rather than the other way around.

Psa 47:4 He chooses our inheritance for us, the glory of Jacob whom He loved. Selah- Jacob gloried in his future inheritance in the Kingdom in that he spoke of Shechem in about his last words (Gen. 48:22), and wanted to buried in Canaan rather than in the opulence of Egypt. We will each have an individual future within God's Kingdom, chosen by Him, and we are to glory in that above all secular things. God here declares His special love for Jacob, and by far His most common title is "God of Jacob / Israel". Jacob was so slow and stubborn in his spiritual development, only calling Yahweh "my God" in his closing years. But God was thrilled with how Jacob got there in the end, and seems to subsequently love calling Himself the God of the Jacob whom He so loved.

Psa 47:5 God has gone up with a shout, Yahweh with the sound of a trumpet- "Gone up" suggest the ascension of the throne (as GNB). The language of shouting and trumpets alludes to the salute given to a new king on his accession (2 Kings 11:12; 1

Sam. 10:24). In Num. 23:21, “the shout of a king” refers to the shout celebrating Yahweh as king. The nations were intended to accept Yahweh as their new king. Possibly the Psalm began with reference to the bringing up of the ark to Zion with a shout (2 Sam. 6:15). Perhaps the immediate reference is to these words being sung as the ark was carried up mount Zion. There are other connections- the ark was "brought up [high]" (2 Sam. 6:12), the same root word used of how Yahweh is the "most high" (Ps. 47:2). The ark of God was seen as His throne, and so that throne being established in Zion (:8 "God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne") was envisioned by David as looking ahead to a day when all the Gentiles would come there to worship, and would accept His enthronement there. The ark was brought to Zion after David had taken Zion from the Gentiles (2 Sam. 5:6-10). But he saw Zion as in fact becoming a place where the Gentiles would come and worship Zion. This didn't happen at the time, Israel were not the light to the Gentiles they were intended to be. But the essence of the Psalm has come true in the conversion of the Gentiles to the God of Israel, and even more fully so in the Kingdom age (see on :9).

This Psalm has 36 words prior to the word "Yahweh" in this verse, and 36 words afterwards. The whole stress is upon Yahweh being perceived as the absolute centre of human life. It has also been observed that between the Yahweh Name in verse 2 and the Yahweh Name in verse 5 there are exactly 26 Hebrew words, with the number 26 being the numerical value of "Yahweh". And this central verse 5 consists of precisely 26 Hebrew letters, again, the numerical value of "Yahweh". And *elohim* is used seven times in the Psalm. All this continues the theme of a God centred worldview which the Gentiles would adopt.

Psa 47:6 Sing praise to God, sing praises. Sing praises to our King, sing praises- This is an appeal to the Gentile world to sing praises to "our king", Israel's King, Yahweh. It was this appeal which Hezekiah and Judah ought to have been making to the Gentiles after the rout of the Assyrians (see on :1).

Psa 47:7 For God is the King of all the earth. Sing praises with understanding- Literally "has become the King", language appropriate to an enthronement ceremony, and continued in :8 "God has taken His seat upon His holy throne" (NEV "God sits on His holy throne"). Surely Yahweh in a sense was always king of His creation. David is perhaps being too literalistic in thinking that because he had brought the ark to Zion, symbolizing God's throne, therefore he had as it were enthroned Yahweh as king of all the earth. For in his wilderness psalms, David clearly sees the location of the ark as irrelevant to the experience of fellowship with God. But clearly the psalm is also a vision, of the nations within the earth coming to Zion in acceptance of Yahweh as king there. In the Christian dispensation, this all has a fulfilment in our acceptance of the

kingdom of God, the dominion of His kingship, with the Lord Jesus now enthroned in the heavenly Jerusalem as king of all kings. The Gentiles were asked to accept Yahweh as king of the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham; but they were not to give lip service praise to Him, as subjected peoples typically did to the gods of the victors. They were to sing praise "with understanding". And this would require Judah to teach them- which they did not, at that time. The scenario however is rescheduled and reapplied to the final establishment of God's Kingdom in Zion at the Lord's return.

Psa 47:8 God reigns over the nations, God sits on His holy throne- Literally, "God has taken His seat upon His holy throne"; see on :7. The throne of God is envisaged as being in Zion, and from there all the nations in the *eretz* (:7) were to be ruled over. This was what was intended to come about after the Assyrian defeat.

Psa 47:9 The princes of the peoples are gathered together, the people of the God of Abraham- "The peoples" apparently refer to "the nations" (:8) of the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham (:7). But they are "the people of the God of Abraham". Abraham rather than Jacob is mentioned because the peoples dwelling in the *eretz* were mainly descended from Abraham. The vision is of the day when the Gentile nations within the *eretz* or land, and perhaps the whole earth, have become the people of Abraham's God. This we know to have become possible through all baptized into Abraham's seed becoming heirs of the Kingdom promises made to him (Gal. 3:27-29). "I will be their God" was one of the terms of those promises (Gen. 17:11)- and the psalmist envisions the day when that will be true for the Gentiles, and the God of Abraham will be their God. This is the same vision as in the surrounding Psalms, of the Gentiles becoming Yahweh's people (Ps. 46:10; 48:10).

For the shields of the earth belong to God. He is greatly exalted!- "Shields" is another way of referring to the "princes"; it is s.w. "ruler". The rulers of the peoples in the *eretz* each had their shields or banners, but they potentially all belonged to Israel's God; they were potentially His people, and the Psalm is appealing for them to actually exalt Him as their God in reality. This is what we are doing in our appeal to people today.

PSALMS CHAPTER 48

Psa 48:1 A Song. A Psalm by the sons of Korah- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship

Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain- The call to praise God in Zion is because of the idea the psalmist will develop that God is somehow eternally present in Zion; see on :8. But Zion was to be destroyed and fall to her enemies. This psalm is a far cry from the David who felt God's presence far from any ark or tabernacle. I suggest this Psalm may follow on from Ps. 46 and Ps. 47. These Psalms were originally by David with reference to the enthronement of Yahweh on Mount Zion when he brought the ark there, but were later rewritten (under Divine inspiration) and applied to later contexts. One such later usage was in giving glory to God for saving Zion at the time of the Assyrian invasion. The last part of Ps. 47 invites the surrounding nations to accept Yahweh of Israel as their God; and Ps. 46:8 speaks of the prophetic intention that the victory over Assyria and her confederacy was to lead to Judah inviting those nations to come and "see" Yahweh's works, and therefore to accept Him as their God. But Hezekiah failed miserably in this. The intention was that Israel's God would be exalted, or accepted as alone worthy of praise, in the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham. But Hezekiah let the ball drop. The surrounding nations came and were allowed by Hezekiah to influence Judah, rather than Hezekiah and Judah bringing these nations beneath Israel's God. He was not "exalted in the earth" as was intended (Ps. 46:10; 47:8) and as was potentially possible. The intention was that the nations would come and praise God on "His holy mountain" of Zion, just as Is. 2:2-4 had prophesied as being possible in Isaiah's time.

Psa 48:2 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the north sides, the city of the great King- Sennacherib wanted to set his throne on the temple mount (compare Is. 14:13 and Ps. 48:2 and notice the many allusions in Ps. 48 to the raising of Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem). But now the city of Zion was to be perceived as the joy or praise of the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham.

I noted on Ps. 15:1 that "Yahweh, who shall dwell in Your sanctuary? Who shall live on Your holy hill?" was written before David took the hill of Zion from the Jebusites. He felt they shouldn't be living there because of how they lived so immorally, and was eager to make it his own inheritance by conquest; and it seems from Ps. 16:5,6 that David considered Zion his personal inheritance where he was to live. He considered Zion his great joy (Ps. 137:6), the ultimately pleasant place (Ps. 48:2).

Psa 48:3 God has shown Himself in her citadels as a refuge- The entire *eretz* had seen that Yahweh, the God of Zion, had been a refuge there for His true people. But the Psalm was likely an edit of an earlier Psalm of David; according to Ps. 72:20, this Psalm was one of David's. David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Psa 48:4 For, behold, the kings assembled themselves, they passed by together- This is the scene of Ps. 2; the nations assembled against Zion in Hezekiah's time, in that the Assyrian army was really comprised of a confederacy of local nations, just as will be seen in the attack of the latter day Assyrian. "Passed by together" is LXX "they came together". The desire to take Zion was what unified them; and so will the Jerusalem issue for the latter day Assyrian confederacy.

Psa 48:5 They saw it, then they were amazed. They were dismayed. They hurried away- This would refer to the fleeing of the remnants of the Assyrian confederacy after they saw the slaying of 185,000 soldiers in one night by one Angel.

Psa 48:6 Trembling took hold of them there, pain, as of a woman in travail- The image of a woman in her time of delivery may imply that

Psa 48:7 With the east wind, You break the ships of Tarshish- The idea may be as NET and GNB, which sees this verse as developing the theme of 'trembling' of :6: "like ships tossing in a furious storm". This version of the text omits the word "Tarshish". If we retain it, then we are to understand that the destruction of the enemies of Zion will include the destruction of their "ships of Tarshish". I have argued on Ez. 38 that Tarshish is one of the ten surrounding peoples listed in Ez. 38 who will come against Zion in the last days. Tarshish is therefore again demonstrated to be against Zion and not for her. This is another nail in the coffin of the idea that Tarshish refers to Anglo Saxon support of Israel in the last days. Tarshish is here presented as against God's people, not for them, and Ez. 38 says likewise.

Psa 48:8 As we have heard, so we have seen- Isaiah's prophetic word came true. This

psalm is praise for faith being turned to sight, and we will also experience this in the last day.

In the city of Yahweh of Armies, in the city of our God- There were armies of Angels within the besieged city, and just one of them slew 185,000 soldiers.

God will establish it forever. Selah- The eternal establishment of Zion is the language of the Kingdom prophecies. The Kingdom of God established in Israel could have come in some form at Hezekiah's time. But it was precluded by Hezekiah's personal failure, and the refusal of the people to accept Isaiah's teaching. The psalmist initially felt that Zion and Jerusalem would last eternally- hence the disillusion of Jeremiah and other faithful ones in Lamentations, when they saw Jerusalem and the temple in ruins. This is quite a common Old Testament experience- disillusion because the believers were obsessed with seeing the Kingdom situation as right now in their lives. The psalmist seems to have reasoned that because God is in Zion, therefore Zion must be eternally preserved, because God is there. This is repeated in :13,14: "Set your heart on her rampart, number her citadels, so that you may recount to another generation, that this is God, our God forever and ever". "This is our God" seems to conflate God with Zion. His eternity means Zion's eternity- in the mind of the psalmist. See on :12 for another example. "Jerusalem the eternal city" is only true ultimately; for Zech. 14 and the Lord's Olivet prophecy are clear that Jerusalem will again fall to her enemies in the last days. But this failed to take into account the message of the prophets- that God's people had departed from Him and He would therefore depart from them. He would not remain in Zion from that time forth and for evermore. Likewise :3 wrongly suggests that because God is literally in Zion, therefore refuge and salvation is found in physical Zion. This had some truth at the time of Hezekiah, when all Judah fell to the Assyrians apart from Jerusalem. But it was wrongly extrapolated to be a global and eternal truth. For salvation ["refuge"] is in no physical place, but ultimately in God's Son, the Lord Jesus. And it is eternal salvation from sin and death which is of the essence.

Psa 48:9 We have thought about Your grace, God, in the midst of Your temple- This could imply that the holy place in the midst of the temple was now open to all. And there was the reflection there that Zion had been saved by grace- because Judah were not at all spiritually strong at the time of her deliverance.

Psa 48:10 As is Your name, God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth. Your right hand is full of righteousness- God's right hand had judged the Assyrians, and His Name or reputation was rightly earned; the news of Him was true, and the ends of the *eretz*, including Babylon, had heard correctly about Him. Hence their ambassadors came to Hezekiah. But instead of leading them to accept Israel's God, Hezekiah failed.

Psa 48:11 Let Mount Zion be glad! Let the daughters of Judah rejoice because of Your judgments- The daughters of Judah would refer to the cities around Jerusalem which had fallen to the Assyrians but were now liberated.

Psa 48:12 Walk about Zion, and go around her. Number its towers- Literally, "encircle it". It was the Assyrians who had encircled Jerusalem. It was their military commanders who had numbered her towers as they planned their assault (Is. 33:18). Instead, the believers were to as it were do the same, assessing Zion's defences- and as explained on :13, to conclude that her defence was in her God and His grace. This Psalm may well have been sung in a procession around Zion, feeling that God was the "guide" leading it (:14). "Number" is 'to count' and is a form of the word to "tell" or 'recount' in :13. The idea is that the physical strength of Zion would be recounted for eternal generations. Again, we see a wrong understanding that Zion would abide eternally (see on :8). It is elsewhere stressed that the towers of Zion would fall "in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall" (Is. 30:25); "Your heart will meditate on the terror. Where is he who counted? Where is he who weighed? Where is he who counted the towers?" (Is. 33:18). This seems a direct allusion to this counting of Jerusalem's towers in Ps. 48:12.

The kings of Judah were later noted for building towers in Jerusalem: "Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem... and fortified them... He made in Jerusalem engines, invented by skilful men, to be on the towers and on the battlements (2 Chron. 26:9,15); "he raised it up to the towers, and the other wall outside, and strengthened Millo in the city of David" (2 Chron. 32:5). But there would come "a day of the trumpet and alarm... against the high towers" (Zeph. 1:16). They forgot that "the name of Yahweh is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it and is safe" (Prov. 18:10). David had forgotten that in his wilderness years, "You have been a refuge for me, a strong tower from the enemy" (Ps. 61:3). He built a particularly strong tower in Jerusalem which became known as "the tower of David" (Song 4:4). In all this we see a slide from personal faith and spirituality into the things of visible, external religion, considering Jerusalem and the temple to be eternal and impregnable. Having God as your strong tower was replaced by having physical strong towers in Jerusalem- which were all brought down in due course.

Psa 48:13 Mark well her bulwarks- Or NET "defences". This then connects with :14 NET: "Our God is our defender for ever". Zion's defence was Yahweh. And the Psalm invites us to "mark well" what her defence was- her God.

Consider her palaces, that you may tell it to the next generation- "Palaces" is NET "fortresses", but the strong tower, or fortress, of Zion was her God.

Psa 48:14 For this God is our God forever and ever. He will be our guide even to death- See on :8,13. "Guide" is a military term for leading forth an army. Judah never fought against the Assyrians; but spiritually they were led forth as an army of faith by God.

PSALMS CHAPTER 49

Psa 49:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah- "By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

Hear this, all you peoples. Listen, all you inhabitants of the world- David, or whoever the Psalmist was who used his Psalm, was interested in appealing not just to Israel but to the Gentiles. The message of rejection of materialism was to be presented to them too. The moral teachings of the true God were and are attractive to secular Gentiles.

Psa 49:2 both low and high, rich and poor together- Trust in wealth and materialism, which this Psalm addresses, is a problem not just for the wealthy but in fact for all of society, including the poor.

Psa 49:3 My mouth will speak words of wisdom, my heart shall utter understanding- This appears to be a claim to direct Divine inspiration in the truths about materialism which are now to be sung about.

Psa 49:4 I will bend my ear to a proverb, I will open my riddle on the harp- It seems that :1-4 are an introduction, and the song begins from :5 onwards. The mention of the harp reminds us that the Psalm at least originated in David (Ps. 72:20). But as noted on :1, the Psalm may have been directed to the exiles in Babylon, who were tempted towards materialism. Their wealth, hinted at in the conclusion of the book of Esther, was what

likely stopped the majority from obeying the call to return to the land and rebuild God's Kingdom there on the ruins left from the Babylonian invasion.

Psa 49:5 Why should I fear in the days of evil, when iniquity barks at my heels, surrounding me?- If we read "days" as an intensive plural, the idea would be that a great day of evil is coming upon "me", all of us, when sin finally catches up with us like a dog barking at our heels, and we must die. In that day, wealth cannot save us- that is the theme to be developed now throughout the Psalm.

The riddle may be as to how and why a wealthy family member cannot redeem a man from eternal death. The answer to the riddle is therefore "Through Jesus the Messiah as redeemer". Another answer to this riddle is that absolutely everything in life is time limited, and in the perspective of eternity, present wealth is irrelevant. The great day of evil could refer to the time of crisis in future life which every man fears, and which explains why man seeks to gather wealth. Man wants ever more money and assets 'in case' some great day of evil comes. And so the surrounding context of the psalm is about the irrelevance of wealth, and that the ultimate day of crisis is not some future catastrophe in this life- but the day of judgment. At which wealth and powerful relatives will not redeem man.

The riddle of :5 is to be solemnly pronounced to the entire world, to every man of every social station. This is intensely laboured in the opening verses of the psalm. Because the riddle basically has the answer: Jesus the Christ. The answer is the Gospel. Verse 3 labours that a very profound, unique message is to come. The message that wealth is futile and can't save from death is true enough. But it is far from unique in wisdom literature. What is unique and ultimately profound is that wealth cannot redeem your brother from death. But there is a redeemer who can, in a glorious morning light to come when the dead shall rise (14) and of course, wealth in this life will play no role. No wealthy man can use his wealth to achieve this kind of redemption; but God can. Hence the Psalm will conclude "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave" (:15). The riddle was to be sung upon a harp (:4) as if this is a matter of joy. The vanity of wealth is a comfort to the poor and over worked, but if we understand the riddle as eternal salvation in Jesus Christ- it makes sense to joyfully sing and proclaim this riddle.

GNB and other versions tend to gloss the original Hebrew with renderings like "I am not afraid in times of danger when I am surrounded by enemies, by evil people who trust in their riches". The thrust of the argument would then be that the psalmist is a poor man being cheated (CEV) or otherwise abused by wealthy enemies; but he copes with that by reflecting that wealth will not save them in the day of judgment, and their worldly advantage will ultimately be meaningless.

Psa 49:6 Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches- The Lord and Paul appear to allude here in saying that those who trust in riches will find entrance to the Kingdom very hard (Mk. 10:24; 1 Tim. 6:17). This Psalm explains why- wealth gives the subconscious persuasion that it can resolve all things. But life's biggest question is death and salvation, and wealth hinders salvation, it cannot at all save from death. We marvel at how the disciples were surprised that a rich man would find it hard to enter the Kingdom: "Who then shall be saved?". This reflects their belief that wealth could in fact somehow buy salvation.

The riddle addresses the question of how can man be saved from death and life for ever. Wealth cannot be trusted at all to achieve that. Rather are we to "trust" in Yahweh's grace for forgiveness (Ps. 32:10; "I trust in the grace of Yahweh for ever", for everlasting life, Ps. 52:8) and eternal salvation (Ps. 37:3; Is. 12:2).

Psa 49:7 none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for him-

The argument in these verses appears to be that although a man can be a *go'el*, a redeemer, for his brother in this life- no man can be such a redeemer who redeems his brother from eternal death. This is the riddle of :5. And the answer is "Jesus the Christ is the redeemer who can redeem you from death". He is our brother, the close relative who had our nature, who can pay the huge ransom to redeem us from eternal death. "No payment is ever enough" (:8)- this is a literally priceless redemption. Human wealth might save a man from the death penalty, but that only gives him a few more years to live. A payment beyond human wealth is required to save from the grave and give eternal life (:8). This explains why even wisdom will not achieve this redemption (:10), wise and foolish will die for ever. Usually the "wise" are commended; but even spiritual wisdom alone will not redeem from death nor give eternal life. A redeemer who can pay more than money is required. The Lord may well allude here when speaking of how He would give His life "a ransom for many". He redeemed not just one brother, but all humanity who accept His ransom payment.

We may well ask as to why the Psalm doesn't simply say that the wealthy cannot save themselves from death. But instead the angle taken is that they cannot redeem their brother from death. The reason perhaps is to raise the suggestion that there is in fact a redeemer who *can* redeem his brother, but not by wealth. David would have understood that redeemer as God, but in reality His redemptive work was to be achieved in His Son, whose redeeming blood is far more costly than secular wealth (1 Pet. 1:18,19). We note that this redemption therefore is for His brothers rather than universal.

The language of redeeming life with money is based upon the law's regulations that in some cases, such as if an ox gored a man to death, the guilty party could pay money to avoid the death penalty (Ex. 21:30; Num. 35:31). This seems to be in view, because the same language is used. But the point is that ultimately, death itself is inevitable and cannot be staved off by money. And perhaps the idea is that the offender personally had to pay from their own money, and no relative could pay for them. Whereas the redemption God could and would provide was for others, because we simply cannot pay ourselves.

This is a psalm of the sons of Korah, whose father and family perished in rebellion. They realized they couldn't save them.

Psa 49:8 For the redemption of their life is costly, no payment is ever enough- A temporary stay of execution for money is one thing (see on :7). But no payment can ultimately redeem a person from death itself. This recognition of utter bankruptcy in the face of death was being used by the Psalmist to appeal even to Gentiles (see on :1), because awareness of this is a subconscious truth for all men. The Davidic origin of the Psalm is indicated by the way that Saul used the same phrase of David's saving of his life: "My soul was precious in your eyes" [s.w. "life is costly"] (1 Sam. 26:21). David is alluding to this; Saul's human life had been precious or costly to him, but he was unable to redeem Saul eternally. Only God could do that, if Saul by faith accepted God's grace. David wished that Solomon would have the same perspective, considering the soul or life of people to be "precious" or "costly" (Ps. 72:14). But sadly Solomon abused his people later, as it were whipping them with whips. In the restoration context, God appreciated the preciousness of the soul or life of His people, and offered to eternally redeem them (s.w. Is. 43:4). See on :15. The relevance to the redemption of the exiles, not for human money but by Divine grace, is that "You [the exiles] were precious [s.w. "costly"] in My sight" (Is. 43:4).

Psa 49:9 that he should live on forever, that he should not see corruption- David clearly saw death as "corruption" and as the cessation of life. Unlike many around him at the time, he rejected the idea of an immortal soul and conscious survival of death. The riddle is answered by understanding that wealthy man cannot "redeem" his brother from "corruption". But God can, through His Son. And so the same word is used of God in Ps. 103:4 "Who redeems your life from destruction [s.w. "corruption"]". He alone can resurrect, as Jonah realized when he praises God "who brought up my life from corruption" (Jon. 2:6). Hezekiah felt that he had been "delivered from the pit of corruption [s.w.] because You have cast all my sins behind Your back" (Is. 38:17). Redemption from corruption / eternal death requires achieving Divine forgiveness. And that cannot be purchased with money. This Psalm surely has relevance to the exiles,

who were "redeemed" by God from exile in Babylon without money, but by His priceless grace. And so the same word is used in Is. 51:14: "The captive exile hastens that he may be loosed, that he should not die in the pit of corruption" of Babylonian exile. But it was a redemption refused.

Psa 49:10 For He sees that wise men die; likewise the fool and the senseless perish, and leave their wealth to others- It is secular wisdom which is in view; for these apparently wise men still have the same basic human assumption that they will somehow survive death (:11). We are to live as dying men, who see so clearly how pointless was their acquisition of wealth seeing they are leaving it to others. Ecclesiastes makes the point that often enough, inherited wealth is inherited by fools and wasted.

Psa 49:11 Their inward thought is that their houses will endure forever, and their dwelling places to all generations. They name their lands after themselves- This is profound psychological insight into how the unspoken, subconscious assumption is that somehow, we will exist beyond death; and our wealth and secular achievement can guarantee this. It is this subconscious eagerness to believe this which explains the huge popularity of the false doctrine of an immortal soul in most religions. And this is why the hard truths of the Bible in this area are unpopular. Even if we are in some form remembered for a few millennia- this too shall pass. And death remains death. Only Divine redemption can change this.

We may well enquire how David thought he knew the state of heart [AV "inward part"] of his enemies and wealthy people (Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11; 62:4; 64:6). Perhaps it was a result of his reflection upon how he had only had a right spirit or heart given by God "within" him as a result of his repentance (Ps. 51:10 s.w.). His enemies were impenitent, and so perhaps on that basis he knew what was in their hearts. Or this may simply have been the result of Divine inspiration (see on :3).

Psa 49:12 But man, despite his riches, doesn't endure. He is like the animals that perish- See on :11. We could not wish for a clearer statement of conditional immortality and a denial of the immortal soul concept. This sublime truth is repeated twice in this Psalm (:12,20). And remember that is it being used in order to preach good news to Gentiles (:1). Likewise in Is. 40, the good news is that "all flesh is as grass". For those fearing immortal torment after death, this was in a sense good news; but the true good news is that if we accept this truth, then we can turn to God for the redemption intimated in :8. This theological attack on the immortal soul concept was relevant for the exiles, who were tending to accept the Babylonian theology on these issues, and thus lose their focus upon the final day of Israel's Hope as the resurrection of the dead.

The context of the Psalm is of how wealth cannot save from death, which is man's ultimate day of evil (see on :5). The comparison with beasts is because wealth in those days was measured by head of cattle owned. Just as it is in poorer societies today. The rich man, who owned many animals, would due like they do. Those animals were also mortal, just like their owner. The man and his wealth, his animals, are therefore paralleled here and in :20. Many secular people are likewise identified with their wealth. Take away their wealth, and they perish- even in life. And certainly in death.

Psa 49:13 This is the destiny of those who are foolish, and of those who approve their sayings. Selah- The "wise" of :10 are hereby declared fools. As are all who look to the wealthy as wise. The readership of "follow my example to get rich" books is huge. But this is presented as approving foolishness. Sin is associated by God with utter and derisible foolishness (e.g. Num. 12:11; 2 Tim. 3:9); but this isn't how man in his unwisdom perceives it at all. Indeed, to him self-denial is inexplicable folly and blindness to the essentials of human existence. The *folly* of sin is only *fully* evident to God.

Psa 49:14 They are appointed as a flock for Sheol. Death shall be their shepherd- The implication is that they are experiencing a living death, they are following the shepherd "death" to an eternal grave. The implication as noted on :8 is that there is another shepherd and another flock- leading to life.

Korah's sons didn't die (Num. 26:11); they separated themselves from their father and his supporters in time. Their names were Assir, Elkanah and Abiasaph (Ex. 6:24)- 'Prisoner', 'God will obtain for me' and 'father of gatherers'. We could possibly see reflected here Korah's sense that his family were imprisoned by their inferior [as he saw it] position, but would obtain and gather more for themselves. And yet these sons of Korah separated from their bad background, they rose above the 'chip on a shoulder' mentality, and became the authors of many Psalms. The Psalms of the sons of Korah have 'deliverance from sheol' as a major theme, especially Ps. 49. Not only does this reference resurrection, but is a reflection of their own deliverance from the 'sheol' where their relatives died. They glory that God saved them from this- even though it was their own decision, they are glorifying the way in which even our own decisions for salvation are of Him and He is to be praised for them. And yet they perceive that the death of their families was in fact the death of all men. For all have sinned: "Like sheep dragged to Sheol, death shall graze on them; the upright shall rule them in the morning". And yet the sons of Korah realized that they were in essence no better than their rebellious ancestors; for they too would go to sheol, but be saved from it by the grace of resurrection: "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol".

The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. Their beauty shall decay in Sheol, far from their mansions- Again we have the implication (see on :8) that the tragedy of eternal death need not be so for all. "The upright" will reappear "in the morning". A morning is coming- for the upright. The day of resurrection from the dead to eternal life.

Psa 49:15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me. Selah- David here states clearly that although no man can redeem his brother, nor himself, yet God can. God is therefore presented as a redeemer, an understanding to be articulated through the future work of His Son. "Receive" is the same word translated "carry away" in :17. Secular man carries nothing away from this life, ultimately. But God carries away His people, although they are unconscious; they are in His care, and shall be revived again at the resurrection. In this life, David felt his prayers had been "received" (s.w. Ps. 6:9). His experience of answered prayer was therefore a foretaste of his faith that God would finally receive or accept him (Ps. 49:15; 73:24 s.w.). The redemption in view is that of eternal life at the resurrection . The psalmist, initially David, was sure of this. As discussed on :5, the answer to the riddle is 'Jesus the Messiah'. And David foresaw his lord Jesus always before his face.

Psa 49:16 Don't be afraid when a man is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased- Why does secular man fear when others become rich? Because they fear that actually the materialistic dream will not in fact be true for them. They consider that wealth is a kind of lottery- if another man wins it, then there's less chance we shall win it. Again we have a powerful insight into modern day psychology when it comes to wealth. These ancient words are intensely, bitingly relevant to modern man- in a way that only Divinely inspired words could be.

Psa 49:17 For when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him- It was common in Egypt and Babylon to bury a man's wealth with him. His glory did descend after him- but he could not carry it away anywhere. For death is total unconsciousness.

Psa 49:18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul- and men praise you when you do well for yourself- This again is an observation so true to life. Spend a fortune on an expensive cruise- and you will be praised by your neighbours. The wealthy and successful become the pinups of the poor. The wealthy congratulate themselves on their wealth, and are congratulated by others. But the perceptive minority will see through this, and it is to these people worldwide (see on :1) that the Psalm / song is addressed.

Psa 49:19 he shall go to the generation of his fathers. They shall never see the light- The Psalm is addressing Gentiles (:1), who would not be resurrected as they are not responsible to Divine judgment. Yet they were being offered the opportunity of redemption from death, if they accepted the good news of Israel's God and His covenant.

Psa 49:20 A man who has riches without understanding is like the animals that perish- We could not wish for a clearer statement of conditional immortality and a denial of the immortal soul concept. This sublime truth is repeated twice in this Psalm (:12,20). And remember that is it being used in order to preach good news to Gentiles (:1). Likewise in Is. 40, the good news is that "all flesh is as grass". For those fearing immortal torment after death, this was in a sense good news; but the true good news is that if we accept this truth, then we can turn to God for the redemption intimated in :8. This theological attack on the immortal soul concept was relevant for the exiles, who were tending to accept the Babylonian theology on these issues, and thus lose their focus upon the final day of Israel's Hope as the resurrection of the dead.

PSALMS CHAPTER 50

Psa 50:1 A Psalm by Asaph- Although all of Psalms 1-72 were by David (Ps. 72:20), it seems they were rewritten and edited, under inspiration, for use in later contexts. This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

However there is a clear linkage between Psalms 50 and 51. The language about God not wanting sacrifice is clearly related (Ps. 50:8 = Ps. 51:16,17). The Psalm is a threat of

judgment upon God's people, but clearly it is relevant to David. There is a structural connection between the Psalms:

A 50:1–6 About sacrifice and Zion

B 50:7–15 Deliverance and sacrifice

C 50:16–21 The rebuke

D 50:22–23 The call to repent given judgment to come

E 51:1 The appearance of Nathan to condemn David

D 51:1–2 An appeal to God's grace

C 51:3–9 Confession

B 51:10–17 About sacrifice and deliverance

A 51:18–19 About sacrifice and Zion.

The Mighty One, God, Yahweh, speaks, and calls the earth from sunrise to sunset- The chapter is about judgment; God "speaks and summons the earth" (ESV) from east to west. The call or summons is to judge His people from wherever they are (:4). And they need to prepare for that judgment and act appropriately.

Psa 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth- The implication is that the judgment happens at Zion, the place of God's throne, when His glory will visibly shine forth from it.

Psa 50:3 Our God comes, and does not keep silent. A fire devours before Him, it is very stormy around Him- The Psalmists often complain that God 'keeps silent'. But finally He will "come", with all the fire and wind associated with His previous theophanies.

Psa 50:4 He calls to the heavens above, to the earth, that He may judge His people- The call to judgment is for those who are responsible to God, Israel "His people" (:5). The calling to heavens and earth may refer to how His judgments of His people affect both those in the ruling classes ("heavens") as well as the ordinary people ("earth"). This is exactly the language of Is. 1:2, where the heavens and earth of Judah are called to judgment.

Psa 50:5 Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice- "Saints" doesn't have to imply 'holy ones' in the sense of righteous ones; it is simply the title for God's separated out people, Israel (Ex. 19:6; Ps. 79:2; 85:8). And there is much negative to say about them in :7-15. They are perhaps "saints" only in that God has imputed righteousness to them. The old covenant appears to be the covenant in view, for that was dependent upon Israel's offering of sacrifice for inauguration (Ex. 24:3-8; Heb. 9:18). The new covenant, based upon the promises to Abraham, was a promise of salvation by God's unilateral grace; it didn't require sacrifice by Abraham for it to come into effect. The offering of the Lord's body was to confirm that covenant, to commend it to us; it was not of itself required for the covenant of grace to be made with Abraham.

Psa 50:6 The heavens shall declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge. Selah- There could be no doubt that the judgment of Israel was just / righteousness; the whole heaven and earth declare that God is a just judge.

Psa 50:7 Hear, My people, and I will speak; Israel, and I will testify against you. I am God, your God- This appeal to "My people" appears in contrast to the address to the "wicked" in :16. But the condemnation of "the wicked" in :16-23 is appropriate to those who are within Israel and responsible to God. So it could be that the section from :7-15 is addressed to the weak but potentially spiritual within God's people, His true Israel; whereas :16-23 is to those in Israel who had totally turned away from Yahweh.

Psa 50:8 I don't rebuke you for your sacrifices. Your burnt offerings are continually before Me- Although this is a Psalm of Asaph (:1), it may well have been a rewrite of one of David's psalms. The allusion is to how after his sin with Bathsheba, David perceived that God didn't require bulls and goats, but rather the sacrifice of contrite heart (Ps. 51:16,17). See on :1. David had been open to Nathan's "rebuke" (s.w. Ps. 6:1; 38:1; 141:5), which was not given in God's anger so much as in His appeal for David to accept His grace.

Psa 50:9 I have no need for a bull from your stall, nor male goats from your pens- This connects with the teaching in the following Psalm, that God didn't require sacrifice from David for his sins, but rather a broken and humbled heart (Ps. 51:16,17). It would seem therefore that this Psalm originated with David, although it may have been edited

subsequently. This was comfort for the exiles, who would have been unable to offer sacrifice away from the temple. God didn't want sacrifice, essentially. But rather trust in His ability to forgive and restore, after the pattern of David's experience.

Psa 50:10 For every animal of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills- God apparently is not a fan of 'sacrifice' because humans inevitably think that they are giving God something; it suggests that man owns things which God doesn't. David therefore says that all the sacrifices and gifts for the temple were in fact only giving God what He had already given to the 'donors' (1 Chron. 29:16); thus all apparent generosity to God is only a giving back to Him of what He already knows.

Psa 50:11 I know all the birds of the mountains. The wild animals of the field are Mine- God not only owns the wild birds, but knows them. Wild animals are typically used as representative of Israel's enemies; and these too are known and owned by Him.

Psa 50:12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is Mine, and all that is in it- The fact that "the earth is the Lord's" is used to highlight the wonder of the fact that therefore how much moreso do His people belong to Him, and are cared for by Him with such sensitivity (Ex. 19:5; Dt. 10:14; Ps. 50:12; 89:11). Just as the *eretz* / earth / land promised to Abraham is Yahweh's, so is in fact the entire planet (Ps. 24:1), and His purpose was perceived by David as incorporating the entire planet and not just Israel. The argument here continues that God is not "hungry" for ritualistic obedience, but for His people to be spiritually minded, praising Him and trusting in Him (:14,15). The Father's hunger was reflected in the hunger of His Son for fruit on the fig tree (Mt. 21:18). Even if it were immature fruit, His hunger was such that He would have accepted it. But instead He found only leaves, the appearance of spiritual fruit, but no reality.

Psa 50:13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?- As explained on :12, the Father's hunger is not for flesh and blood, but for spirituality. Such flesh and blood was indeed offered to God but He found it an irritation, for it was not a reflection of spirituality (Is. 65:5; Am. 4:4 and often in the prophets). God was not a pagan deity, placated by flesh and blood.

Psa 50:14 Offer to God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, pay your vows to the Most High- Heartfelt praise was what God hungered for (:12), not ritualistic sacrifice. To this day, He is thrilled by from the heart thanksgiving, and actions of gratitude for what He has done ["pay your vows"].

Psa 50:15 Call on Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honour Me- The intention of David's Psalms were to share his experience of God's grace and salvation with others. It was David who had been answered in his 'days of trouble', and set on high (Ps. 20:1). His desire was fulfilled- for this verse of the Psalm clearly was reapplied to the "day of trouble" of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3) and also to the Babylonian traumas of the exiles (s.w. Jer. 16:19; 30:7; Nah. 1:7; Hab. 3:16). See on Ex. 25:8. God didn't want sacrifice as much as He wanted faith in His promise of deliverance.

Psa 50:16 But to the wicked God says, What right do you have to declare My statutes and to have taken My covenant on your lips- The appeal to "My people" in :7-15 appears in contrast to this address to the "wicked" in :16. But the condemnation of "the wicked" in :16-23 is appropriate to those who are within Israel and responsible to God, having taken His covenant onto their lips. So it could be that the section from :7-15 is addressed to the weak but potentially spiritual within God's people, His true Israel; whereas :16-23 is to those in Israel who had totally turned away from Yahweh. The division amongst God's people is therefore between the hypocrites, and those who fail to be ritually obedient but trust in God's mercy and power to save.

Psa 50:17 since you hate instruction- Solomon later accuses any who refuse his Proverbs of doing just this, hating instruction, which here in Ps. 50:17 means 'You are condemned' (s.w. Prov. 5:12; 12:1; 15:10).

And throw My words behind you?- Nobody would have said they did that to God's words. But here we have an example of where God interprets human attitudes for what they are in practice. But we must sound a caveat- *we* can too quickly say that 'Because you said A, therefore, that means B'. And often we are wrong. But God has the right and ability to judge in this way.

Psa 50:18 When you saw a thief, you consented with him, and have participated with adulterers- This is not to teach guilt by association; for the Lord ate with sinners in order to bring them to Himself. But 'consenting with' a thief is paralleled with committing the same sin as adulterers. The idea is that by mixing with such company, what begins with consenting to their behaviour leads men to actually commit the sins of those they consort and consent with. "Consent" is the word for approval, delighting in, agreement with (s.w. Ps. 49:13). We may begin by vicariously approving the behaviour of sinners and mixing with them, and this will lead us into committing their sins. Perhaps the parallel between theft and adultery is because adultery is a form of theft.

Psa 50:19 You give your mouth to evil, your tongue frames deceit- This is an example of how the final judgment will involve God giving people flashbacks from their lives (see on :21). But the present tense is used, because they were impenitent, and therefore in essence continue in those positions right up to judgment day.

Psa 50:20 You sit and speak against your brother, you slander your own mother's son- This example of a flashback at the day of judgment (see on :21) involves the virtual photograph of a man sitting and speaking slander against his brother. The body language and circumstance is recorded. On Ps. 51:5 I suggest that this may in fact be a rebuke of David having slandered his own brother.

Psa 50:21 You have done these things, and I kept silent. You thought that I was just like you. I will rebuke you, and accuse you in front of your eyes- I suggested on :1 and Ps. 51:5 that Psalm 50 is judgment directed at David. This verse would therefore in that context speak to God's apparent silence after David's sin, and then rebuking and accusing him through Nathan.

In a more general sense, the day of judgment will be a face to face meeting between God and man, with flashbacks of human life provided to those who are to be condemned. We tend to see ourselves as little sinners, just a fraction over the line, we come to the end of the day with no real sense of having offended God, no sense of how deeply sin and indifference hurts Him. Perhaps we see God as altogether too human, like us not very shocked at habitual sin, comfortably numb to the fact that sinful thoughts really are as bad as the action. God's words to Israel are so relevant to us, living in a world where sin means nothing, and where God never openly intervenes in judgment. And it can be that we also lack the faith, or perhaps the concentration and reflection, to meditate on the actual reality of sin forgiven that we have experienced in Christ. Our temptation is to think that God sees things as we see them, to think that God is merely an ideal human being. But the day of judgment will reveal otherwise (Ps. 50:21). He is God, not man. It is not for us to set the terms. As the Lord taught in His parable of the approaching army, it's either total, abject surrender before the King of Heaven, accepting *whatever* terms He asks, or a foolhardy attempt to meet Him in head on confrontation (Lk. 14:31). Those who challenge the harder side of God are often called 'brave'; but their 'bravery' is foolhardy rebellion against the sovereign Almighty.

Psa 50:22 Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you into pieces, and there be none to deliver- The deliverer was God (:15). But He would not do this if they forgot

Him. The threat of tearing to pieces uses a term especially relevant to lions (Ps. 17:12; 22:13), a symbol of Judah's later enemies (Jer. 5:6 s.w.), who would be used by God to inflict such tearing into pieces (Hos. 5:14; 6:1 s.w.).

Psa 50:23 Whoever offers the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifies Me, and prepares his way so that I will show God's salvation to him- God is not practicing universal salvation. His salvation, Yehoshua, Jesus, is to those who prepare their way to desire it. Heartfelt praise was what God hungered for (:12), not ritualistic sacrifice. To this day, He is thrilled by from the heart thanksgiving, and actions of gratitude for what He has done ["pay your vows", :14].

PSALMS CHAPTER 51

Psa 51:1 For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David, when Nathan the prophet came to him, after he had gone in to Bathsheba- David's repentance in 2 Samuel 12 appears very short and sweet, with forgiveness immediately granted as if it were a rubber stamp. But the issues were serious- the sin of presumption [despising Yahweh's word], murder and adultery. The Psalms give a deeper insight into David's depth of repentance. The two perspectives are helpful because repentance at times can involve overthinking and over analysis, to the point we miss the simple truth of God's forgiveness. The deal is that simple, in one sense. But we have no entitlement to His grace, and it does require the lengthy matters of the heart we have in the penitential Psalms.

It is amazing how sudden David's proper repentance seems to have come. There is no reason to be unduly afraid of a sudden, emotional confession of sin, prompted by a certain circumstance, as David's was by Nathan's parable. Psalm 51 may well have been prayed but moments after Nathan finished his parable. And Psalm 32, describing the joy of David's repentance, would have followed soon after. The Psalms are several times presented in pairs which are related to each other; and Ps. 50 and 51 are certainly connected.

The language about God not wanting sacrifice is clearly related (Ps. 50:8 = Ps. 51:16,17). The Psalm is a threat of judgment upon God's people, but clearly it is relevant to David. There is a structural connection between the Psalms:

A 50:1–6 About sacrifice and Zion

B 50:7–15 Deliverance and sacrifice

C 50:16–21 The rebuke

D 50:22–23 The call to repent given judgment to come

E 51:1 The appearance of Nathan to condemn David

D 51:1–2 An appeal to God's grace

C 51:3–9 Confession

B 51:10–17 About sacrifice and deliverance

A 51:18–19 About sacrifice and Zion.

Have mercy on me, God, according to Your grace. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions- Mercies and truth are often references to the promises to Abraham- to bless his seed with forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:25,26). Like us, in crises we are thrown back upon the basics of our faith. The promises to Abraham which are the basis of the new covenant. It is noteworthy that Peter appeals to Israel to repent and be converted "that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3:19)- quoting the words of Ps. 51:1, where the sin of David with Bathsheba is 'blotted out' after his repentance and conversion. Each sinner who repents and is baptized and leads the life of ongoing conversion is therefore living out the pattern of David's repentance. "Have mercy on me, O God..." is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David's prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

David's experience of God's grace stayed with him when he faced up to the results of his errors in the future, too. From experience, he can ask to fall into the Lord's hand rather than man's, because "his *mercies* are *great*" (2 Sam. 24:14)- using the same two Hebrew words he had used when Nathan came to him here in Ps. 51:1 AV: "Have mercy upon me... according unto the *multitude* [Heb. 'greatness'] of thy *tender mercies*". And so the experience of God's gracious mercy over one sin fortifies us to believe in His grace when, sadly, we fall again; although, in passing, I think that in 2 Sam. 24, David himself didn't really do so much wrong. Yet he perceived himself to have sinned, so the point is still established.

We find the Psalms so often expressing David's intense anger- even to the extent of contradicting his other more gracious statements about people, and also being at variance with his own beggings for mercy and grace at the time of his sin with Bathsheba. Consider "Hold them guilty, O God; Let them fall by their own counsels; Thrust them out in the multitude of their transgressions; For they have rebelled against thee" (Ps. 5:10). Yet David has to use these very words about himself in Ps. 51:1 when he

pleads with God to be merciful to *him*. In the bigger picture, God used David's sin with Bathsheba to try to correct David's judgmentalism against others. David's 'imprecatory Psalms', in which he asks for bloodcurdling judgments upon his enemies, are hard to justify in the light of the Lord's teachings. They appear to be a continuation of the moments of bitterness, anger and brutality which we saw in the above mentioned historical examples.

"Mercy" or grace is the same word David used in 2 Sam. 12:22 ["who knows if God will be gracious to me"], and confirms our suggestion there that David's begging for grace about his sick child was really praying for grace for himself. The child's death was understood by him as his salvation through sacrificial atonement. Which is why he doesn't mourn the child's death but is so upbeat and positive afterwards.

Blotting out sin is clearly alluded to in the encouragement to the exiles that "I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers them no more" (Is. 43:25). Time and again we find David's experience presented as that of all God's children.

Psa 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, cleanse me from my sin- David perhaps alludes to how Bathsheba had washed herself after sex with him, at his home, before she returned to her house. This in New Testament terms would equate with the desire to be washed and regenerated in baptism. "The washing of regeneration" (Tit. 3:5) may allude here. The Mosaic rituals required sinners or unclean persons to wash *themselves,* and to cleanse *themselves* of uncleanness through performing rituals; but David moves closer to the understanding of grace by realizing that he has to ask *God* to wash *him*. For there was no help for him in any of the Mosaic rituals, given the nature of his sins. This need for washing from sin is relevant to Judah in their later sinfulness (s.w. Jer. 4:14). Israel were to be encouraged by David's experience that they could receive "plenteous" redemption (Ps. 130:7; s.w. "wash me *thoroughly* from my iniquity" in Ps. 51:2), and be "abundantly pardoned" (s.w. Is. 55:7). There is a totality and abundance in God's forgiveness- a quality we find hard to understand seeing we never experienced this quality of forgiveness when men forgave us.

David asks God to wash him from his sins (Ps. 51:2). The Hebrew means literally to tread out or down, alluding to how a fuller trod clothes to remove the dirt or old stain; he needed more than mere rinsing, he perceived that his sin was deeply ingrained. This is the sense of how the word is used in Mic. 7:19: "He will tread our iniquities under foot; and you will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea". The Lord's clothing is presented as whiter than any human fuller can whiten; this is the extent of our forgiveness and the total nature of the righteousness imputed to us. Judah of Micah's time were invited to experience the same cleansing as David had. The washing, cleansing and blotting out (:1) speak of the removal of a stain in the way that only God

can do. The stain of David's sin wasn't removed from him in a social sense- the consequences were ever before him and God's judgment of him involves exactly that. So the removal of the stain was achieved by God only in David's conscience and inner parts of his heart. This may account for his subsequent proclamation of himself [in his later Psalms] as innocent and his desire to see judgment upon other sinners. On the other hand, these statements may well reflect a diminution in his sense of sin and repentance as time went on. As ever with David, we are left to ponder his apparently divided heart.

Psa 51:3 For I acknowledge my transgressions- This very phrase was used by David in insisting that he did *not* acknowledge any transgression in him whilst in exile from Saul (1 Sam. 24:11). What he said and felt then may have been relatively true, compared to the unspirituality of Saul and the false accusations against him. But perhaps there was an element of the overly self righteous in his words, and the sin with Bathsheba made him realize this. It is the same phrase which is as it were put in the mouth of the repentant exiles in Is. 59:12; they were intended to follow David's path of repentance.

My sin is constantly before me- David's confession of sin in Ps. 51:3,4 is packed with Job allusions; as if Job's physical trials brought about the same effect as David's full recognition of his sin. The extent of his sorrow is heavily stressed: "My sorrow is continually before me... my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 38:17; 51:3 AV). How much sorrow is there for our sins? Have the years mellowed our terror at sin? Things which once appalled us can so easily become sins of habit, the real sorrow we once experienced on committing them can be watered down to just a vague tickle of conscience. The significance of David's sin and repentance being held up as an example of our own should be a good antidote against such problems. The chilling thing is, despite all this awareness of his sin during the nine month period, when he was told the parable by Nathan- he just didn't fully see it. Every part of the story had such relevant application, but David was blinded to it. He knew he had sinned, but this was only on a surface level. "Thou art the man" was still news to him. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments" (Ps. 119:176) was likely rewritten by David with his mind on his follies relating to Bathsheba. The point, is in the 'lost' state, he still remembered the commandments. He didn't turn his back on God; and neither do we, in our semi-spiritual unspirituality. We can likewise be blinded to true, personal understanding of God's message because of our refusal to *truly* repent. Corinth and the Hebrews could not understand the strong meat of the word because they were divided; their divisiveness hindered their understanding. Husbands and wives find their prayers hindered unless they are themselves united.

I have noted on :1 and :5 that Ps. 51 is presented as David's response to the message of general judgment in Ps. 50. The connection here is to Ps. 50:8, where God says that He doesn't ask for sacrifices to be "constantly before Me" (s.w.). David realizes that. What God wants is for us to have constantly before us a realization of His grace and our position as sinners before Him.

Psa 51:4 Against You, and You only, have I sinned- Perhaps David uses the idea of "only" in the sense of "You above all", for he had sinned against Bathsheba, Uriah and other related parties. Or more negatively, we could wonder whether again he is limiting his recognition of sin, by reasoning that he had not sinned against Uriah since he was dead, nor against Bathsheba in that David [wrongly?] counted her as equally culpable.

And done that which is evil in Your sight; that You may be proved right when You speak, and justified when You judge- He recognized that God works through our sinfulness- he is effectively saying 'I sinned so that You might be justified…'. These words are quoted in Rom. 3:4,5 in the context of Paul's exultation that "*our* unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God"- in just the same way as David's did! Because God displays His righteousness every time He justifies a repentant sinner, He is in a sense making Himself yet more righteous. We must see things from God's perspective, from the standpoint of giving glory to God's righteous attributes. If we do this, then we can see through the ugliness of sin, and come to terms with our transgressions the more effectively. And Paul quotes David's sin with Bathsheba as our supreme example in this. We along with all the righteous ought to “shout for joy” that David really was forgiven (Ps. 32:11)- for there is such hope for us now. David is our example. And yet the intensity of David’s repentance must be ours. He hung his head as one in whose mouth there were no more arguments, hoping only in the Lord’s grace (Ps. 38:14 RVmg.). Notice too how Ps. 51:1 “Have mercy on me, O God…” is quoted by the publican in Lk. 18:13. He felt that David’s prayer and situation was to be his. And he is held up as the example for each of us.

David was very conscious that his sin had been "in Your (God's) sight" (Ps. 51:4). He thought he had sinned secretly, even though the record describes how his servants and messengers knew what was going on. Now he recognizes the utter folly of thinking that any sin can be kept secret from God. We live in His sight, mentally and physically. The psalms of repentance have several examples of him talking like this. It may be to this Davidic theme that the parable of the prodigal son (i.e. each of us) refers: "I have sinned… in Your sight" (Lk. 15:18,21). It is significant that our Lord's supreme parable of repentance refers back to that of David. It has been observed that there are many connections between the Psalms related to the Bathsheba incident, and those which are especially prophetic of Christ's crucifixion. David's intense suffering on account of sin was therefore prophetic of our Lord's mental and physical suffering for the same

reason. He there felt as a condemned sinner, whilst personally spotless, because of the depth of His identification with sinful man. It is truly breathtaking to discern how God works through our sins, to the extent that through the struggle for repentance which they engender, they can associate us with the sufferings of His sinless Son.

In Rom. 3:4, Paul speaks of how God will "overcome when You are brought to judgment [Gk.]". "Overcome" is the legal word for winning a case in court. It is our doubts as to the extent of God's grace, that He abides faithful even throughout our unfaithfulness, which are effectively our bringing God to court, to judgment. Paul is here quoting Ps. 51:4, which were David's words of reflection upon his sin unto death, and God's forgiveness of him. He reflected that he had sinned *so that* God might be justified when He is brought to judgment by us. Again we are up against an amazing grace. God uses our sin, our doubt of His forgiveness, in order to declare Himself yet more righteous when He is put in the dock to answer against our false charges: 'Is He really able to forgive me *that*? Will He really not hold *this* eternally against me? Will I *really* be saved, sinner that I am? Can God really accept *me* after what I have done, all I have failed to do as I should, all I have not been…?'. These are the kinds of questions with which we accuse God. Effectively the case against God's grace is that He will *not* actually forgive, justify and save weak sinners. And He gloriously wins the case against us. And He even uses our sin, as He used David's (who becomes a figure of us all), in order to prove this to us and to the world. And so, in a matchless logical *tour de force*, Paul triumphs in Rom. 3:5: "Our unrighteousness commends the righteousness of God". The immediate context of the quotation in Romans 3 is Paul's argument that God has not forgotten His people nor been unjust to them. He is willing to show the same amazing grace to them as He showed David. Any denial of our sin is to condemn God, to bring Him to judgment. This was Job's mistake: "Will you altogether annul my righteousness, condemn Me, that you may be righteous?". And this is the answer to all who wallow in spiritual depression and complaint that God is unreasonable, too harsh and unreasonably distant from them. David sinned "so that" God might be justified and glorified. David didn't surely intend this to be the outcome as he stood on the roof gaping at Bathsheba. But in God's bigger purpose, He used that sin as He does all human failure to His final glorification. And we can only marvel at the triumph of His grace in this.

David's confession that he had sinned against God uses the very language of faithful Joseph who refused ongoing sexual temptation with these words (Gen. 39:9). Could this not imply that Bathsheba wife of Uriah was seen by David as similar to Potiphar's wife? Perhaps she was; or perhaps we are to see here another example of David seeking to mitigate his sin. There is no hint in the psalms of David's regret for having sinned against an innocent Bathsheba. *Her* child had to die; the retribution did not just come upon David. The incident is referred to as "the matter of *Uriah*" (1 Kings 15:5); her name does not figure in those sinned against. "She came in unto him, and he lay with her" (2 Sam. 11:4) is an odd way of putting it; it reverses the usual Biblical reference to

intercourse as a man coming in to the woman. The reason for this inversion seems to be to balance the blame. And there seems an evident similarity between the way the sin occurred within the city, and the way Dt. 22:24 says that in cases of adultery both parties were to be stoned if the sin occurred within a city and the woman didn't cry out. Bathsheba doesn't seem to have cried out- and so she bears equal blame, it would seem. This makes Bathsheba more of a sinner than a saint. This said, Nathan's parable describes David as killing the sweet lamb (Bathsheba); if she was partly guilty for the actual act, this may suggest a killing of her spirituality by David, at least temporarily.

"Justified", that God is right and man is wrong, is the central point of the argument, and is the crux of repentance:

A :1 blot out

B :2a wash

C :2b cleanse

D :3 I know

E :4a I sinned

F :4b you are justified

E :5 I... a sinner

D :6 teach me

C :7a clean

B :7b wash

A :9 blot out.

However, we have to ask how these words "Against You alone have I sinned" were accepted by those who first heard them- by the families of Uriah, of Bathsheba, of the other slain soldiers. Indeed, David had sinned against all his soldiers and against all Israel. He never apologizes to them; there is no public confession nor apology from David. That seems significant. We rather expect it, but never hear it. In today's world, this would be absolutely required by all sides. Again we have a sneaking suspicion that whilst David is indeed spiritually minded, there is always some possible element of ignorance of the real dimensions of his sin, a struggle to accept consequences for actions. We think of how he strangely doesn't mourn the death of his child by Bathsheba and instead is eager to have sex with her and produce a replacement child. And of his enigmatic words in :7 "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me". Theologically, this isn't true. It's no sin to be a fetus. He may wrongly imply that this is the case, or at best he is blaming his sin upon having been born into a sinful situation, as he was the result of his mother having an extra-marital affair.

However we read it, we again have a suspicion that David is on one hand now recognizing how sin permeates everything; but on the other, he is seeking to justify his sin by placing it within the wider context of all the sin going on in humanity and in his own family historically. Whatever, this militates against personal confession of failure and responsibility for it.

But the logic here still leads to a slight suspicion that David is just slightly justifying his son. For he is saying that he sinned so that God might be justified and glorified. Indeed God works through human sin, but still there remains the possibility that David is seeking at least some slender percentage of justifying himself through saying this. When put together with all the other such slight possibilities in other verses in this Psalm, we are left with the conclusion that there was a small element of self justification in David's approach to his sin. And it seems this grew over the years until he complains bitterly at the unfair consequences of his sin and presents himself as an innocent man. Although it is also possible that he has these attitudes because he truly believes that God had eradicated his sin. Such internal conflicts are known to us all.

Psa 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me- It could be that David was incorrect in this. His sin made him perhaps blame it upon his being conceived out of wedlock; which would explain the tension between him and his much older brothers. But our biological background is no excuse for sin. Or perhaps David was blaming his sin upon some false idea that human conception, birth and being is of itself sinful. But this isn't the true picture of human nature. For whatever we posit about human nature, we are saying about the Lord Jesus, who fully shared our nature and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Clearly being human, having human nature, doesn't of itself alienate God from man. Nor are we inevitable sinners. So it seems to me that here David is here excusing his sin by wrongly blaming it upon such other factors. Again we get the sense so often that David's repentance was not as thorough going as it might have been.

But there is another, somewhat complicated, explanation of these strange words. I noted on :1 that Psalms 50 and 51 are related. By considering this in more detail, we see that this verse is the match to Ps. 50:20:

A 50:2, 5: "Out of ZION… a covenant with me by SACRIFICE"

B 50:8 "your BURNT OFFERINGS are continually before Me"

C 50:9 "I will not accept a bull from your house"

D 50:15 "call on me… I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me"

E 50:18–20 recitation of Decalogue

F 50:20 "You slander your own MOTHER'S child"

G 50:22 call to repentance: you who forget GOD

H 51:1 Nathan's confrontation of David

Ga 51:1 prayer of repentance:

Fa 51:5 "a sinner when my MOTHER conceived me"

Ea 51:6 "teach me wisdom"

Da 51:14 "deliver me from bloodshed… and my tongue will sing aloud"

Ca 51:16 "You have no delight in sacrifice"

Ba 51:16 "if I were to give a BURNT OFFERING"

Aa 51:18, 19 Do good to ZION… then You will delight in right SACRIFICE"

David had been accused of slandering his own mother's son- namely himself and perhaps his brother. Here in Ps. 51:5 he admits that what he has said; he has accused his mother of conceiving in sin, out of wedlock. Perhaps David's tensions with his brothers had led to him accusing one of them of being illegitimate.

"Brought forth" is AV "shapen". "Shapen" is from a Hebrew word to twist around, and can have the sense of moral perversion. David appears to be blaming his sins on being born twisted, a sinner even in the womb. But this is not the case, for the Lord was likewise conceived and didn't sin and was holy and harmless. So it is hard not to think that David isn't trying to justify himself by blaming his nature and conception. On the other hand, contrition over a particular sin quite rightly makes us perceived how very sinful we are in so many other ways. No doubt David felt like that, but it seems he goes a tad too far in blaming his sins upon his human condition.

Psalm 119 gives us the impression that David loved God's commandments, but lamented he had not followed them in his life- indeed he fears some kind of shame if his sins catch up with him. His fear of shame is often repeated (:6,22,31,39,46,51,80,116,141); this could refer to some public shame for an openly revealed sin. Or it could reference his sense of shame that "in sin did my mother conceive me" and his sense of shame that he was a poor man now in the opulence of court life. Possibly his illegitimate background had been hushed up, although it was known by "the one who taunts me… the arrogant mock me… utterly derided me" (:42,51); but when his sin with Bathsheba is revealed, he openly states for all the world to know that his mother conceived him "in sin". Yet despite this potential shame, David says he will cling to God's word of promise that he would be king. If his mother were a Moabite or non-Israelite, accounting for his red hair ["ruddy of countenance"], he may have assumed that he as an illegitimate Gentile could never be king of Israel- if that were known about. We recall how Jephthah and Abimelech were the sons of prostitutes and how this militated against their leadership (Jud. 8:29-31; 11:1,2). Jesse was asked

to parade his sons before Samuel in order for a king to be chosen. None of them are chosen; but when asked if he has any other sons, Jesse answers rather awkwardly and obliquely that there is David who is minding the sheep. That sounds an excuse as the family did have a "keeper" of the sheep apart from David (1 Sam. 17:20). This would be appropriate if David were in fact illegitimate. He was therefore "a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children" (Ps. 69:8). "Stranger" is Hebrew *muzar* which is related to *mamzer* or bastard / illegitimate. All this rejection and lack of attention set David up for what was likely some form of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Dt. 23:2-4 was clear that a Moabite could not enter the congregation of Israel until the 10th generation. And David was descended from Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:13-17). And so his faith in God's word of promise, that he would really be king, is in tension with his fear that he would be shamed and never accepted as Israel's king- seeing he was illegitimate, and not fully Hebrew. In addition to this Dt. 23:2 likewise says that an illegitimate man couldn't enter for ten generations: "One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of Yahweh".

*Psa 51:6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts-"*Desire" can be translated simply as 'love'. God loves truth in the inward parts- not a list of theological propositions called "the truth", but the final truth is that we deeply confess our sins in our innermost heart, and are recreated there by God's Spirit. This should be our greatest desire; for it is God's greatest hope and desire for us. "Desire" is the word used by David at the end of his life of how God desired or delighted in him (2 Sam. 22:20 "He delivered me, because He delighted in / desired me"). Perhaps this desire or delight was because of the "truth" in David's heart in recognizing his sins and accepting God's grace. God did not "desire" sacrifice as much as this truth (s.w. Ps. 40:6; 51:16).

Truth is something God wants to find in us, it is what we give to God, not answer of intellectual truths He gives to us. To know the depth of our son and also of our salvation, to see us as God sees us- this is the final Truth. The truth to live by. "I acknowledge..." in :3 in Hebrew puts the stress upon the "I". David now perceives that God indeed saw all aspects of his sin. And now he too sees it. He sees himself as God does, and this is the "truth" which God desires.

Through his experience, David came to know what he calls 'truth in the inward parts': that the required sacrifice was a desperately broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17). Repentance is really about recognizing this truth within us; this, and not a set of theologically pure propositions, is the ultimate "truth". According to Paul's use of the Bathsheba incident, David's learning curve *must* be ours. There are other links which show that David's sin, desperation and restoration are typical of the experience of all God's true people (e.g. Ps. 51:7 = Is. 1:18).

His very innermost being would then be able to learn more deeply of God's real wisdom. There is a connection between David knowing God in his "hidden part", and Ps. 32:7: "You are my hiding place", or 'hidden part'. This shows that David felt that after his repentance, God Himself would live in David's 'hidden part', that part of his mind and thinking which no one else knows. Through knowing God, God would come and live in that part which truly knew God. The tabernacling of God in our 'hidden part' also requires us to come to know Him, as David did.

You teach me wisdom in the innermost place- Here again we see the activity of God's Spirit on the very innermost parts of the human psyche, the "heart". The "innermost place" is "the secret heart"; the Hebrew *battuhot* is related to the Egyptian word Thoth, used for the Egyptian god of the secret heart. David had sinned "secretly", but he now realized that the use of messengers meant that actually all Jerusalem knew what he had done; and likewise God knew what he had done, it was all done "in Your sight". He now realizes that the secret place of his inner heart where he had hidden the sin was what needed reformation. He asks God to enter it and teach him there, and create there a pure heart. God can create in us a new heart, even though the mind of the flesh is still present with us (Rom. 7). He can place His way and wisdom in that new heart; Job 38:36 speaks of God putting wisdom in the inward parts, and giving understanding to the heart.

Psa 51:7 Purify me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow- "Purge" is literally de-sin, to 'unsin'. The Hebrew word is based around the standard word for sin, *chata*. This de-sinning is a strange idea for us, because the forgiveness we experience in human relationships cannot ultimately take away our sin, or as Paul would put it, cleanse the conscience. This de-sinning is shown by God's "play on" to David and acceptance of his marriage to Bathsheba, and choosing the blood line of His Son through her children. John appears to apply these words to every man: "The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "All sin" doesn't just mean all committed sins, but sin in all its forms. Verses 5-9 seem to use every possible Hebrew word for sin, reflected in the translations iniquity, sin and transgression. David perceives sin in all its forms and dimensions. Or as Paul would put it, "the exceeding sinfulness of sin" which the Lord dealt with in His death- atonement for sin in all its forms, aspects and dimensions. David's appeal for God's total deep pardon and obliteration of his sins contrasts with the surrounding view of sin at his time. Sin was dealt with by appeasing a deity; the deity was never asked to obliterate the sin but rather to just overlook it and keep showing favour and material blessing to the offender. But the one true God has that unique ability. Likewise today, no amount of psychotherapy can obliterate sin, no amount of rationalization or self-understanding. Only God's work through the blood of His Son.

It should be noted that David / Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7 = Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7 = Is. 1:18 "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow"; Ps. 65:2 = Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed the Lord Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

"Purge *me*... and I shall be clean... create in me a clean heart" (Ps. 51:7,10) shows that David understood the 'me' which needed cleansing as being his own mind. This was clearly a result of the great level of self-examination which brought forth his real repentance. "Against thee, thee *only* have I sinned" (Ps. 51:4) was a conclusion wrung out of so much reflection about what he had done; as is his recognition that his "sin" had involved many "transgressions" (Ps. 51:3).

Hyssop was used in the rituals for cleansing leprosy, and it is possible that David was struck with something like this disease after his sin with Bathsheba. This would explain why all his family and friends kept distant from him at that time of illness.

"Whiter than snow" suggests a forgiveness that no human agency can achieve. It is the figure of how the Lord's clothes were whiter than any fuller could whiten them. We can only achieve that status by being baptized into Him and having His clothing, His righteousness imputed to us.

Psa 51:8 Let me hear joy and gladness- It is possible to intensely believe in the mercy of God, His ability to save, and yet not have the real faith- which is to believe that this mercy and salvation really can still apply to us personally. Thus he prays "Let me hear joy and gladness". His introspective world of sin and self-hate found joy a paradigm impossible to relate to; as with mercy and salvation, he knew spiritual joy existed, but seemed unable to make this apply to him personally.

So that the bones which You have broken may rejoice- Here we see the contrast with the Lord Jesus, who identified with David's feelings after the sin with Bathsheba, but whose bones were not broken.

Psa 51:9 Hide Your face from my sins- In :4, David recognized that he had sinned in God's sight, before His face. The paradox is that once we recognize that, we can ask God not to look at our sins. Paul can speak in Rom. 7 as if he is two different people; “I myself serve the law of God”, but “my flesh” serves sin. Likewise David asked God not to

hide His face from him, David *personally*, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's *sins* (Ps. 51:9). And one wonders whether the way the records of the Lord's temptations are written implies some similar recognition by the Spirit of the two 'men' within the Lord.

David's requests to have his sin totally obliterated are of course commendable. His faith in God's mercy is outstanding. But again we wonder whether he doesn't also have in mind that if this request is granted, then the threatened consequences for his sins would thereby be abrogated. And his later Psalms, calling down judgment upon violent men who take others' lives, presenting himself as innocent, all rather suggest he struggled with taking any consequence for his behaviour.

And blot out all of my iniquities- We note with concern that in a Psalm written apparently after this time concerning the time of Absalom's rebellion, David asks that the sins of his enemies *not* be blotted out (Ps. 109:14). Again we wonder as to whether David maintained an awareness of the enormity of God's grace to him. In the context of the exiles, they were comforted that God would likewise blot out their iniquities- if they repented as David did (s.w. Is. 43:25; 44:22).

Psa 51:10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me- Here we see clearly enough that God can work directly on the human heart or spirit, through the work of His Holy Spirit (:11,12). His Spirit works upon the human spirit. And the same word for "create" is used of the natural creation; here we have the doctrine of a new creation in the hearts of people, of the kind repeatedly offered to the exiles in later Isaiah- if they followed David's path of repentance. This direct work of God on the heart is likely what is in view when God offers to circumcise the heart of His people (Dt. 30:2,6,10) if they abide in the covenant. For in that figure we again have the picture of God working delicately and intricately on the most personal and sensitive parts of man. Here we have the OT equivalent of the "new creation", a new and clean heart created. Not the old heart slightly adapted and improved, but the creation of a new heart / mind. But this is the promise of the new covenant in Ez. 36:26,27. The new covenant was therefore based upon what was done to David after his repentance. And it was initially offered to the exiles who also had no chance to offer sacrifices; and so much of the language in Ps. 51 is applied to the exiles. But the offer was if they would accept that David's sin was theirs. And that is how things are today. The new heart isn't created in so many because they refuse to accept the desperation of their position before God. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit after the Lord's death is therefore an intensified form of what was already possible even for Old Testament man. Tit. 3:5 surely has this passage and the whole

David and Bathsheba affair in view: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done [cp. "sacrifice and offering You do not desire"] but by His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit". This new heart is clean, has the spirit of freedom / willingness, "where the spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free" as Paul puts it; it is renewed, fresh, experiencing newness of life, rejoices in the certainty of salvation, assured that all sin has been washed and all stains removed for ever, aware that God sees all that is in it. But that heart is also convicted of sin and described as broken and contrite. This is the heart we are to have, what Paul calls "the spirit", the mind of the spirit, Christ in you the hope of glory. The mind of the flesh is still with us and wars with it. But this is the real me. Most people live life in survival mode, in crisis management mode living day by day, worrying about their work, financial issues, conflict with children, parents, relationships, partners; worried they aren't putting money aside for retirement, stress in the workplace, at home, health issues. As believers we aren't exempt from any of these things. But this is all life in the flesh, and yet parallel to that we have the life in the Spirit. And that heart, created in us by the Spirit, must be our real heart of hearts, inward parts identity.

David felt that his youth was renewed like the eagle's in his repeated experience of God's grace (Ps. 103:5), that his soul was restored (Ps. 23:5), and that a right spirit could be renewed by God within him (Ps. 51:10). This is the equivalent of the "newness of life" which is promised to us through acceptance of God's Spirit. As God doesn't faint or weary, so somehow those who identify their lives with His will also keep on keeping on- even now (Is. 40:31 cp. 29).

David had earlier understood that for the humble and righteous, God can "prepare their heart" (Ps. 10:17). This is evidence enough that God works directly upon the human heart and psychology, which He does today through the work of His Spirit upon the human spirit. For it is men who must prepare their heart in prayer and relationship toward God (s.w. 2 Chron. 12:14; Job 11:13; Ps. 7:9). But God can also do this for the humble. Hence David later asks God to create in him a 'prepared' heart (s.w. Ps. 51:10). And God heard; for the same phrase is used of how God 'prepared' or (AV) "fixed" his heart (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7). In allusion to this, Solomon was to later reflect that God can direct or 'prepare' (s.w.) the heart of man, even if he is thinking to direct his steps elsewhere (Prov. 16:9).

Psa 51:11 Don't throw me out from Your presence, and don't take Your spirit of holiness from me- The implication seems to be that whilst we are in God's presence, in covenant relationship with Him, then His Holy Spirit is working in our lives and hearts (:10). This is the litmus test as to whether we are in fellowship with God- rather than acceptance of any particular set of theological propositions. The request for restoration of the Spirit in :12 could suggest that God had withdrawn His Holy Spirit from David in the time

between the sin with Bathsheba and his repentance; but see on :12. If we go with AV "Holy Spirit" we may have a reference to an Angel, for the term is used in Is. 63 of the Angel that was with Israel in the desert. And David was aware of how the Angel of Yahweh encamped around him. But the context here is of matters of the deepest heart, and God's work upon the human heart to cleanse it and renew it (:10). David perceived the working of the Holy Spirit as it works today, in the hidden places of the human heart, and he dearly wants this work and presence to continue. The parallel between presence and Spirit is found again in the teaching about the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit. It is repeated in Ps. 139:7: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?”.

The work of the Holy Spirit here in Ps. 51 is in line with how the New Testament speaks. This gift of a holy spirit has been made yet more powerful through the Lord's death, whereby the Spirit is poured out into human hearts far more abundantly. But here we see what it looks like- God's presence, joy of salvation, a free or willing to give heart. David's fear he may lose this surely alludes to his experience when first anointed [a symbol of receiving the Spirit] in 1 Sam. 16:13. He fears he will be treated like Saul, and have this gift of the Spirit's abiding presence withdrawn from him.

Psa 51:12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, uphold me with a willing spirit-

The new heart, filled with the Holy Spirit, is convicted of sin and yet is certain of salvation, and rejoices in this. This is the "truth" God desires in the inward parts, the new heart. The heart of the flesh is still with us, with all its doubts and fears. But the new heart, "the spirit", is certain of salvation. This explains why believers still have doubts within them of salvation- but that is the old man, the flesh. The words for "joy" and "salvation" are found in Zeph. 3:17, where it is God who rejoices over saving us ["He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy"]. In the new heart, we see ourselves as God sees us- sinners, with no sin hidden from His seeing, and yet saved. His joy in our salvation is to be ours.

Paul teaches that where the spirit of the Lord is, there the heart is free. And he surely had these words in mind, again applying David's experience to us all. Ps. 51:11,12 speaks of God's "free spirit" [AV] [or 'willing spirit' NEV], paralleling it with God's Spirit, His "presence", the "joy of thy salvation". All those terms are parallel. God wills us to be spiritual, with His "willing spirit". The spirit of God is His presence, His salvation, joy, freedom. The Hebrew translated "free" really means 'generous'- the generosity of God's Spirit / mind / ways is shown in His forgiveness and saving of us. If God's spirit is His character, then, it is free, joyous, generous etc. Human beings can also have a "free heart" - the same Hebrew word appears translated like this in 2 Chron. 29:31 etc.- i.e. a spirit of generosity. When we have this, we are reflecting the "free spirit" / attitude of God. Whenever we are generous, His Spirit, with all its generosity, dwells in us and

becomes our spirit. It is in this sense that I see a window into understanding the gift of God's spirit into the heart / mind / attitude of the believer. If God's spirit is free / generous, then so is ours to be; if His Spirit is joyous, just, true etc., then so is ours to be. In this sense we receive of His Spirit by reflecting His free and generous mind to others. We have here the picture of what it is to live in the Spirit, to receive God's Holy Spirit. TEV puts it: “Give me again the joy that comes from your salvation, and make my spirit obedient”. The gift of the Holy Spirit helps our spirit to be obedient. We are assured of salvation, and rejoice in this.

A free or willing spirit / heart is the idea behind the description of those who offered to the work of the construction of the tabernacle with a free or willing heart in Ex. 35:5,22. David may have in mind that his response to God's grace would be to freely, generously give things for the construction of the temple. But here again he is slightly not getting it, for he had been told specifically not to do

There is good reason to think that David did not spiritually crash completely, during the months in which he refused to fully acknowledge his sin. Although he no longer felt confident of having God's salvation, he still felt that God's Spirit / presence was with him. Hence he prayed in his confession: "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me (i.e. he felt that he had these things even then). Restore unto me the joy of salvation…thy free spirit" (Ps.51:11,12). He was very conscious that God was so closely watching him: " Hide thy *face* from my sins…against thee (have I) done this evil in thy *sight*" (Ps.51:4,9). "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me" (Ps.32:4), he later recognized as he reflected upon God's close scrutiny of his life during those unrepentant months.

Psa 51:13 Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, sinners shall be converted to You- Being so certain of having received God's mercy, and therefore knowing the joy of living in good conscience with God, led David to preach to those around him. And he was certain that if he were forgiven and restored, he would make converts on the basis of this wonderful grace being publicized. Note too that Psalm 32 is a 'Maschil' psalm- 'for instruction', or teaching of others. If we have really experienced the mercy of God, we *will* preach to others from our personal experience. 'Preaching' will not be something which we will have to will ourselves to do, nor will it be just a compartment of our lives. Like David, our very existence, the very spirit of our lives, will be an open proclamation of what God's mercy has achieved in us. And indeed David turned men to God after he himself had turned back to Him in repentance about Bathsheba. And we will only be powerful preachers if we preach likewise.

Morally disgraced in the eyes of all Israel and even the surrounding nations, not to mention his own family, it could be argued that David didn't have a leg to stand on when it came to telling other people how to live their lives. A lesser man than David would have resigned all connection with any kind of preaching. But throughout the Bathsheba psalms there is constant reference to David's desire to go and share the grace of God which he had experienced with others (Ps. 32 title; 51:13). He titles them 'maschil'- for instruction / teaching. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord... *that* I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates" (Ps. 9:13,14).

When David wrote that "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee" (Ps. 51:13), he was paralleling his teaching with others' conversion- in a way that suggests he was so confident that his preaching would certainly bring forth conversion. Yet distribution of leaflets, countless conversations... all these preaching activities are inevitably repetitious, and so few respond that we can lose our basic *love* for our fellow man, and lose the hopeful spirit which pervades throughout the self-revelation of our Heavenly Father.

Psa 51:14 Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, the God of my salvation. My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness- Deliverance from blood guiltiness is the language of Ez. 3:17-19; 33:7-9. There, it is achieved by warning others of the judgment for their sins, and this is exactly the context of the preceding :13. This is David's vow to warn others against sin, based on his own experience. It could be argued that the existence of these Psalms, especially the maschil / teaching Psalm 32, is the fulfilment of these vows. But historically, there is no record of David warning others against the sins of adultery and murder. Instead we read of him not disciplining his children in regard to these very things, and his continued advocacy of murder to his son Solomon. Again we ponder whether David maintained the feelings he now expresses.

Deliverance from sin was to be the prayer of the exiles (Ps. 79:9 s.w.); again, David's path of repentance and restoration is set up as the pattern for the exiles. Solomon often speaks of righteousness delivering the wise; he has missed the desperation of his father, who prayed for God to deliver *him*.

David's prayer of repentance and request to be saved from "blood guiltiness" (Ps. 51:14) is literally 'from blood'. He was a man of blood and was guilty of Uriah's innocent blood. David had asked for 'men of blood' to be slain (Ps. 55:23 s.w.), those who had taken the blood of the innocent (Ps. 94:21), and for 'men of blood' to be expelled from his presence (Ps. 139:19). And it is not at all clear whether all those Psalms were written before his sin with Bathsheba. God was trying to teach David that he was the type of person whom he condemned. And yet it is unclear if he learned that lesson. Solomon

liberally condemns the man who sheds innocent blood (Prov. 6:17; 28:17), refusing to recognize that his much lauded father had done just this, and was only saved by grace and not by any obedience to wisdom. There is so little grace in the book of Solomon's Proverbs because Solomon had failed to perceive the grace shown to his father.

The desire to be saved from blood guiltiness could also be read as a desire to be saved from the consequences of the shedding of Uriah's blood. Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather, turned against David because of it. Again we note that his desire to be saved from shame and the consequences of the sins appears greater and more frequently stated than his desire for forgiveness.

Psa 51:15 Lord, open my lips; my mouth shall declare Your praise- During the illness David endured after the sin with Bathsheba, it seems he may have suffered a stroke which left him dumb. He wanted healing so that he could then praise God. "Declare" is used here for David's declaration of praise after his forgiveness concerning Bathsheba; the "truth" which David "declared" after his forgiveness (Ps. 30:9) was the ultimate truth, of God's forgiveness of him by grace; a 'declaring' of his sin (Ps. 38:18 s.w.) and God's forgiveness.

Psa 51:16 For You don't delight in sacrifice, or else I would give it; You have no pleasure in burnt offering- As noted on Ps. 20:13, success in war and answer to prayer was thought to depend upon the offering of sacrifice. After the sin with Bathsheba, David now matures in his understanding- that salvation and God's operation with His people is by grace and not because He desired sacrifice (Ps. 40:6; 51:16,17). This was spoken by David perhaps more concerning this sin of presumption for which there was no sacrifice prescribed, rather than about the actual sin of adultery. The sin of presumption, however, must not give us the impression that David was a hard, callous man. Everything we know about him points to him be a big hearted, warm softie. David's sin with Bathsheba was in that sense out of character. Yet such is the stranglehold of sin that even he was forced to act with such uncharacteristic callousness and indifference to both God and man in order to try to cover his sin.

The situation here is again alluded to when Isaiah suggests that Judah are in the same position as David, in that sacrifice will not help them: "The multitude of your sacrifices— what are they to me? says the LORD. I have more than enough of burnt offerings, of rams and the fat of fattened animals; I have no pleasure in the blood of bulls and lambs and goats" (Is. 1:11).

Psa 51:17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God,

You will not despise- See on :7. Joel 2:12,13 applies this to all God's people: "Rend your heart and not your garments". David had "despised" God's word (2 Sam. 12:9) but he is confident that he will not be despised by God in return, because of the state of his heart. Again we have just a slight possible concern that David is using his state of heart as a bargaining chip with God, rather than just begging for grace. As noted on :1, this is David's response to the judgment threatened in Ps. 50:8. David was aware that God didn't really want sacrifice, or else he would so eagerly have offered it. Instead, David perceived that what God wanted in essence was a broken and contrite spirit. The Bathsheba incident was programmatic for David's understanding of God, and his prayers and psalms subsequently can be expected to have constant allusion back to it. We meet the same idea of God not ultimately wanting sacrifice in Ps. 40:6-9: "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire [but instead] mine ears hast thou opened [Heb. 'digged'- a reference to a servant being permanently committed as a slave to his master]: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come... to do thy will... thy law is within my heart". In Ps. 51:17, David had reasoned that instead of sacrifice, God wanted a heart that was broken and contrite. In Ps. 40 he reflects that instead of sacrifice, God wants a heart that has the law of God within it. This ultimately is the effect of God's law being in our heart- it creates a broken and contrite heart. But how? In the experience of most of us, the law does this through convicting us of our inability to keep the it. And so we see how guilt and grace work so seamlessly together. David's broken heart was a heart which knew he had sinned, sinned irreversibly, and condemned himself. But this, he perceived, was the result of God's law being within his heart. But the words of Ps. 40:6-9 are applied in the New Testament to the Lord's death upon the cross. What's the connection, and what's the lesson? In essence, through David's experience of sin, and the work of God's law upon his heart, he came through that sin to have the very mind of the Lord Jesus as He hung upon the cross, matchless and spotless in His perfection, as the Lamb for sinners slain. Again and again we see the lesson taught- that God works through human sin, in this case, in order to bring us to know the very mind of Christ in His finest hour of glory and spiritual conquest. We must not only let God's word work its way in us; but we need to recognize when dealing with other sinners that God likewise is working with them. He doesn't shrug and walk away from sin; He earnestly seeks to use our experience of it to bring us closer unto Himself.

Psa 51:18 Do well in Your good pleasure to Zion, build the walls of Jerusalem- It seems apparent the Psalms were re-written over time, and hence have relevance to various historical settings. Psalm 51 down to :17 is clearly relevant to David's sin with Bathsheba. But then, in order to make the entire Psalm an acrostic, we find verses

apparently ‘added’, referring to God building the walls of Jerusalem and acceptable sacrifice being offered again in the temple [which didn’t exist in David’s time]. David’s sin and restoration was evidently understood by some inspired scribe or prophet at the time of the exile to speak to Judah’s sin, punishment and restoration. Hence the apparent changes of some passages from “I” to “we”.

David saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). This is how we are to make sense of suffering- by understanding that it plays a role in the salvation of others, and is part of a wider nexus of Divine operation. We suffer so that we may be able to minister the comfort we receive to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Job likewise came to realize that his sufferings were not so much for his personal maturing, but for the teaching and salvation of the friends.

Although indeed this Psalm may have been rewritten during the exile, hence the reference to the building of Jerusalem's walls, it is quite possible that David even in his humiliation and contrition reverts to his old dream- of Zion, his own citadel, being built up as a temple. We note that Solomon built not only the temple but also at the same time, a wall around Jerusalem (1 Kings 3:1)- presumably because this was part of David's vision for Zion. The promises of 2 Samuel 7 had sought to correct his vision about this- but even in his desperate contrition, he clings on to that hope and fantasy of a literal temple being built in his own backyard of Zion. Psalm 102, another penitential Psalm within the Bathsheba context, has even more to say within the Psalm [and not just apparently added on, as in Ps. 51] about how David wanted his restoration to be understood as the restoration of Zion.

Psa 51:19 Then You will delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt offerings and in whole burnt offerings. Then they will offer bullocks on Your altar- "Then..." connects back to the statement in :17 that God wants a broken heart rather than a sacrificed animal. The idea is that sacrifice will then be offered with the understanding that the animal represents the broken heart of the offerer. This surely alludes to the statement in the previous Psalm that God doesn't delight in burnt offerings as much as in trust in Him in the day of trouble (Ps. 50:8). See on :1. After his sin with Bathsheba, David perceived that God didn't require bulls and goats, but rather the sacrifice of contrite heart (Ps. 51:16,17). But here he again envisages offering sacrifice. We could conclude that he means sacrifices now offered in the right spirit. Or we could see this as a slip back from grace towards the old way of works-based thinking.

The force of "then" God would be pleased with sacrifice may suggest David still nurses the wrong idea that somehow a physical house of God would make the sacrifices pleasing to Him. The same word for pleasing or desiring is in :16 " You do not desire / are not pleased with sacrifice". But David reasons that when the temple is built, then God willing be pleased with sacrifice. He apparently still has a willful misunderstanding of the promises about his house and Messiah's house of people.

PSALMS CHAPTER 52

Psa 52:1 For the Chief Musician. A contemplation by David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, David has come to Abimelech's house- This incident caused the slaughter of the 85 priests of Abimelech's family (1 Sam. 22:18). These are David's reflections upon this.

Doeg being detained before Yahweh in 1 Sam. 21:7 may have been because he had made a vow, or possibly, was becoming a proselyte. This then adds more background to David's ranting against him in Ps. 52:1-4 as being a liar, using deceitful words. What were these words? No specific lie of Doeg is recorded, but the accusation of being a serious liar makes sense if he had made false vows to Yahweh. Psalm 52 was likely later rewritten, under inspiration, during the exile; for Edom was a much hated ally of the Babylonians who eagerly destroyed Jerusalem and murdered the priests (Lam. 4:21,22; Mal. 1:2–5; Joel 3:19; Ez. 25:12; 35:3,15; Ps. 137:7; Obadiah 11).

Why do you boast of mischief, mighty man? God's grace endures continually- Doeg apparently boasted about the slaughter of the priests. "Mighty man" is the word used of Goliath the "champion" (1 Sam. 17:51). As his proud boasts had been brought down by God's grace working through David, so David believed Doeg would eventually be conquered likewise; see on :2 for another allusion to Goliath. We can also look to past precedents in our lives for encouragement as to how God will finally come through for us. Betrayal and having another man boasting against you is here answered by the recollection that God's grace is eternal. Betrayal and boasting are for a brief moment. God's grace gives us eternal life. This is one window onto how to cope with betrayal and abuse.

Psa 52:2 Your tongue plots destruction, like a sharp razor, working deceitfully- David was to later plot the destruction of Uriah by his words; and when he repented of this in Ps. 32:2, he says that lack of deceit / guile (s.w.) is only possible through imputed righteousness. David's intolerance of "deceitful" persons (Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:3) must

be compared with the fact that he himself was only counted as not deceitful by grace; for he was very deceitful regarding Uriah. "Razor" is the same word used for the sheath of Goliath's sword (1 Sam. 17:51); the same verse speaks of Goliath as the "champion", s.w. "mighty man" in :1.

The power of 'mere' words is yet again shown. As James says, the tongue is a fire that consumes. The tongue is elsewhere compared to swords, spears and arrows (Ps. 55:21; 57:4,; 59:7; 64:3; cp. Prov. 26:18). Words are never "mere" words, in God's book.

Psa 52:3 You love evil more than good, lying rather than speaking the truth. Selah- "Lying" reflects again David's deep sense of injustice (see on Ps. 35:7). He uses the word for "false witness", as if they were breaking one of the ten commandments; and he uses it often, heaping condemnation upon any who dare lie / bear false witness about him (Ps. 38:19; 52:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:29,69,86,118; 120:2; 144:8,11). And yet David lied and deceived in order to get Uriah killed so that he could take his wife for himself. Surely reflection upon that sin made him realize that his zeal to condemn dishonesty was at best misplaced; to lament it is one thing, but David was to be taught that he had himself done the very thing he so condemned.

The Bible often reduces spirituality down to whether we love God and good, and hate evil and sin. Mic. 3:2 condemns those “who hate the good and love the evil”. Paul says that all who "love His appearing" shall be saved; the wicked are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4), and Paul in Romans 7 sums up all his spiritual struggles by saying that he hates his sins but loves the law of God and the spiritual life. Here we have another example. To love God is not to never sin. Many of these passages suggest there is a degree of loving God and good, but the love of sin and evil is greater. They are "lovers of pleasure [more than being] lovers of God" (2 Tim. 3:4) It's a question of where the balance is. This feature of many of these passages cuts deep into our self examination.

The historical record shows Doeg as being strictly truthful in what he said to Saul about David. "David came to Nob to Ahimelech the priest" (1 Sam. 21:2) and this is exactly what Doeg says: "I saw the son of Jesse come to Nob to Ahimelech the priest." (1 Sam. 22:8). Doeg informs that the priest gave David the sword of Goliath. That is exactly what happened: "The sword of Goliath... is here... David said, "There is none like it; give it to me"" (1 Sam. 21:10). Doeg informs Saul that the priest provided David with food, and that was the case: "The priest gave him holy bread" (1 Sam. 21:7). But David repeatedly claims that Doeg was a liar and had a "deceitful tongue". We could assume that in fact Doeg said other things about David which aren't recorded, and here we have a typical case of where the Biblical evidence must be put together in order to get the complete picture. Or it could be that even by saying things which are truthful, we can do so in a way that is in fact proactively destructive ["devouring", :4) and deceitful- in the sense of

being unfaithful to David. We wonder why David's anger is not so much with Saul but with Doeg. It was Saul who commanded Doeg to kill Abimelech and the priests because of Doeg's informing on him. Possibly he as it were forbad himself to curse Saul- and so he redirects his anger with Saul onto Doeg. Rather than taking a more spiritual attitude. We also wonder why David's anger is with Doeg for being a liar, rather than a murderer: "The king said to Doeg, You turn and attack the priests! Doeg the Edomite turned and attacked the priests, and he killed on that day eighty-five people who wore a linen ephod. He struck Nob, the city of the priests, with the edge of the sword, men, women, children and nursing babies, and cattle, donkeys and sheep" (1 Sam. 22:18,19). David apparently never mentions this, but rather rants about Doeg being such a liar. Possibly Doeg had become a proselyte, and therefore was deceitful to then kill Yahweh's priests.

We also observe that it was David at this time who was the liar. But he likes to focus on Doeg as a liar. Doeg was more a murderer, seeking to ingratiate himself to Saul his boss in return for power and wealth- than a liar. I suggest that David is making Doeg out to be a liar and punishing him because this is what David is guilty of. Rather like the pastor committing adultery who beats up on a member of his congregation for falling into sexual sin. The evidence for David's lying at the time is significant. He lies to Abimelech: "The king has commissioned me with a matter and said to me, "Let no one know anything of the matter with respect to which I am sending you and about which I have commissioned you" (1 Sam. 21:3). David was in fact fleeing from Saul, who was determined to kill him (1 Sam. 20:30-42). He totally fabricates words which he claims Saul had spoken and that he is quoting verbatim. Neither did he receive any commission from king Saul. This was all deliberate deception. When asked why he is travelling alone, David lies by saying that his "young men" are going to meet up with him soon at a pre-arranged location: "And as for the young men, I have made an appointment for such and such a place" (1 Sam. 21:3). David wants the priest to believe that David is accompanied by an entourage from the king. When asked by the priest if the young men for whom he asks food are ceremonially clean, David tells another lie: "Indeed women have been kept from us as always when I go on an expedition; the vessels of the young men are holy even when it is a common journey; how much more today will their vessels be holy?" (1 Sam. 21:5). The record is clear that David was alone and didn't have these "young men" actually with him. David comes to Nob alone (1 Sam. 21:1,2), and leaves Nob alone (1 Sam. 21:11). Then he alone flees to Philistine territory unaccompanied (1 Sam 21:11-16), and he leaves Philistine territory alone (1 Sam. 22:1). No one joins him until we learn from 1 Sam. 22:1,2 that after reaching the cave of Adullam, "his brothers and all his father's house heard and came down there, and there were gathered to him any man in distress". David's reason as to why he had no sword is so blatantly untrue that surely Abimelech must have wondered whether David was being truthful: "I took in hand neither my sword nor my weapons because the king's commission was urgent" (1 Sam. 21:9). If indeed he was commissioned by Saul to do

something that needed a weapon, surely he would have taken the weapon with him. David's lies therefore led Ahimelech to a position which cost Ahimelech and his family their lives. Hence David later rues that he was responsible for their deaths, and we could even argue that Psalm 52 is David's self hatred over this matter, condemning himself as a liar.

Psa 52:4 You love all devouring words, you deceitful tongue- Doeg is here addressed as if he is his own tongue. As "the word was God", so a man is his words. This points up the critical importance of our words.

Psa 52:5 God will likewise destroy you forever- Doeg would be destroyed "likewise" by the sword, as the priests were slain by the sword; but "forever", perhaps implying that David understood the destruction of the 85 priests as not being "forever" in that they would be resurrected.

He will take you up, and pluck you out of your tent, and root you out of the land of the living. Selah- "Tent" is appropriate as Doeg lived in a tent as an itinerant herdsman (1 Sam. 21:7).

Psa 52:6 The righteous also will see it, and fear, and laugh at him, saying- This is best understood as the language of the last judgment, as there is no evidence that it happened to Doeg in this life. There is a Biblical theme that the judgment seat will be before all; the righteous will see the wicked walking naked in their shame; and will see the destruction of Doeg, resurrected and condemned to the second death. But again we see David as out of step with God, who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Prov. 24:17 is clear: "Don't rejoice when your enemy falls; don't let your heart be glad when he is overthrown". Hence Job calls a curse upon himself "if I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me" (Job 31:29). To rejoice in the condemnation of the wicked, rather than feeling sorry for them, is in fact the very reason for the condemnation of Babylon- see notes throughout Is. 47.

Psa 52:7 Behold, this is the man who didn't make God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness- Doeg clearly was motivated by a love of riches, and was rewarded by Saul materially for bringing about the betrayal of David and the slaughter of the priests. Trust in wealth is so clearly condemned in the Bible (Ps. 49:6), and the Lord brings out the parallel between having wealth and trusting in it. Whatever wealth you have, you will tend to trust in. Seeing God wants us to live life trusting / believing in Him, no surprises that He rarely gives wealth to His people, contrary to Pentecostal teachings.

Psa 52:8 But as for me, I am like a green olive tree in God's house. I trust in God's grace forever and ever- At the time of the Psalm (:1), David was still on the run from Saul. But he felt as if he was in the sanctuary. The "house" of God was not then built; perhaps this was added in the exile, to encourage the exiles that like David they by God's eternal grace could likewise effectively be in His "house"- even whilst in exile from it.

Psa 52:9 I will give You thanks forever, because You have done it. I will hope in Your name, for it is good, in the presence of Your saints- David speaks of that yet future as if it is yet done. This is how God sees things, and the invitation to have faith is an invitation to see things from His perspective. David sees himself at the last day in the presence of other faithful ones, thanking God for His judgments upon the wicked.

PSALMS CHAPTER 53

Psa 53:1 For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Mahalath. A contemplation by David- "Mahalath" means "sickness", and this may have been written or used with reference to the time when David was sick after the sin with Bathsheba. The AV adds the title "Maschil", for instruction; as if this may have been one of the songs David wrote after receiving forgiveness, in an attempt to bring others to know the grace he had experienced.

The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity. There is no one who does good- The Psalms are sometimes paired, and we wonder if Ps. 53 continues the reflections of Ps. 52 about Doeg. However, "Nabal", whose name means "fool", died from heart failure; and perhaps he is here in view. Or perhaps a Psalm initially about Nabal was reworked to be relevant to Doeg and other individuals who had rejected God. The denial of God need not refer to atheism as we understand it; for atheism was almost unheard of in David's time. Rather does it refer to the inner mentality which acts as if there is no God. The same phrase is used in Ps. 14:1, and the Targum on that verse is 'There is no government of God in the earth'. God may exist theoretically, but is not a factor in human life. And we too can be effective atheists in this sense. "There is" has been added by the translators. The fool says "no God" in his heart. But that is how God interprets man's self talk; for those two words aren't said consciously by men. We marvel that the God who knows every human thought in advance also knows and perceives the effective implication of those thoughts. This is an example of where God reads our thoughts and actions for what they

effectively mean to Him. "The wicked has no room in his thoughts for God" (Ps. 10:4). "They say, how does God know?" (Ps. 73:11). "They say in their heart, Yahweh will not do good neither will He do evil" (Zeph. 1:12). "They have denied Yahweh and said, It is not He" (Jer. 5:12). "They refused to have God in their knowledge" (Rom. 1:28).

The quotation in Rom. 3:10 from Ps. 14:1-3; 53:1-3 is about the fools who say in their heart that there is no God; and it seems David has specific enemies of his in view, perhaps Nabal or Doeg. Yet Paul applies this to every one of us, himself included. What he's doing here is similar to what he does at the end of Romans 1- he speaks of the grossest sins such as sexual perversion and reasons that we are all in essence guilty and condemned as serious sinners before God. Here he quotes passages which speak of effective atheism and applies them to us all, himself included- even though atheism was abhorrent to the Jews, and Paul may have seemed the last person to be an atheist. But the 'atheism' occurs within the psychological thought processes of the human mind- the fool says in his heart that there is no God. In the context of Romans, Paul is arguing that we call God a liar when we disbelieve His offer of justification and salvation. To deny this is to effectively say in our hearts that there is no God. If God is, then He is a Saviour God. To deny that He will save me is effectively to say He doesn't exist; for a God who won't save me may as well not exist. Far too many people claim some level of belief in God's existence, but in their hearts deny Him, in that they personally doubt whether His promised salvation is really true for me.

Psa 53:2 God looks down from heaven on the children of men, to see if there are any who understood, who seek after God- David clearly assumed that although this was generally the case, he and the righteous did understand and seek after God. But as noted on :2, Paul sees David as being overly generous to himself, and "concludes all under sin", including the righteous. We note that understanding God is paralleled with seeking after Him. Nobody arrives at 100% understanding of God; the true understanding is to have a heart which seeks to understand Him. The extent of God's knowledge is amazing. He sees every man's downsitting and uprising, and sees the thoughts of every man before he has them (Ps. 139). He "sees all the sons of men… He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth" (Ps. 33:13,14). Our genuine interest in Him must be a bright light in the gross darkness of what He sees. On one hand we can read these verses as God's opinion of literally every human being. But :4 speaks of these sinful masses eating up "My people", as if in fact the generalized statements concern the unbelieving world. But Paul interprets these words further, applying them to literally all of us.

Psa 53:3 Every one of them has gone back. They have become filthy together. There is no one who does good, no, not one- David often describes himself as "upright in heart" just as Job was (s.w. Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w.

Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). But he sees the wicked as those who are not upright, who have "gone back" (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

Psa 53:4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and don't call on God?- This Psalm which was originally about Doeg or Nabal comes to be reapplied to the general enemies of God's people, who 'ate them up' as did the Babylonians and Assyrians. Their abuse of people was because they lacked "knowledge", and yet adultery is also a sin reflecting a lacking of knowledge or understanding (Prov. 6:32). Again, David uses terms about the wicked which become relevant to himself. All sin against others is a reflection of a lack of understanding and personal calling upon God.

Psa 53:5 There they were in great fear, where no fear was, for God has scattered the bones of him who encamps against you. You have put them to shame, because God has rejected them- As noted on :4, a Psalm which began as David's reflections upon individuals like Doeg or Nabal comes to be applied to Israel as a whole. A comparison of Psalms 14 and 53 illustrate the process of re-writing at Hezekiah's time. These Psalms are both "A Psalm of David", and are virtually identical apart from Ps. 53:5 adding: "There were they in great fear, where no fear was; For God has scattered the bones of him that encamps against you: You have put them to shame, because God has rejected them". This surely alludes to the Assyrian army encamped against Jerusalem (2 Chron. 32:1), put into fear by the Angels, and returning "with shame of face to his own land" (2 Chron. 32:21). The shame of the Assyrians is also reflected in 2 Kings 19:20 "The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and ridiculed you. The daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head at you". Perhaps the idea is that the Jews who feared them need not have feared them. Yet both Psalms conclude with a verse which connects with the exiles in Babylonian captivity: "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God brings back the captivity of his people, Then shall Jacob rejoice, and Israel shall be glad". So it would appear that the initial Psalm was indeed written by David; the version of Ps. 14 which is now Ps. 53 was added to and adapted in Hezekiah's time (Prov. 25:1), and both versions had a final verse added to them during the exile.

"Rejected" is 'despised'. David claims here that God "despises" people. But God doesn't despise any (Job 36:5 s.w.). See on Ps. 15:4.

Psa 53:6 Oh that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When God brings back His people from captivity, then Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad- "Salvation" is *Yeshua*. Clearly the desire is for Yeshua / Jesus to come out of Zion, and this is how it is interpreted in Rom. 11:26. Many NT passages mix a number of OT passages in one 'quotation'; e.g. "The deliverer will come from Zion" (Rom. 11:26) is a conflated quotation of Ps. 14:7; 53:6 and Is. 59:20. And Heb. 13:5 combines quotes from Gen. 28:15; Josh. 1:5 and Dt. 31:16. Heb. 13:5 doesn't quote any of them exactly, but mixes them together. As noted on :5, this Psalm had initial application to individuals in David's time, but :4,5 are reworked with relevance to the Assyrian invasion; and now in this verse the Psalm is given relevance to the exiles awaiting restoration to Zion. And this is how we too are invited to personalize and use the scriptures.

PSALMS CHAPTER 54

Psa 54:1 For the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A contemplation by David, when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Isn't David hiding himself among us?- Most people react badly to betrayal, and it leaves a lingering sense of bitterness. But David dealt with it by writing songs about his experiences, openly sharing how he thought and felt, and bringing God into every feeling and situation. The men of Ziph betrayed David to Saul twice (1 Sam. 23,26). The first time, it seemed Saul would thereby indeed catch David; he chased him around a conical hill and was about to get him, when a message came that the Philistines had attacked and he must return. The second time, David sneaked into Saul's camp at night and stole Saul's spear and water jar, after God had made Saul's guards fall deeply asleep; and by thus sparing Saul, he elicits from Saul a desire to give up the chase. So each time, the betrayal by the Ziphites was undone by direct Divine intervention. But in this Psalm we read of David's hatred of the Ziphites and his earnest desire for their condemnation. Whilst at the same time, showing unusual grace to Saul. As with us, we can show great grace to one enemy whilst at the same time harbouring bitterness against other enemies. Or quite simply, David doesn't maintain his feelings of grace toward Saul. For this Psalm wishes condemnation upon both Saul and the Ziphites. He showed the same failure with his attitude toward Shimei.

Save me, God, by Your name. Vindicate me in Your might- David understood God's Name as the summary of His personality and character; and it was according to his understanding of this that he asks for salvation. For the summation of God's character is that He is a loving saviour. This came to full term in His Son, and abides true for all time. God's Name and His power / might are often paralleled- because God's entire

might is expended in the manifestation of the principles and characteristics of His Name. The personality of God, His Name, is reflected in the fruits of the Spirit in the New Testament. His power, His might, His Holy Spirit, will manifest those fruits in us- if we are open to it.

Psa 54:2 Hear my prayer, God. Listen to the words of my mouth- This could imply that David prayed his prayers out loud. David marvels that words coming out of his mouth could be heard all the way "up" in Heaven.

Psa 54:3 For strangers have risen up against me- The Ziphites were from Judah (Josh. 15:55), but David treats them as Gentiles, which is the implication of "strangers". To hate our brother (for David was also from Judah) is to classify ourselves with the world.

Violent men have sought after my soul- The very phrase used of Saul's hunting of David at the time of the incident with the Ziphites (1 Sam. 23:15). Saul *sought* to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved.

They haven't set God before them. Selah- The implication is that David *had* done this (Ps. 16:8). Always David likes to present himself as of a totally superior spiritual class to his enemies; the sin with Bathsheba was to mean that so much of his hard words about others became relevant to him, driving him to throw himself upon Divine grace alone. Man is always "before" God. The art of the spiritual life is to live "before God", to realize our nakedness before Him, and to live transparently before Him and therefore all men.

Psa 54:4 Behold, God is my helper, the Lord is the one who sustains my soul- The tone of the Psalm changes from desperate begging for help, to confidence that God has heard him. This may have been because of some direct Divine revelation; but I suggest rather it is what happens in our prayers. Within the prayer we ourselves become persuaded of God's answer and find peace and confidence in Him.

Psa 54:5 He will repay the evil to my enemies; destroy them in Your truth- "Truth" is often a reference to God's covenant. He appeals for judgment of his enemies on the basis that he considers they have broken covenant with God and must receive the curses associated with doing so.

Psa 54:6 With a free will offering, I will sacrifice to You. I will give thanks to Your name, Yahweh, for it is good- David at this time was on the run from Saul. His freewill offering would have had to be made outside of the sanctuary system. Although he may have in view returning to the sanctuary and offering there, once all his enemies (including Saul) had been destroyed (:7).

Psa 54:7 For He has delivered me out of all trouble. My eye has seen triumph over my enemies- This is like Ps. 52:9 and other psalms concluding "He has done it", or "He has finished / done it" (Ps. 22:31). Even though that point was yet future. This is the path of prayer, persuading ourselves through the course of the prayer that God will answer, and concluding that He has done so- and praising Him for it. Even though the answer is only what our eye has seen, by faith. He speaks in the past tense when he has the future in view. David speaks of that yet future as if it is yet done. This is how God sees things, and the invitation to have faith is an invitation to see things from His perspective. David sees himself at the last day in the presence of other faithful ones, thanking God for His judgments upon the wicked.

And yet despite David's undoubted faith, at the same time he so frequently rejoices at the fall of his enemies (Ps. 37:34; 52:6; 59:10; 92:11; 112:8; 118:7). Whereas God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, feels sorry for Israel in their fall, and condemns Babylon in Is. 47 for having no compassion upon the condemned. He is definitely out of step with God- and yet David mourns the death of Saul and Absalom, both of whom he has ranted against in his psalms. I conclude he was so transparent before God that he just says what he knows is in his heart, even if it is wrong. For there is no point in trying to hide from God how we feel.

PSALMS CHAPTER 55

Psa 55:1 For the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A contemplation by David- The context appears to be when David was still in Jerusalem (:9-11), and realized the extent of Absalom's rebellion and Ahithophel's deceit.

Listen to my prayer, God. Don't hide Yourself from my supplication- David's prayer before fleeing Jerusalem was presumably written down, or recalled under Divine inspiration; and he wanted it to be known for all time and to all peoples, that God had saved him from apparently inevitable destruction- both personally and of his kingdom.

Psa 55:2 Attend to me, and answer me- If we "attend" to God's word (Prov. 2:2; 4:1; 7:24), then He will "attend" to our word, of prayer (Ps. 55:2 and often in the Psalms). There is thereby a mutuality between God and man. Our attitude to His word becomes reflected in His attitude to our words in prayer; for God and man are in dialogue.

I am restless in my complaint and moan- David's moaning or weeping was his prayer (:1). Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer", although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord hath heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point.

Psa 55:3 because of the words of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked. For they bring suffering on me, in anger they hold a grudge against me- David surely should have hardly been surprised that Bathsheba's grandfather held a grudge against him! Yet his pain at the words he heard and the rumours that got back to him were all part of the "burden" he finally casts upon the Lord later in the Psalm. We may rightly feel that David ought to have been more acceptive of the results and consequences of his sin with Bathsheba; but so much of his prayer life after the incident appears to be complaint about the consequences and badgering God to remove them- rather than glorying in the grace and forgiveness given him.

An alternative translation is "for they cast / hurl /throw iniquity upon me, and in anger they persecute me". The allusion would then be to Shimei at this time, throwing stones and dust at David. Yet David accepts that Yahweh had bidden Shimei curse him, and indeed David did deserve death by stoning for his sins. But the Hebrew here seems to suggest that David considered the "enemy", Ahithophel and Absalom, were unreasonably oppressing him and making him more guilty than he was. As the Jewish rabbi Rashi puts it, "Ahithophel accuses me of iniquities that overweigh [the scale] to demonstrate that I am liable to death, and they sanction [the shedding of] my blood". Likewise David will lament in :13 that his "own familiar friend" has betrayed him and is now not his friend. He seems to just not get it- that he has sinned grievously and cannot reasonably complain about the consequences. He seems to have some mistaken sense of entitlement in thinking that his good friend Ahithophel ought to remain his good friend- although he was Bathsheba's grandfather.

Psa 55:4 My heart is severely pained within me, the terrors of death have come upon me-

This is a far cry from the David who faced Goliath and fought the Philistines, fearless of death. His fear of death surely reflects his disquieted conscience, knowing he must come to judgment. He at this point lacks an abiding faith in God's salvation of him.

Despite his undoubted physique stamina, David was a broken man, even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam.24:14 with 1 Sam. 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps. 75:10 and the whole of Ps. 101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam. 11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom. He had a heart cruelly torn so many ways. All these traits are amply reflected in the Psalms: Ps. 6:7; 31:10; 42:3,6; 38:8; 55:4; 56:8; 69:3,29; 88:3,9; 94:19 (what introspection!); 102:4; 116:3; 143:4.

Psa 55:5 Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, horror has overwhelmed me- This seems the very opposite to the situation in Ps. 78:53, where the faithful were not fearful, and it was their Egyptian enemies who were "overwhelmed". He feels overwhelmed [s.w. "covered"] with horror, rather than feeling covered by Yahweh's protective cherubic wings, as he often confidently expresses (Ps. 143:9 s.w.). David appears to feel he is spiritually without God and facing the judgment of condemnation. His faith in forgiveness regarding Bathsheba and Uriah appears deeply dented at this point; because he had set his mind to assume that he was not going to suffer the consequences of the sin. Yet Nathan had assured him that he would, and he clearly struggled with that.

Psa 55:6 I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! Then I would fly away, and be at rest- The "I said..." suggests this Psalm is David's recollection of how he felt just before fleeing Jerusalem from Absalom (see on :1).

Psa 55:7 Behold, then I would wander far off, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah- David did indeed lodge in the wilderness when he fled Absalom. But initially it seemed that flight even to the wilderness was impossible, because it would require David to have wings and fly there from Jerusalem (:6). He felt he was encircled. See on :10. David like all of us at some times in our lives wanted to return to his wilderness years

shepherding "those few sheep in the wilderness" as his brother put it, or perhaps when on the run from Saul when he felt so close to God. The image of "a dove" (:5) is of innocence. He fantasized about just getting away from it all. But as the Psalm progresses, he casts his burden on the Lord, despite retaining his self righteousness.

Psa 55:8 I would hurry to a shelter from the stormy wind and storm- David appears to wish to have a shelter from the storm- when elsewhere he proclaims Yahweh to be just this. His confusion is because he expects God to remove from him the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba- and when God will not, David feels God is somehow not there for him. He fails to appreciate the wonder of the fact God had no executed him, and had extended the forgiveness which only comes from radical grace.

Psa 55:9 Confuse them, Lord, and confound their language, for I have seen violence and strife in the city- This clearly alludes to Babel. David sees Jerusalem as no better than Babel / Babylon; and thereby the Psalm came to have relevance to the exiles with their desire to see judgment upon Babylon. This is however what happened to Absalom's putsch- it imploded and they were confounded.

"Confuse" is literally "swallow up", the idea being "swallow up these malicious plotters, as the earth swallowed up Korah and his crew". David also wishes this in Ps. 55:23, asking for them to be 'brought down'. This was fulfilled in Absalom's burial under a heap of stones in a deep pit (2 Sam. 18:17). And yet David bitterly mourned Absalom's death. The lesson is to be careful what we pray for, as we shall in essence receive it.

"Confound their language" is "divide their tongues", and refers to the difference of advice between Hushai and Ahithophel.

Psa 55:10 Day and night they prowl around on its walls, malice and abuse are also within her- David had felt that fleeing Jerusalem was next to impossible because he was encircled within the city; hence he felt he needed to be as a bird to fly away, over the top of them. See on :7. His escape was therefore just in time, and was itself a token of God's deliverance, seeing there were opposing forces trying to catch him if he fled.

Psa 55:11 Destructive forces are within her, threats and lies don't depart from her streets- "Destructive" or "wickedness" is the word used of the wickedness of Ahithophel and Absalom (Ps. 55:11). Solomon's Proverbs seem in places a justification of himself as king over his brother Absalom. He uses the same word to speak of "transgressors are taken in their own wickedness / destructiveness" (Prov. 11:6); how a liar [Absalom] listens to a 'destructive' tongue [in taking advice from Ahithophel] (Prov. 17:4); and how a foolish son [Absalom] is the calamity or destruction of his father (Prov. 19:13). And yet

all this evil had been predicted by Nathan as arising from within David's family [of which both Absalom and Ahithophel were members]- because of his sin. And he is now railing at that and refusing to accept that his sin was the root cause of it. Evil would not "depart" from David (2 Sam. 12:10) but he now laments that it doesn't depart from the streets of his city of Zion.

Psa 55:12 For it was not an enemy who insulted me, then I could have endured it; neither was it he who hated me who raised himself up against me, then I would have hidden myself from him- This suggests that Ahithophel's deceit of David went undetected for some time. The equivalent off Ahithophel is clearly Judas in the context of the Lord Jesus. And we wonder how He could have known from the beginning that Judas would betray Him, and yet apparently trust and like him so much that the betrayal came as a shock. We may be helped by considering how Samson surely knew Delilah would betray him, and yet still loved and trusted her, time and again. This is the nature of the human condition, to know and yet act as if we do not know. It is one of the features of love. The problem we have in understanding Samson (if we do have a problem with it) occurs again, in exactly the same form, when we consider the Lord's relationship with Judas. He knew from the beginning who should betray him. He knew that the one with whom He shared especially sweet counsel would betray Him (Ps. 55:12-14). And surely the Lord Jesus had reflected on David's experience with Ahithophel. And yet He spoke of how the twelve (including Judas) would sit on twelve thrones, sharing his glory (Mt. 19:28). He loved Judas and treated him as a close friend, even though he knew that this very close friend would betray Him. There is, to my mind, no satisfactory explanation of this apart from to realize the utter humanity of the Lord; that just like Samson, He could sincerely love a man whom he knew would betray Him. This same Lord is the same today and forever. He isn't a hard man. He loves and actively fellowships *at the time* with those whom later He knows will betray Him, even now. He doesn't just not bother because He knows they will later turn nasty. Lord, we salute you for this, your utter grace.

Psa 55:13 But it was you, a man like me, my companion, and my familiar friend- The person in view is clearly Ahithophel, David's counsellor, the "man of my peace" (2 Sam. 15:12), referenced also in Ps. 41:9. He was Bathsheba's grandfather, so we can imagine how his bitterness with David developed. The application of this passage to the Lord Jesus is an essay in His utter humanity. Judas was His friend and "a man like me". But as David said these words and perhaps later sung them, he surely must have realized that it was to be expected that the grandfather of the woman he had violated would turn against him. What else could he expect? "But it was you" is spoken to a person. But at this point David wasn't with Ahithophel. But, with absolute psychological credibility, he had him as it were in his mind and spoke with him in his self talk. Indeed this psalm is

mostly all David's self-talk. This surely is why Absalom and Ahithophel aren't mentioned by name- David knew the names of those whom he was referring to, and this Psalm is really and truly a transcript of his self talk.

Psa 55:14 We took sweet fellowship together- No "house" of God existed in David's time, so perhaps this was edited at a later period. "Fellowship" is better "counsel", and the word carries the idea of decision making. Ahithophel had been David's advisor and confidante. And they had sweet fellowship together- apparently.

We walked to God's house in company- "In company" is a word only used elsewhere in Ps. 64:2, where it is translated "insurrection", again perhaps in the context of Absalom. The double meaning of the word chosen reflects the duplicity of Ahithophel. In Ps. 44:2 David ruefully remembers how happy he was to go to the tabernacle "in company" with other worshippers. Then in Ps. 55:14, composed also in the short time whilst he was on the run from Absalom, he bitterly laments that Ahithophel had walked with him in those crowds- but then betrayed him. David presents at this time as wanting various things, like the death of Absalom and yet Absalom's sparing from death… he is an unhappy man because he has slipped from having God's Kingdom and His Son as his sole focus.

Psa 55:15 Let death come suddenly on them, let them go down alive into Sheol. For wickedness is in their dwelling, in their midst- Dwelling in tents and going alive into the grave is the language of Korah's rebellion. That is how David sees Absalom's rebellion. And yet when Absalom was indeed suddenly slain, David breaks down in grief. We must be careful what we pray for and what we wish upon men, lest it come true and it is not actually what we want. David on one hand has a mind full of Biblical precedents, alluding to the destruction of Babel and also Korah, whilst at the same time stubbornly refusing to take full personal responsibility for his sins and therefore their consequences. One way to deal with the pain of injustice, betrayal and broken relationships is to simply think of our own sins and how we continue living by grace alone. Spiritually, we have no right to life. Let alone anything else. Being "cast down alive" could mean in the midst / prime of life, as in :23 David wishes they die in the midst of their years. When this happened to his middle aged son Absalom, he was heartbroken. He is just expressing his feelings with no wisdom nor thought to what an answer to prayer would really look like in practice.

We could read "May He [God] impose death". This is asking for the death penalty- when David himself had been saved by grace from the death penalties for murder, adultery and the sin of presumption. Or, "May He invite death against them", a reference to the

Angel of death. Yet David so bitterly mourned Absalom's death, despite these emotional pleas in prayer at this point.

Psa 55:16 As for me, I will call on God. Yahweh will save me- The tone of the Psalm changes; see on :18. The idea of Yahweh's saving is 'Yehoshua', 'Jesus'. David was coming to faith in the essence of the yet future Lord Jesus. But "As for me..." suggests David's abiding wrong belief that he was the wronged righteous one in all this. And yet David was a great example of transparency before God, just telling God his feelings, be they of fuming anger against his enemies, or his wrongful sense of self-righteousness. This transparency arises from a real belief that God sees and knows all things in the human heart.

Psa 55:17 Evening, morning, and at noon, I will cry out in distress; He will hear my voice-

Verse 17 begins a new section of the Psalm. The Psalm started by describing how David "cries out" in "distress"; the same word is used for "moan" in :2. At the start of the prayer David begs God to hear him / his voice (:1,2). We could better render :1,2: "*Hear* my prayer, God. Don't hide Yourself from my *crying out*. *Hear my voice*, and answer me. I am restless in my complaint and *distress*". Now he is more confident, that God *will* hear his voice. This is one of many such prayers, where over the course of the prayer, David persuades himself of God's involvement and answer. Praying out loud can have the same effect for us too.

Day and night as they were prowling around (:10), David presents himself as praying. Note that "evening" was the start of the Jewish day. David's first waking moments were naturally of prayer to God. And this is our pattern. He often mentions his habit of regular prayer morning and evening (Ps. 5:3; 55:17; 59:16; 88:3; 119:147). This should not have to be enforced upon us, but rather the natural outcome of a life lived in constant connection with God. David perceived that the Mosaic ritual of morning and evening sacrifice taught the sacrifice of prayer should be made in daily life, even though at the time of many of the Psalms, David was exiled from the sanctuary. This exile from organized religion led him to make this connection, as it can for us too.

Psa 55:18 He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle that was against me, although there are many who oppose me- The tone of the Psalm changes from desperate begging for help, to confidence that God has heard him. This may have been because of some direct Divine revelation; but I suggest rather it is what happens in our prayers. Within the prayer we ourselves become persuaded of God's answer and find peace and confidence in Him. Often we think that we can have peace only after the

battle is fought. But David commendably comes to see that we can have that peace whilst the struggles are ongoing.

Psa 55:19 God, who is enthroned forever, will hear, and answer them. Selah. They never change, those who don't fear God- God's eternal kingship perhaps suggests that at some time, these people will come to judgment. For God is sitting as eternal judge, and those who will not change or repent will be judged by Him. At what time that will be- isn't the issue. They will come to judgment.

Psa 55:20 He raises his hands against his friends, he has violated his covenant- The individual in view is surely Ahithophel. The covenant in view is presumably that with God; for there is no evidence he had made a covenant with David. But to raise our hand against our brother, to hate our brother, is to break covenant with God- as the New Testament is clear. Mal. 2:10 uses the same phrase to break or violate the covenant- and again says we do so if we deal treacherously with our brother. Ps. 41:10 speaks of this man as "one who ate my bread", the sign of covenant relationship. The reference is later to Judas who was at the last supper but betrayed the Lord. It is the betrayal of one with whom we have broken bread or done communion. "He raises his hands" may allude to how this was done at the offering of a peace offering- and David is saying that his enemy does that but at the same time plots against him. We recall that Absalom's rebellion began with him going to Hebron to supposedly offer sacrifice / peace offerings related to a covenant vow (2 Sam. 15:7,9).

Psa 55:21 His mouth was smooth as butter, but his heart was war. His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords- This laments how words can not reflect the true state of a man's heart. So why, then, is there so much emphasis on spoken words as the basis for judgment to come? Surely it is that although thoughts will also be judged, and the hypocrites revealed for who they are, it doesn't follow that a good man sometimes uses 'corrupt speech'. It's impossible. A good man cannot bring forth bad words. But a bad man can sometimes bring forth words which seem good on the surface, but which are in fact counterfeit. But it can't happen another way- a good man's words aren't just his surface level sin.

"Smooth" or slippery is the language used of God's confirmation of Judah in their sinful way (Jer. 23:12 = Ps. 35:6); whichever path we choose, we are confirmed in. Those who are of a slippery tongue (Ps. 55:21 s.w.) will be confirmed in this; they will, as it were, slip headlong into condemnation. Their own chosen way is their judgment.

And yet exactly these thoughts must have been Uriah's about David's words and offers to him.

Psa 55:22 Cast your burden on Yahweh, and He will sustain you. He will never allow the righteous to be moved-

David is right in telling himself in his self talk to cast his burden on Yahweh. But the burden was so avoidable and self created. It was his pain at the actions of Absalom and Ahithophel. Had he done the right thing and resigned his crown, asking Yahweh to raise up a more suitable man- then his son wouldn't have sought the throne, and Ahithophel wouldn't have betrayed him. David himself had said that "he that rules over men must be just" or of integrity. He had lost his integrity. He could no longer be general in chief of the military, nor king of Israel. But he refused to get that. His anger with them arose from his refusal to accept abiding guilt for his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. This was his burden. But all the same he casts it upon Yahweh. And these words are applied by Peter to us, to cast all our anxieties [which are very often self inflicted] upon the Lord. And perhaps the Lord had these words in mind when He invites all the burdened to come to Him and take on His light yoke, so their burden will become light. Knowing we are forgiven, both of sins we recognize or those we don't fully recognize, relieved of both true and false guilt, is the only way to peace.

Yet straight afterwards, David goes on to call himself "the righteous". He was indeed counted righteous by grace through faith, but we could also argue that in the immediate context, David is simply being self-righteous. The rest of this Psalm surely indicates this [e.g. "But as for me..."]. So we marvel at God's grace. Counting not just a humble, repentant sinner as righteous, but even one who was not a humble sinner and who was in fact self righteous.

David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Psa 55:23 But You, God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction-
Remember that this is prayed at the time of Absalom's rebellion; David prayed that his enemies be cast into a pit. But when this happens to Absalom (2 Sam. 18:17), David is heartbroken. Clearly his prayers were uttered in a flush of hot blood, and remain a powerful reminder to think about what we are asking for, and be properly motivated in our requests. For in essence, we receive what we ask for.

Bloodthirsty and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in You- David's prayer of repentance and request to be saved from "blood guiltiness" (Ps. 51:14) is literally 'from blood'. He was a man of blood and was guilty of Uriah's innocent blood. David had asked for 'men of blood' to be slain (Ps. 55:23 s.w.), those who had taken the blood of the innocent (Ps. 94:21), and for 'men of blood' to be expelled from his presence (Ps. 139:19). And here David is writing *after* his sin with Bathsheba. God was trying to teach David that he was the type of person whom he condemned. And yet it is unclear if he learned that lesson. He asks not only for deliverance, but for judgment upon his enemies, and seems to take comfort in the prospect of their destruction. This is hardly the spirit of the Lord Jesus. Solomon liberally condemns the man who sheds innocent blood (Prov. 6:17; 28:17), refusing to recognize that his much lauded father had done just this, and was only saved by grace and not by any obedience to wisdom. There is so little grace in the book of Solomon's Proverbs because Solomon had failed to perceive the grace shown to his father.

Absalom died in mid-life, in the midst of his days, just as David wished for him. But when it happened, David was heartbroken.

PSALMS CHAPTER 56

Psa 56:1 For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Silent Dove in Distant Lands. A poem by David, when the Philistines seized him in Gath- As David was as it were in captivity to the Philistines, feeling like a Jewish dove in Gentile lands, so the exiles felt. Hence the usage of this Psalm by them. A case can be made that the whole of book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) was written / edited in Babylon. The Psalms of Korah (83-87) seem to reflect the longing of the righteous remnant in Babylon for the temple services. And it is just possible that the entire Psalter was re-edited there in Babylon, under inspiration- for so *many* Psalms have elements of appropriacy to the exiles in Babylon and the restoration. The LXX titles of Psalm 56 [“Concerning the people that were removed from the Sanctuary”] and 71 [“Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first that were taken captive”] speak for themselves. Likewise the LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah.

Many of the Psalms appear to be paired; Ps. 56 and Ps. 57 are an example. They are very similar. The title of Ps. 56 therefore provides a context for Ps. 57, which was "A poem by David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave" (Ps. 57:1). David's time when seized by the Philistines in Gath could refer to some unrecorded capture and detention of him in Gath- the home town of Goliath, whose sons / relatives had also been slain by David's

men, and David had slain "ten thousands" of Philistines. Or it could refer to the time when he was serving Achish king of Gath and had to feign himself mad in order to get released. Perhaps things were far tougher for David at that time than recorded in 1 Sam. 21:10-15. Whatever, David took comfort from his situation with Saul (the subject of Ps. 57) and reapplied it to his situation in Gath in Ps. 56. And this is how we too pass through life- experiences in one situation strengthen us for another.

Be merciful to me, God, for man wants to swallow me up. All day long he attacks and oppresses me- The "attacks" upon David in Gath were surely verbal ones; but he felt them as real beatings and death threats. He was so sensitive to words that today we would likely place him somewhere on the autism spectrum. "Be merciful to me" was to be the very appeal of David to God after his sin with Bathsbeba (Ps. 51:1). We too are led by experiences. Even our sins are used by God to teach us. And our sins are foreseen by God, as David's was. He was in Gath due to his lack of faith and unwisdom. He has to beg God for mercy. He received it. And this was to be programatic for when he faced the Divine death sentence for his later sin, with Bathsheba.

Psa 56:2 My enemies want to swallow me up all day long, for they are many who fight proudly against me- The word used of Saul wanting to swallow up David in Ps. 57:3. But now it is used of the Gentile enemies of David. This means that Saul was acting as a Gentile to David, and this is quite a common conception in the Psalms; that those Israelites who hated David are treated by him as outside the covenant and effectively Gentiles. It was their hatred which led them to break the covenant, just as hating our brother means we have broken the new covenant.

Psa 56:3 When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You- It seems that David in the crisis in Gath reminded himself of one of his life principles, and kept repeating it to himself- that in times of fear, he would trust in Yahweh. This is the essential stuff of spiritual life; to repeat little phrases like that to ourselves, in both ordinary life and times of crisis.

Psa 56:4 In God, I praise His word. In God do I put my trust. I will not be afraid- what can flesh do to me?- In the Hezekiah context, this would have been relevant to the reflection that Sennacherib had with him only an arm of flesh (2 Chron. 32:8). The "word" David praised and trusted was not the entire scriptures which he had then available. Rather does it refer to the specific prophetic word that he should be king after Saul, and / or that his kingdom would ultimately flourish. This likewise is "the word" he has in view in Ps. 119, rather than "the Bible" generally. In the Hezekiah context, it was Isaiah's prophetic word of deliverance from Assyria which was to be trusted; to trust God's word is to trust Him. For "the word was God". Our attitude to His word is our attitude to Him.

David's low view of human "flesh" is God's view. He was brought through his extremity to see man as God sees him, as so weak and powerless. "He remembered that they were but flesh" (Ps. 78:39), accepting that man is only flesh and not to be striven against (Gen. 6:3). And so "cursed is the man who makes flesh his arm" (Jer. 17:5), for "all flesh is grass" (Is. 40:6).

Psa 56:5 All day long they twist my words, all their thoughts are against me for evil- The twisting of words apparently applies to the Philistines (:1), but these are also David's thoughts whilst suffering at the hands of Saul and then Absalom's supporters. With us too, circumstances repeat in our lives; our attitudes and faith are developed and tested. But again we marvel at David's sense of self justification. He was feigning madness in Gath, he had slain many Philistines including Goliath… and he complains that the Philistines twisted his words and were plotting revenge against him! He was clearly being deceitful with them. This was addressed by God, in the bigger picture, in teaching him through his sin with Bathsheba. For he was then taught that he could say nothing in his self defence, he was wrong wrong wrong. And yet justified by God's grace alone. His strong tendency to self justification and self pity was addressed through his sin with Bathsheba and God's grace to him, although there is ample evidence that later in life he returned to this same weakness of character. The language of twisting his words and plotting evil against him is exactly what David uses at the time of Absalom's insurrection against him (Ps. 41:7 and often). He was given the same experience as he had in Gath, in the hope he would have learnt from it.

Psa 56:6 They conspire and lurk, watching my steps, they are eager to take my life- See on :5; these are also David's thoughts whilst suffering at the hands of Saul and then Absalom's supporters. His Psalms were rewritten by him and reapplied to different situations, and this is how God also uses His own word, rescheduling and reinterpreting as needed. This explains why in Matthew especially, many New Testament quotations of the Old are not in perfect context; rather is it a case of reapplication and reinterpretation.

Psa 56:7 Shall they escape by iniquity? In anger cast down the peoples, God- David later reflects that God had indeed cast down the peoples *under him* (2 Sam. 22:48; Ps. 18:47); by saying this he considers that his prayer of Ps. 56:7 has been answered. Perhaps when he prayed it, he just wanted God's anger to be poured out immediately, the day of judgment to come there and then, when the scales will be adjusted and men and nations cast down or lifted up. But he reflects that in a sense that had happened in his life, in that the peoples were cast down beneath *him*.

We could render "Weigh unto them (i.e. pay them, cp. Ps. 58:2) according to their iniquity". This desire for judgment upon enemies for their sins contrasts with what God taught David at the time of his sin with Bathsheba. He had a strong desire to see Divine judgment upon sinners. Which God sought to correct, working as He does even through human sin.

Psa 56:8 You number my wanderings- David had at this point in his life come to be in Gath and in danger of death; and this was far from the first time in his life he had been in such danger. He saw all his life and every point in it as part of "my wanderings", and they had been "numbered" by God, just as the book of Numbers is God's numbering of Israel's wanderings. He knew God was not unmindful. But LXX "O God, I have declared my life to thee" has a beauty to it; relationship with God involves us telling Him our lives and situations, even though He knows them all.

You put my tears into Your bottle. Aren't they in Your book?- Tear bottles were kept by mourners at funerals; they put their tears in a bottle which they then kept in memory of the deceased. But David says that *his* tears are in *God's* bottle. The idea was that *your* tears went into *your* bottle. But David was so intimate with God that he perceived that *his* tears were in fact *God's*; and vice versa. Perhaps he considered that he would die in Gath (see on :1), and God would mourn for him and record his death.

Psa 56:9 Then my enemies shall turn back in the day that I call. I know this, that God is for me- Seeing he was surrounded in Gath, this was quite some faith. But I suggested on :8 that he may have considered the possibility that he was meant to die in Gath. And so the "day" he would in the future "call" would then refer to the day of judgment. And even in defeat and death, God was still "for me". This is an abiding principle to live by.

Psa 56:10 In God, I will praise His word. In Yahweh, I will praise His word- The "word" David praised and trusted was not the entire scriptures which he had then available. Rather does it refer to the specific prophetic word that he should be king after Saul, and / or that his kingdom would ultimately flourish. This likewise is "the word" he has in view in Ps. 119, rather than "the Bible" generally. In the Hezekiah context, it was Isaiah's prophetic word of deliverance from Assyria which was to be trusted; to trust God's word is to trust Him. For "the word was God". Our attitude to His word is our attitude to Him.

Psa 56:11 I have put my trust in God; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?- It seems that David in the crisis in Gath reminded himself of one of his life principles, and kept repeating it to himself- that in times of fear, he would trust in Yahweh. This is the

essential stuff of spiritual life; to repeat little phrases like that to ourselves, in both ordinary life and times of crisis.

Psa 56:12 Your vows are on me, God. I will give thank offerings to You- This promise to offer thank offerings presupposes that David would again one day be free to return to Zion or to the sanctuary; unless he offered in the wilderness.

Psa 56:13 For You have delivered my soul from death, and prevented my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living- This may have been added after the deliverance; or it could be that David, as he sometimes does, speaks of future things as being in the past. This is what faith is about- believing in things from God's viewpoint, that what is yet future is now, in essence, for those with Him. So often David's prayers begin in crisis, but his prayers are a kind of self persuasion, to the point that he concludes triumphant that God will hear him and has effectively already done so. This is indeed the path of prayer.

PSALMS CHAPTER 57

Psalm 57:1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A poem by David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave-
"Do not destroy" may allude to Moses' prayer for Israel, "do not destroy" (Dt. 9:26). They were rejected by God, but Moses' mediation for God to "not destroy" them was heard, against all odds. This explains David's appeal for "mercy" and his references to God's grace in this psalm. David thus associates himself both with Moses, the prayer of the prayer, and also with the weak Israel for whom Moses was interceding. He prays like Moses, but for himself and his own salvation by grace. But the words are those of David to Abishai in 1 Sam. 26:9 "Do not destroy him", when urging him not to destroy Saul when he had the chance. And that is the context here- of David in the cave having an earlier chance to destroy Saul. But he kept singing himself the song "Do not destroy", to strengthen himself against the advice he was being given to destroy Saul.

Many of the Psalms appear to be paired; Ps. 56 and Ps. 57 are an example. They are very similar. The title of Ps. 56 ["when seized by the Philistines in Gath"] therefore provides a context for Ps. 57, which was "A poem by David, when he fled from Saul, in the cave" (Ps. 57:1). David's time when seized by the Philistines in Gath could refer to some unrecorded capture and detention of him in Gath- the home town of Goliath, whose

sons / relatives had also been slain by David's men, and David had slain "ten thousands" of Philistines. Or it could refer to the time when he was serving Achish king of Gath and had to feign himself mad in order to get released. Perhaps things were far tougher for David at that time than recorded in 1 Sam. 21:10-15. Whatever, David took comfort from his situation with Saul (the subject of Ps. 57) and reapplied it to his situation in Gath in Ps. 56. And this is how we too pass through life- experiences in one situation strengthen us for another.

Be merciful to me, God, be merciful to me, for my soul takes refuge in You-
According to the title, David is composing this having fled for refuge into a cave, a rocky stronghold. But his real refuge is God. It's like 'trusting' in medicine or insurance, when the essential refuge is God. The idea is that God was David's city of refuge. These cities were for those who needed to flee when being chased by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:26). The imagery is very appropriate to David when fleeing from Saul and Absalom. David's constant meditation upon God's law would have included the sections about the cities of refuge; he realized that actually no such city was available for him, but the spirit of the law led him to reflect that Yahweh was his refuge, wherever he was. David tends to open wilderness Psalms with this reflection, just as we may tend to begin prayers with the same opening phrase and thoughts (Ps. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1).

Yes, in the shadow of Your wings I will take refuge, until disaster has passed-
Likewise David realized that the cherubim shadowing the mercy seat were over him; he was as it were located on the very mercy seat. But he was nowhere near the sanctuary, and possibly in a state of ritual uncleanness and not technically obedient to the law. But he perceived from that same law that God is in fact beyond the confines of ritual. With God in his heart, he was as it were covered by His glory and the blood of atonement on the mercy seat.

Understanding the "wings" as those of the cherubim over the "mercy seat", the lid of the ark of the covenant, would fit well with David's appeal to be shown mercy beneath the wings. But running to take shelter under the shadow of wings is also the language of a bird running to the mother bird, protected by her wings and warmed by the heat from the mother's heart; and "wings" also by extension means the wings of a garment, into which the frightened child would run.

Psalm 57:2

I cry out to God Most High, to God who accomplishes my requests for me-
"Most High" might allude to how the saves of Adullam were on high land, overlooking the valley of Elah. But David knew that despite that apparently human advantage and strength, the only true height was in God. The thought of the highness and power of God is an inspiration to faith in prayer. The requests of prayer are "accomplished"; not

answered by a simple flash action, but involve working out so many facets of the answer. The idea of the Hebrew is of God completing or perfecting all things. David knew he was on the way to being perfected, even through all the dramas in the cave. And he knew his prayers would be answered in that context. He who has begun a good work in us will likewise work at perfecting it / completing it until the day the Lord returns. "God, who supplies my every need" (GNB) is surely alluded to in Phil. 4:19:"My God shall supply all your need".

"I cry out to God" gives the idea of making a lot of noise, indeed David says in :8 he will praise God so loudly that he would as it were wake up the sun. But he felt these things in the cave, where silence was critical. Despite the constrictions of his immediate circumstances, he could in faith look forward to a day when he would loudly praise God, waking up the sun by the volume, and in fact be heard by the whole earth (:9). We too can look out from our own immediate constrictions, socially and otherwise, to the day when we shall be totally unlimited in our service of God. What's critical is that in our 'caves' we have that dream and desire. Are these the things we dream of? When life's pressures abate for a moment and our mind can wander… what are our daydreams? Are they of the things of the Lord and His Kingdom? For those momentary day dreams of a spare moment indicate where our deepest heart is.

Psalm 57:3

He will send from heaven and save me, He rebukes the one who is pursuing me. Selah. God will send out His grace and His truth-
The word "send" is normally translated 'to send away, to let depart', implying physical movement away. This implies Angels are physically sent over space to answer prayer. The same word occurs in other verses where this same idea stands up well- e.g. Ps. 144:7 "Send Your hand (an Angel) from Heaven…". It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10. There is no record of Saul ever being rebuked for persecuting David. Quite possibly Samuel did, but it is unrecorded. David's confidence that God rebuked Saul may be an insight he had into the court of Heaven, where he as it were saw Saul being rebuked, and Angels being sent from that same Heavenly court to save David.

Psalm 57:4

My soul is among lions. I lie among those who are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword-
David fled from Saul's presence to the cave of Adullam, and all manner of bitter men

and women came to him there. Adullam is an area near the Valley of Elah, where David killed Goliath, and has valleys with many caves on the valley edges where the men could live: "David therefore departed from there and escaped to the cave of Adullam. When his brothers and all his father's house heard it, they went down there to him. Everyone who was in distress, everyone who was in debt and everyone who was discontented [LXX "troubled in mind"] gathered themselves to him and he became their captain. About four hundred men were with him" (1 Sam. 22:1,2). The Lord's body of people likewise has this feature of attracting alternative folks, or those disengaged with society, who may not have anything spiritually in common with His true people. We wonder if the snares dug by his enemies (:6) refer to some unrecorded intrigues against him by his own men. If the psalm has reference to the time when David had the chance to kill Saul in the cave, then we can better understand this reference to the bad words of the men around him. For they urged him then to slay Saul. The advice of friends is often not right. Against the noise in his own mind of their bad advice, he beat out the tune of "Do not destroy", possibly a well known song of the time. And this is how to use spiritual music. To let the words beat in our mind, against the temptations to go the wrong way in the heat of the moment. Without doubt, these men who were "set on fire" in bitterness could be understood as a reference to the men with David. He lay down to sleep next to them. David's men represent the followers of the Lord Jesus (cp. Heb. 13:13). David's motley crew were bitter men, "them that are set on fire… whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword" (Ps. 57:4). So rough were they that David says that having to live with them almost destroyed him spiritually (1 Sam. 26:19). This typology would explain why the body of Christ seems full of bitter men and women with hard words- who eventually will be the rulers in Messiah's Kingdom, after the pattern of David's men. There can be no misunderstanding of David as some softie who let anything go. Of course he was a sensitive man, with a soft heart. The way others' words so hurt him is evidence enough of this (Ps. 57:4). Yet this was marvellously blended with his clear recognition of evil and firmly expressed desire not to mix with it.

Psalm 57:5

Be exalted, God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be above all the earth!-
David had earlier lamented that Saul "My enemy" (= Saul, 1 Sam. 18:29; 19:17) was "exalted over me" (Ps. 13:2 s.w.). The David who had once triumphed over his enemy Goliath now felt that Saul was triumphing over him. This, in the bigger Divine picture, may have been to keep David from pride at the amazing victory and triumph. And he learned the lesson. David was indeed to triumph / be exalted over Saul (Ps. 18:48), but he saw it is God triumphing / being exalted (Ps. 18:46). His praise Psalms are full of this word and idea- of the exaltation of God (Ps. 57:5,11) and not himself. In extreme situations, as David was in, we can too easily focus simply upon praying for our immediate deliverance. But David commendably sees the glorification of God as being of the essence. So much so that it is at times hard to understand this prayer as in fact

composed whilst in the cave hiding from Saul. But the title tells us this was indeed the context. "Be exalted" is asking God to exalt Himself, to visibly make His glory seen over the earth. In essence, this was David's form of our desire for the Lord's coming and the visible establishment of the Kingdom. This must always be our great desire even in the midst of personal crisis. For this is the ultimate truth that gives perspective to the immediate issues of this life, including death itself. The language is very much of large scale freedom, God's glory soaring above the heavens. And yet David these feelings within all the constrictions of the cave- physical as well as social constriction, if we have understood correctly the references to the men with him. We too live very limited lives, but can soar above them with the thoughts of God's glory. And again, as in so many of the Psalms, David begins in a crisis situation- but within the prayer, goes on to confidently exalt in God's salvation. It's one thing to praise God after the salvation has come, or the problem has been resolved. David's example is of glorying in God right in the midst of the crisis, and not afterwards. Although we could argue that he is editing his thoughts after the deliverance from Saul.

Psalm 57:6

They have prepared a net for my steps. My soul is bowed down, they dig a snare before me. They fall into its midst themselves. Selah-
David had elsewhere prayed that the wicked would fall into their own pit (Ps. 141:10) and seems to rejoice when this prayer was answered (here and Ps. 7:15; 9:15). This is a far cry from the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Perhaps God tried to correct him over this attitude when his son Absalom finally ends up dead in a pit, after David praying this would happen to him. In the immediate context, David perhaps reasoned that Saul's persecution of him had led him to hide in a cave. But Saul entered that cave alone and thus David could easily have slain him. Saul fell into the pit he had set for David, but David in the end didn't slay Saul. He as it were allowed Saul to get up out of the pit and go his way. Despite having eagerly prayed for such a moment, when Saul would fall into the pit he had made for David. On one hand, David was bitter with his enemies, but on the other hand, showed them amazing grace. We see this both with Saul and Absalom. His grief when they die is sincere and not at all theatrical. We too struggle between angry judgment of people and yet showing them grace. David is presented as being so absolutely human and like us all. But in the cave, grace triumphed. We notice too the wild mood swings in David- from "my soul is bowed down" to his enthusiasm to shout out in worship and wake up the sun with his praise (:9).

It is a common theme that the wicked snare themselves, falling into their own pit, judged by their own words, rather than God specifically snaring them (e.g. Ps. 7:15; 9:15; 57:6; Prov. 26:27; 28:10; Ecc. 10:8). From their own mouth and words men will be judged (Mt. 12:37; Lk. 19:22 cp. 2 Sam. 1:16; 1 Kings 20:40). It could even be that the

Lord cites the condemnatory words of the rejected uttered during their lifetimes and leaves these as their condemnation. Woe, therefore, to he or she who has said unrepentantly that they don't want to be in the Kingdom if brother x or sister y are going to be there. "He that keeps his mouth keeps his life; but he that opens wide his lips [in this life] shall have destruction" at judgment day (Prov. 13:3).

The snare was dug "before me". Solomon alludes to this in Prov. 1:17 "For in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird". All Solomon says is inspired truth, but clearly he has a subtext of justifying his father David; this was an obsession with him.

Psalm 57:7

My heart is steadfast, God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises-
David's "fixed" or steadfast heart (also mentioned in Ps. 108:1; 112:7) is the heart of the Lord Jesus who steadfastly set His face to go to death in Jerusalem. To have a single hearted, set and fixed heart position for God… is what it is, to be a Christian. David had earlier understood that for the humble and righteous, God can "prepare their heart" (Ps. 10:17). This is evidence enough that God works directly upon the human heart and psychology, which He does today through the work of His Spirit upon the human spirit. For it is men who must prepare their heart in prayer and relationship toward God (s.w. 2 Chron. 12:14; Job 11:13; Ps. 7:9). But God can also do this for the humble. Hence David later asks God to create in him a 'prepared' heart (s.w. Ps. 51:10). And God heard; for the same phrase is used of how God 'prepared' or (AV) "fixed" / NEV 'made steadfast' his heart (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7). In allusion to this, Solomon was to later reflect that God can direct or 'prepare' (s.w.) the heart of man, even if he is thinking to direct his steps elsewhere (Prov. 16:9).

Psalm 57:8

Wake up, my glory! Wake up, psaltery and harp! I will wake up the dawn-
This is again David's self-talk, as we find in so many of his psalms. He is urging himself to awake in praise. It's one thing to thank God after the victory, after the answer has come. But quite another to praise God before the answer comes, or whilst the struggle is ongoing and apparently undecided. This is the praise of faith.

Or as AV "I myself will awake early". The Psalms continually stress the importance of starting each day with the Lord; David gives the impression his heart was bursting with praise as he awoke, and he instinctively wanted to grab his harp and play and sing praise.

Psalm 57:9

I will give thanks to You, Lord, among the peoples, I will sing praises to You among the nations-
This psalm was composed in the cave, hiding from Saul. Although in a very hemmed in environment, David looked ahead to the day when he would sing praise out loud to God amongst the Gentile world. We too can look out of the tight confines of our social or economic space, to the time of eternal freedom and glory ahead.

David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older; and increasingly he wanted to spread the knowledge of Israel's God to the Gentile nations around him. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others.
David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

Psalm 57:10

For Your great grace reaches to the heavens, and Your truth to the skies-
The message David wanted to preach to the Gentiles (:9) was that God's grace stretches between heaven and earth. "Mercy / grace and truth" is a phrase often used about the promises to Abraham. David saw these as the parade example of God's grace, and he wanted to share that covenant with the Gentiles (:9). But the observation could be made that nearly all the "Gentiles" in the land [*eretz*] promised to Abraham were in fact Abraham's seed in some way anyway. But David is directing them back to their roots and urging them to accept the covenant made with their forefather instead of the idols they had chosen. God's grace is indescribable and beyond comprehension, reaching to Heaven.

Psalm 57:11

Be exalted, God, above the heavens. Let Your glory be over all the earth- The earth / *eretz* refers to the land promised to Abraham. It was David's desire that God be exalted there, lifted up to heaven, as it were, by the people living there. See on :10. David was a man of wide spiritual vision. The visible glory of God was in those days only seen over the ark of the covenant; but he had a vision of it spreading from there over the entire "earth", and here he is praying for that day to come about. But as noted on :9, he realized [as we must in our day] that this will only happen once the Gospel has been taken to "all the earth".

PSALMS CHAPTER 58

Psa 58:1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A poem by David-
As discussed previously, "Do not destroy" may have been a popular song at the time which David particularly hummed to himself when contemplating the possibility of killing Saul. He rants and raves about Saul's wrongness but with that background noise- "Do not destroy".

This Psalm is a criticism of corrupt judges and leadership. Such criticism of Israel's judges is common in the prophets (Is. 1:16-25; Is. 10:1-4; Jer. 5:26-29; Mic. 3:9-12). So it could refer to the situation in Israel at the time of Saul or perhaps during Absalom's brief reign. But the Psalm may well have been reused regarding the corrupt leadership of Babylon over the exiles, or of the corrupt Jewish leadership within Babylon.

Do you indeed speak righteousness, silent ones? Do you judge blamelessly, you sons of men?-
The sin of keeping silence in the face of others' oppression is perhaps the most common sin of omission. So many who have struggled against abusive regimes have come to this conclusion- that the real abusers were all the good people who remained silent and thus empowered abusive regimes. "Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness?" (Ps. 58:1 RV). Speaking and acting righteously whilst keeping silent about others' abuse is *not* righteousness. But "silent ones", Heb. *elem*, may be an intentional parody of *elohim*, mighty ones, a term also used for Israel's judges, who were intended to reflect the judgment of the *elohim* above.

Absalom had for years urged the men of Israel to oust David and appoint him as king, because he would judge rightly. Hence David's complaint that in fact Absalom and his group were not at all righteous judges. The offer of good judgment was the platform Absalom had developed in order to overthrow his father David. This clearly stuck in David's gullet; he concludes the Psalm with an appeal for Yahweh to be the judge (:11). Not Absalom and not even himself.

Psa 58:2

No, in your heart you plot injustice. You measure out the violence of your hands in the earth-
David again comes over as (overly?) confident of knowing the hearts of men. It could be argued that he believed that works reflect thoughts, as the Lord also taught, and therefore reasoned back from actions to thoughts. Instead of measuring out justice, they measured out violence. Quite possibly David on one hand knew Absalom's plots against him, but like the Lord loving and trusting Judas despite what He knew of him, David allowed him to go to Hebron, from where Absalom's long plotted putsch against David began.

Psa 58:3

The wicked go astray from the womb. They are wayward as soon as they are born, speaking lies-
This is not true in real time. But for timeless God, this is His perspective on them. Likewise in other cases He expresses His timelessness in ways which men can only understand as predestination. Or we could simply understand this as hyperbole, an exaggerated statement to the effect that the wicked go wrong from their youth. Or it could be that David is imputing too much sin to his enemies. See on :5.

He clearly refers here to a category of people, "the wicked", and not to all humanity. So it cannot be used as any proof that all human beings are like this from birth. We must remember that whatever we posit about human nature generally, we are saying about the Lord Jesus. For He shared our nature completely, and yet was holy, harmless and undefiled (Heb. 7:26). Quite possibly David has in view Absalom, who perhaps from a child was wayward and deceitful. In any case, David sees the epitomy of wickedness as being dishonest. Lying is the essence of sin, which is why the Lord Jesus and the way in Him is called "the truth". To live in sin, and in denial of your sinfulness, is to lie. It's not just that radical honesty is mandatory for the believer; we are to see all sin as having lying at its root. The sins of Adam and Eve were all about lying. And so in :6 David twice wishes that the teeth of his enemies would be broken: "Break their teeth, God, in their mouth". Several Ancient Near Eastern legal codes stipulate smashing the teeth as a

punishment for dishonesty. Although we feel in this David's anger at Absalom for lying about going to Hebron, claiming he was going there to pay a vow to Yahweh when in fact he went there in order to start the putsch against David.

Psa 58:4

Their poison is like the poison of a snake; like a deaf cobra that stops its ear-
David presents these people as the seed of the serpent of Gen. 3:15, abusing the seed of the woman, the righteous. Solomon speaks of the wicked within Israel as stopping their ears at the cry of the poor (Prov. 21:13 s.w.). He is alluding to how David his father had complained that the judges of Israel were like cobras who stopped their ear to the voice of charmers, refusing the voice of God's word (Ps. 58:4 s.w.). Connecting the ideas, the cry of the poor is the cry of God's word to us; our response to them is our response to them.

Psa 58:5

which doesn't listen to the voice of charmers, no matter how skilful the charmer may be-
Cobras are not actually deaf, but they can appear deaf to attempts to charm them with words and sounds. This provides some balance to the hyperbole of :3. The wicked are given the chance to respond to God's word, but refuse it- and so their biographies appear to be consistently wicked even from their youth. 'Not listening to the voice' is the phrase so often used of Israel's refusal to listen to God's voice (s.w. Ps. 81:11; 106:25; Jer. 3:13 etc.). Even those who are snakes can be charmed by God's word- if they unstop their ears.

Psa 58:6

Break their teeth, God, in their mouth. Break out the great teeth of the young lions, Yahweh-
Lions are symbolic of Israel's Gentile enemies, as well as of the leadership of Judah in Ez. 19:3-6. God's apostate people are often likened to Gentiles; hence the double symbolism of the lion, representing both them and also the Gentiles. See on :3. David's sons as the princes of Judah and future potential kings were the young lions. We think of the lion motifs around the throne of the kings of Judah, as well as Ez. 19:3-6. It was from them that Nathan had prophesied there would arise suffering for David. Instead of humbly accepting this, David rails against it and asks for Divine judgment against them. And yet he bitterly mourns Absalom's death when God does in fact respond to his prayers. Again we have an example of David's prayers being a transparent reflection to

God of how he was feeling at the time. He doesn't put on a good face before God whilst feeling otherwise in his heart.

Psa 58:7

Let them vanish as water that flows away. When they draw the bow, let their arrows be made blunt-
This could be asking for the judgments of the corrupt judges and leadership to be somehow rendered powerless. But again we note with concern that instead of wishing their repentance and salvation, David seems quite obsessed with wishing their condemnation. Whereas God has no joy at all in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). In the Hezekiah context we note that the only other usage of the phrase "vanish as water" is in Is. 8:6.

Psa 58:8

Let them be like the path of a snail which melts and passes away, like the stillborn child, who has not seen the sun-
The idea may be that the snail appears to be melting into nothing during its very path through life; and this was how it was with the wicked. This idea is developed in :9; judgment is in essence now.

Psa 58:9

Before your pots can feel the heat of the thorns, he will sweep away the green and the burning alike-
This suggests that David expected the time of judgment to come very soon. Divine judgment was to come as a whirlwind from the desert, suddenly sweeping away the kindling which desert travellers had made to heat their pots. He saw his enemies as kindling burning, some of it green and not good kindling; but before they could generate much heat, they were to be swept away in judgment. This implies that they were as it were on fire already; the essence of judgment is going on now. Cheyne offers: "Before your pots can feel the thorns, and while your flesh (i.e. the flesh in the pots, on which you are about to feast) is still raw, the hot wrath of Jehovah shall sweep it away".

Psa 58:10

The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked-
Again it seems that David's reveling in the blood of the condemned is out of step with the God who takes no pleasure [cp. 'rejoicing'] in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11). It

was perhaps because of David's attitude to "blood" rather than simply his shedding of blood which disqualified him from building the temple; God was not pleased with this attitude (1 Chron. 22:8). David had these feelings, but he tried to rehearse them to God to the tune of "Do not destroy" (see title). Typical of all men, David on one hand wanted to show grace, on the other, he had feelings of hatred, anger and relishing in the prospect of judgment. But because he was commendably transparent before God, he shares these feelings with God- for there's no point trying to hide feelings from God. We are as we are before Him and we have to acceot that. And yet it is hard to think that the Lord didn't have this verse in mind when He taught that in fact God would take vengeance for His people: "Now will not the God execute the vengeance of his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? And will he delay over them? I am saying to you that he will execute their vengeance with speed" (Lk. 18:7,8).

Psa 58:11

so that men shall say, Most certainly there is a reward for the righteous. Most certainly there is a God who judges the earth-
David here looks ahead to the day of final judgment. But again as noted on :10, we wonder at his logic; he appears to think that rejoicing in the death of the wicked therefore implies there is a great reward for the righteous. Grace seems not to factor, neither the awareness that the righteous have done what the wicked have done, and are saved by grace through faith rather than their works. So often David rejoices in final judgment / justice. There is a longing in every human heart for justice, or a feeling that justice was not really "done" and indeed never really can be. Again, God has set eternity in our hearts. Man desires the right things, but looks for them in the wrong ways or forms. But those desires, and their lack of realization in our lives, are to hone us for the expectation and longing of realizing them in God's Kingdom.

PSALMS CHAPTER 59

Psa 59:1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A poem by David, when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him-
As Saul "watched" or "kept" the house, David's response was to keep or watch over God's ways (:9 s.w.). We note that this is an imprecatory Psalm, praying for destruction of enemies. But it is set "to the tune of Do Not Destroy". It's as if on one hand David wished destruction upon Saul, but this was in tension with "Do not destroy". Perhaps he set it to this tune because he realized that his desire for Saul's judgment was pitted against, or nuanced along with, his considering of Saul's life as "precious", choosing not

to destroy him when he had the chance, twice, and weeping genuine tears of sadness at Saul's death. And then enquiring "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God unto him?".

Deliver me from my enemies, my God; lift me on high from those who rise up against me-
"Redeem / deliver me..." is a quotation from Jacob's words when he found his relative Esau barring his path back home (Gen. 32:11,30). And the word is used of David's desire for deliverance from Saul (1 Sam. 26:24); and yet this was a redemption unappreciated by him as it ought to have been (2 Sam. 12:7). Finally David recognized that this prayer was answered (2 Sam. 22:18,49). As David had earlier prayed for redemption / deliverance from Saul and his enemies (Ps. 31:15; 59:1; 144:7), he would later pray for redemption / deliverance from his sins (Ps. 39:8; 79:9).

Psa 59:2

Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, save me from the bloodthirsty men-
"Workers of iniquity" is a phrase used only in Job (Job 31:3; 34:8,22) and then by David (with Solomon later alluding to David's usage of the phrase). Apart from the law of Moses, Job was likely the only "scripture" David had access to; and so he often alludes to Job, seeing in him a parade example of innocent suffering. We too have been given scripture, which is largely a collection of biographies, in order to see that man is not alone in his apparently unique experiences; each are in essence passing through that which has already been experienced amongst God's people.

Despite being a man of blood guilt (Ps. 51:14), as Shimei rightly said in cursing him on behalf of Yahweh, David asks God to remove all blood guilty people from his presence as he doesn't want their company (Ps. 59:2; 139:19). Indeed David sees such people as the epitome of wickedness- when he himself had blood guilt and had only been saved from it by grace. He simply refuses to accept his blood guilt in any lasting sense. The same Hebrew term for blood guilt is used in 1 Sam. 25:26, where Yahweh through Abigail "Withheld you [David] from blood guilt"- by the grace of sending Abigail to David in His wisdom and grace. And David recognized at the time that indeed he had been saved from bloodguilt by being stopped from killing Nabal (1 Sam. 25:33 s.w.). David likewise had assured the woman of Tekoah that blood guilt would not be required from her son, and he would by Kingly decree ensure that those who sought to expiate the son's blood guilt by his murder wouldn't be allowed to do so (2 Sam. 14:11). And thus by extension he gave the same guarantee of safety from blood guilt revenge to his son Absalom who had murdered Amnon.

Psa 59:3

For, behold, they lie in wait for my soul. The mighty gather themselves together against me- "Lie in wait" is the word for ambush. Solomon often uses the word, as if it is for him a major characteristic of sinners (Prov. 1:11,18; 7:12; 12:6; 23:28; 24:15). But it's a rather specific word to use so often. It's as if Solomon is consciously alluding to his father's experiences at the hands of the house of Saul (s.w. Ps. 10:9; 59:3), whom Solomon considered a threat to his own kingship. And so he seems to rather like using the term about sinners, as if using his wisdom to have a dig at his immediate opposition.

Not for my disobedience, nor for my sin, Yahweh-
Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals that frequent and intense self-examination was a leading characteristic of David:, especially while on the run from Saul; as if he began to pick up false guilt from how he was being treated, wondering if it was all in fact justified (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

"Transgression" is Heb. 'rebellion'. The charge was going to be of treason, that David was planning on being king and was to be condemned. A kangaroo court would be held on this charge, David would be found guilty and executed. Yet Saul had twice been told that he would not be king and would be replaced. By charging David with rebellion, Saul's sin was indeed great.

Psa 59:4

I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me. Rise up, behold, and help me!-
As noted on :5, this attitude was to change after his sin with Bathsheba. The injustice of Saul's persecution weighed heavily on David's mind in the Psalms written at this time. But clearly this led him too far along the road of self righteousness and assumption of his general perfection, which led him into the sin with Bathsheba. We too can wrongly respond to false accusation in the same way. Ps. 119 shows David was aware of many sins and weaknesses in himself at this time, but the experience of false accusation lead him to overlook this at this point. "Ready to attack me" is Heb. "they station themselves"- exactly what happened that night when Saul's men surrounded his house.

Psa 59:5

You, Yahweh God of Armies, the God of Israel, rouse Yourself to punish the nations. Show no mercy to the wicked traitors. Selah-
See on :7. "Show no mercy" is "Be not gracious"; but later David asks exactly for such grace for himself in Ps. 56:1; 57:1. "Show mercy" is the term used in David's plea for forgiveness in Ps. 41:4; 51:1. "I have done no wrong" (:4) was typical of David's attitude before the sin with Bathsheba. He was taught that mercy to the undeserving is the essence of the Gospel; whereas previously he had railed against the display of any such

mercy. AV "Be not merciful to *any* wicked transgressors" heightens the lesson. "Transgressors" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Psa 59:6

They return at evening, howling like dogs, and prowl around the city-
The allusion is to dogs hunting in packs, singling out their victim, chasing it until it is exhausted, bringing it down to the ground [David often speaks of 'bringing down'] and eating it alive. The "return at evening" could mean that having tracked David to his house, they disperse for a time like dog packs do, but "return" again to the victim at evening, and take up their watch (1Sa 19:11). If they were patrolling around the city, it was by God's grace that David managed to get over the wall and run away. Hence he asks God to "meet" him in :5 Heb. the other side of the wall. There was nobody standing there but God met him and directed him to safety. This is a description of Saul's men prowling around the city, ensuring David didn't escape (:1). But the language is repeated in :14, with the Hebrew suggesting they would be made to do this again- in the condemnation of the last day. As they had prowled around the perimeters of the city like dogs, so they would be thrown out of Zion in the last day and wander in the darkness of rejection and condemnation. The idea is that they were living out their own condemnation. Their hatred of their brother led them to act out ahead of time the condemnation of the wicked.

Psa 59:7

Behold, they spew with their mouth; swords are in their lips-
Here again we see the lesson of Job's sufferings; that human words are of immense power, and can be as swords. They were speaking loud enough for David to hear inside the house. The foaming at the mouth is described in :12 as curses and lies [the Hebrew could possibly mean "spells". These curses would have been imprecations, demanding David's eternal condemnation by God. "Foaming at the mouth" ["spew with their mouth"] is language associated with witchcraft and cursing. It has been observed: "this characteristic of salivation at the mouth was also ascribed to witches in Akkadian incantations. In the same way, the mulozi of Zimbabwe use "mate mabi", ‘bad spittle’ to

effectuate ruin". Dogs and hyenas are associated with witches in Africa today, the belief being that witches can turn themselves into animals; and probably they also were thus associated in the ancient near east. Hence David likens these people to dogs. Michal's use of teraphim may have been because she thought they would counter all this. Curses were usually met by counter-curses. But unlike Michal, David was far above and beyond their ideas and called upon Yahweh to save him from evil in whatever form, perceived or actual. He says God is his shield against these curses (:11), not some counter curse nor teraphim. We could re-point :5 to read "wake up to punish all the witches, don't have pity on any master of the dark arts". Likewise :8 "You scoff at all the nations" can be repointed as "you utter imprecations against all the witches".

We note that Saul at this time was using witchcraft- it was likely popular in Israel at the time. But later he condemns witches. Again this is a psychological classic. He judges severely against what he himself is guilty of; he transfers his guilt to the witches.

For, they say, who hears us?-
Here we have an example of God perceiving what human words and attitudes mean in reality, before Him. For they likely didn't actually exalt that nobody heard their words, and that therefore they were unaccountable to God. But this was what their attitudes implied. The assumption that God doesn't hear human words and thoughts is almost endemic to human nature. But He does and by them He judges men.

Psa 59:8

But You, Yahweh, laugh at them. You scoff at all the nations-
See on :7. David was in an apparently hopeless position, with the house he was in, and the entire city, encircled by Saul's men (:1,6). But he was confident that at that moment, Yahweh was laughing at those men. He was treating them as the Gentile nations. David commonly perceives the hateful and apostate within Israel as mere Gentiles. Or perhaps "the nations" was added under inspiration at a later point, perhaps during the exile.

In :5 and :8 David speaks of Gentiles. It could be that Saul's men who were sent to take him included Gentile mercenaries like Doeg the Edomite. Or perhaps David reapplied this Psalm to a later time of threat from Gentiles. Thus he took comfort in his deliverance from Goliath as a basis for his deliverance from Saul at this time, and then used that deliverance from Saul as encouragement to faith that God would likewise deliver him from some Gentile opposition. This is the path of spiritual maturity and growth, going from strength to strength through all life's trials.

Psa 59:9

Oh my Strength, I watch for You- As Saul "watched" or "kept" the house, David's response was to keep or watch over God's ways (:1 s.w.). The idea is "unto You will I watch". As they were looking at him, watching him, David was looking to God. In various ways we may all feel watched by men, we worry about image and appearance, or fear what they are devising. But our response is to believe that God is watching it all and we look unto Him.

For God is my high tower-
David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31 "He will judge the world in righteousness, He will administer judgment to the peoples in uprightness. Yahweh will also be a high tower for the oppressed; a high tower in times of trouble. Those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, Yahweh, have not forsaken those who seek You"). This was his ultimate defence, rather than the house in which he was taking refuge at the time (:1). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Psa 59:10

My God will go before me with His grace- David was inside his house surrounded by his enemies (:1), and escaped through a window. As he planned the escape, he believed that God's grace would go before him. At the end of his life he appears to reflect upon this incident, glorying that although he was "compassed about" with the threat of death, seeing the house was surrounded by Saul's men intending to kill him; yet God's grace had somehow gone before David and prepared a way of escape (Ps. 18:5,18 s.w.).

Psalm 18 speaks of a time when David is surrounded but miraculously delivered by an eartquake. We wonder whether this applies to the time when he was surrounded by Saul's men in his home with Michal. The house was surrounded, but Michal let him down out of a window and he escaped. How come, if the house was surrounded? An earthquake would explain how this was possible: "The cords of death surrounded me, the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The cords of Sheol were around me, the snares of death came on me [all referring to Saul's men surrounding his house]... Then the earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the mountains quaked and were shaken... He sent from on high. He took me [Ps. 59:1 "lift me on high from those who rise up against me"], He delivered me from my strong enemy [Saul] [Ps. 59:1 "Deliver me from my enemies"], from those who hated me [Saul's men surrounding his house]; for they were too mighty for me. They came on me in the day of my calamity, but Yahweh was my support. He brought me forth also into a large place [David fled to Samuel]. He

delivered me, because He delighted in me. Yahweh has judged me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands has He recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of Yahweh, and have not wickedly departed from my God [Ps. 59:3,4"not for my disobedience, nor for my sin, Yahweh. I have done no wrong, yet they are ready to attack me"]" (Ps. 18:4,5,7,16-21).

The idea is as in LXX that God's mercy goes before David. This is prevenient grace, the idea that God is already there and His grace has gone before us. David displays such faith by saying this, surrounded and trapped as he was my men intent on killing him. Ps. 21:3 has this same idea of God's grace being prevenient, going before us, just as predestination and calling from the beginning is cited by Paul as the parade example of God's grace: "For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head".

God will let me look at my enemies in triumph-
AV "See my desire upon my enemies". David's desire to see his enemies condemned seems to sharply contradict the Father who has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11).

Psa 59:11

Don't kill them immediately, or my people may forget. Scatter them by Your power-
David wanted them to be destroyed (:13), but he wanted them to be scattered and then destroyed, so that their doom would be a lesson to as many people as possible. This was what happened to God's apostate people- they were scattered as a lesson to the nations. This is an allusion to Cain being told he would not die immediately but rather would wander until his death- just as David wishes Saul's men would wander in the darkness of condemnation (:14).

And bring them down-
The phrase is usually used by David to mean 'bring them down to the grave'. David is seeking to invert Saul's command to bring David *up* to him to be killed- up the hill to the upper town in Gibeah where Saul's palace was. David sees the descend of Saul's men from the palace down to his house as God bringing them down- to condemnation.

Lord our shield-
Another allusion to the promise that God would be a shield to Abraham and his seed. The promises to Abraham were continually appealed to by David in his times of crises. David surely had in mind how he had turned down Saul's offer of a shield, and had slain Goliath who had a shield. He is asking God to come through for him again, as He did against Goliath. We too are led to build on previous experiences of God's activity for us.

Psa 59:12

For the sin of their mouth, and the words of their lips, let them be caught in their pride-
Rather, "the sin of their mouth is each word of their lips". See on :7. As the Lord taught, by our words we are justified or condemned. We note how "sin" and "words" are paralleled. Pride and words spoken are the basis for their condemnation- things which would be shrugged off merely as surface level weakness by many today.

For the curses and lies which they utter-
There were no expletives used in ancient languages. The curses they uttered were imprecations for Divine judgment upon David; and he asks for these curses to come true for them. But again we note the lack of grace and desire for their repentance on David's part. Although unrecorded in the historical record, Saul would have justified his demand for David to be arrested and slain by various untrue lies about him. Backed up by curses. We note that instead of directly requesting their destruction, David asks God to let his enemies be caught up in their own pride and words, and thereby to condemn themselves. The Lord possibly alludes here in teaching that by their own words men are condemned or saved.

Psa 59:13

Consume them in wrath, consume them, and they will be no more. Let them know that God rules in Jacob, to the ends of the earth. Selah-
The idea may be that he wanted the God of Jacob to be known as king throughout the *eretz* promised to Abraham. He wished for the Kingdom, the dominion of the king, to be known within that entire territory. And David considered that the destruction of the wicked would achieve this. It is perhaps intentionally ambiguous as to whether David wanted them to finally "know that God rules", rather than Saul ruling, as meaning he wanted them to repent- or whether he wanted them to realize all too late, in their condemnation, that "God rules". It appears from :14,15 that the latter is how David saw it. And such wishing of condemnation upon men seems to me quite wrong.

The connection is clear with 1 Sam. 17:46, where David said he would "give the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel". Clearly David was inspired by memory of his victory over Goliath.

Psa 59:14

At evening let them return. Let them howl like a dog, and go around the city-

This repeats :6. What they had done, acting like wandering dogs in the darkness, is here what David wishes upon them in the future day of judgment. As they acted like dogs wandering around the town and his property, so he wishes them the wandering of condemnation. The allusion is to Cain who also didn't die immediately but wandered around. As punishment for slaying Abel in jealousy. So by wandering around the town like dogs on the scent of meat, i.e. David, they were living out their condemnation. David's attitude was far from right bit yet he sung this to the tune of Do Not Destroy. Saul's life was precious in his sight. His wrath and his saving grace and love were in conflict, but love and grace won out. In this sense David had God's heart, for Hosea shows us that He feels the same struggle.

The ecclesia in the wilderness were 'types of us'. They were rejected from entry into the Kingdom; and when that finally sunk in, they "returned [s.w. convert, turn back] and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice" (Dt. 1:45). The rejected will "return [s.w. convert] at evening: they make a noise like a dog [whining for acceptance], and go round about the city [cp. the foolish virgins knocking on the closed door]". This is the picture of Rev, 22:15, where the dogs wander outside the closed city of Zion. The language here repeats that of :6. This was a description of Saul's men prowling around the city, ensuring David didn't escape (:1). But the language is repeated here in :14, but with the Hebrew suggesting they would be made to do this again- in the condemnation of the last day. As they had prowled around the perimeters of the city like dogs, so they would be thrown out of Zion in the last day and wander in the darkness of rejection and condemnation. The idea is that they were living out their own condemnation. Their hatred of their brother led them to act out ahead of time the condemnation of the wicked. Just as John says that those who hate their brother walk in darkness, and darkness means condemnation at the last day.

Psa 59:15

They shall wander up and down for food, and howl all night because they aren't satisfied-
David was confident that God would deliver him from his encirclement, and that all who were out watching for him that night would find he had escaped and be "not satisfied". But he sees this as looking forward to their ultimate disappointment in the condemnation of the last day; see on :14. The lack of "satisfaction" is a major theme in the descriptions of condemnation for those who break the covenant (s.w. Lev. 26:26). And it is the principle we must live by today; that the only satisfaction is in the things of God's Kingdom. Even in this life, the eye is not "satisfied" with seeing or wealth (s.w. Prov. 27:20; Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10). And those who seek such satisfaction from those things will find that dissatisfaction is the lead characteristic of their condemnation (Ps. 59:15).

Tragically Solomon knew the truth of all this but lived otherwise; just as so many do who give lip service to the idea that the things of the flesh cannot satisfy.

Psa 59:16

But I will sing of Your strength. Yes, I will sing aloud of Your grace in the morning. For You have been my high tower, a refuge in the day of my distress-
"In the morning", David had escaped (1 Sam. 19:12), and "sang of God's mercy" at Ramah with Samuel. David escaped by night from his house when surrounded by Saul's men (:1). This Psalm is his confident prayer before escaping out of the window. He was confident that by morning he would be safe and able to praise God for the deliverance. But the words also have generic reference to how David's first waking moments were naturally of prayer to God. And this is our pattern. He often mentions his habit of regular prayer morning and evening (Ps. 5:3; 55:17; 59:16; 88:3; 119:147). This should not have to be enforced upon us, but rather the natural outcome of a life lived in constant connection with God. David perceived that the Mosaic ritual of morning and evening sacrifice taught the sacrifice of prayer should be made in daily life, even though at the time of many of the Psalms, David was exiled from the sanctuary. This exile from organized religion led him to make this connection, as it can for us too.

Psa 59:17

To You, my strength, I will sing praises. For God is my high tower, the God of my mercy-
As noted on :16, David was confident that God would deliver him from his hopeless situation, in the house encircled by men sent to murder him (:1). He was confident that one day he would sing praises to God for the deliverance; either the next morning (:16), or in the eternal dawn of God's Kingdom upon earth. "The God of my mercy" or grace reflects how David thought that although he was suffering as an innocent victim, his salvation from that suffering was still by grace alone.

PSALMS CHAPTER 60

Psa 60:1 For the Chief Musician. To the tune of The Lily of the Covenant. A teaching poem by David, when he fought with Aram Naharaim and with Aram Zobah, and Joab returned, and killed twelve thousand of Edom in the Valley of Salt-
God not going out with Israel's armies, and their turning back from their enemies at this time (:10; Ps. 44:10), is all the language of the punishments for Israel breaking the covenant. The conflict with Edom is in 2 Sam. 8, immediately after the covenant with

David. It's as if David is being warned that despite having the covenant, he is not invincible. He is being reminded that his people as a whole were not faithful to the Mosaic covenant. But this Psalm 60 is a celebration of victory; a victory given because they had kept the covenant (:1). So the idea may be that David saw in the victory that now Israel were back in covenant relationship with Yahweh. Hence it is "to the tune of The Lily of the Covenant". God's grace was being extended; those who had broken covenant were being treated as if they had kept it. But having received the huge grace of the Davidic covenant, David was being reminded that covenant relationship was indeed by grace. This is indeed, as the title says, "A teaching poem by [or for] David".

God, You have rejected us. You have broken us down, You have been angry. Restore us again- The Psalm is clearly related to Ps. 44, which appears to be a comment upon a temporary set back and defeat during this campaign against Edom. But despite this, the Psalm glorifies how God had come through for His people, despite the temporary reverses. See on :10,11.

I have discussed on 2 Sam. 8:1 how the major defeat in Edom is glossed over there in order to make David appear victorious all around him. The extent of the initial defeat may be hinted at in 1 Kings 11:15,16: "When David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the army was gone up to bury the slain, and had struck every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom)". This seems to say that Joab went to bury the slain of Israel, and at that slain in a great defeat, and at that time he remained six months subduing the Edomites with the victory which Psalm 60 later celebrates.

Psa 60:2 You have made the land tremble, You have torn it. Mend its fractures, for it quakes- "Fractures" is "breaches", and we wonder whether the Psalm was rewritten or reapplied with relevance to the exiles. A case can be made that the whole of book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) was written / edited in Babylon. The Psalms of Korah (83-87) seem to reflect the longing of the righteous remnant in Babylon for the temple services. And it is just possible that the entire Psalter was re-edited there in Babylon, under inspiration- for so *many* Psalms have elements of appropriacy to the exiles in Babylon and the restoration. The LXX titles of Psalm 56 [“Concerning the people that were removed from the Sanctuary”] and 71 [“Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first that were taken captive”] speak for themselves. Likewise the LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah. Even Psalm 60, whose title apparently refers to David, is full of reference to the exiles: "O God, *You* have scattered us [recognizing God's hand in the Babylonian scattering of Judah]; O restore us again [RV]"; to which God responds that the land is in fact His and His alone (Ps. 60:6-9), i.e. Judah did not in His eyes belong to the Babylonian nor Persian empires. The request for God to "heal the breaches" (Ps. 60:2) was answered in that God raised up Ezra and Nehemiah with the potential power to indeed mend the breaches in Jerusalem and the temple.

Psa 60:3 You have shown Your people hard things, You have made us drink the wine that makes us stagger- Taking the cup of wine is a double symbol: of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25), and of condemnation (Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Rev. 14:10; 16:19). Why this use of a double symbol? Surely the Lord designed this sacrament in order to highlight the two ways which are placed before us by taking that cup: it is either to our blessing, or to our condemnation. Each breaking of bread is a further stage along one of those two roads. The relevance of this to the exiles is that indeed they had been shown hard things and had drunk the wine of condemnation, 'staggering' as a result of the invasion (Is. 29:9). They themselves were stiffnecked (s.w. "hard"), and reaped an appropriate judgment.

In the immediate context, David and his future Messianic Son have just received the amazing promises of 2 Sam. 7 but perhaps the point is that "Your people" were not faithful and actually through the defeat in Edom were given the cup of condemnation to drink. The fact they were later given victory, as Psalm 60 and 2 Sam. 8 mention, was by absolute grace to those who had just been condemned. David is also being nudged that he is not invincible because he has been given God's grace, and his failure with Bathsheba suggests he failed to grasp this still.

Psa 60:4 You have given a banner to those who fear You, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah- "The truth" is a reference to the covenant; see on :1. The poles or banners of the Israelite army were in the name of that covenant. But there is a deeper, Messianic connection between "the truth" and the banner or pole. This is another link between the concept of 'truth' and the cross. In Ps. 60:4 God's Truth is displayed on the banner (s.w. "pole", on which the snake was lifted up). John struggled with words, even under inspiration, to get over to us the tremendous truth and reality of what he witnessed at the cross (Jn. 19:35). God is the ultimate Truth, and the cross was the ultimate declaration of His Truth.

In the immediate context, the "truth", the covenant, was the basis of deliverance / salvation (:5), and, as it were, carrying this banner, Israel again went into battle against Edom despite their huge losses. But which covenant? Possibly the covenant David has just received. This verse doesn't mean that we go on crusades in the name of "truth"; but that a humiliated people of God, defeated after trusting in their own strength, now go to battle again- but this time trusting in the "mercy / grace and truth" of the covenant that saves (:5). Much of this Psalm 60 is repeated in Psalm 108 as a victory song. Likewise in Psalm 44. The war with Edom clearly had a far larger dimension than the simple note in 2 Samuel 8 that David defeated Edom. He did, but after a stunning

defeat, and an amazing victory by God's grace alone, for which David gave ample thanks in at least three Psalms, 44,60 and 108.

Psa 60:5 So that Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and answer us- "The beloved of Yahweh" was Israel nationally (s.w. Dt. 33:12; Jer. 11:15; 12:7). But it was also David personally; Ps. 108:6 has the same words, but concludes "and answer *me*". A Psalm about David's personal deliverance is extended to all Israel. David saw himself as representative of God's people. It could be that Solomon is in view also; for his original name was Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25), 'the beloved of Yahweh', referred to in that way by David in Ps. 45:1. Perhaps Solomon was involved in the battle against the Edomites and David is asking for his son to be preserved. So we see here how David conflated the promises about his Messianic son with himself personally and all Israel. And it led to disappointment when Israel were initially defeated by Edom.

Psa 60:6 God has spoken from His sanctuary: I will triumph. I will divide Shechem, and measure out the valley of Succoth-Presumably there was a direct Divine communication from the sanctuary, perhaps through the mouth of Nathan, encouraging Israel to continue in the Edom campaign despite the reverses experienced (see on Ps. 44). The idea of 'division' and 'measuring' is 'possession' and inheritance (as Josh. 18:10). The idea therefore is that Israel is God's, and He had given it to Israel for inheritance; therefore those seeking to take it from them would be defeated. Perhaps Succoth and Shechem are mentioned because of their connections with Jacob, mentioned together in Gen. 33:17,18. As He had been with Jacob, despite allowing him to experience many setbacks and near defeats, so He would be with the later seed of Israel. Or perhaps the idea is that territory on both the right and left hand of the Jordan river was God's and His land.

Possibly David's "measuring" of the Moabites in 2 Sam. 8:2 is to be connected with this assurance that God will measure out an inheritance for Israel.

Psa 60:7 Gilead is Mine and Manasseh is Mine. Ephraim also is the helmet of My head. Judah is My scepter- The emphasis is that the land belongs to God, it "is Mine"; therefore those seeking to take it from God's people would be defeated. Gilead and Manasseh represent the territory east of the Jordan; and Ephraim and Judah refer to the tribes west of the Jordan. The territories east of the Jordan just as much were God's as those to the west of it; for the Edomites were seeking to take firstly the Israelite territory east of the Jordan.

Psa 60:8 Moab is My wash basin. I will throw My shoe on Edom, I shout in triumph over

Philistia- They were to become subservient to Yahweh. And that could imply that the hope was that they would accept Him as their God. For that was what conquered peoples usually did. David had earlier shouted in triumph over the Philistines when he slew Goliath; and that was to prepare him for this later victory. Circumstances repeat in our lives because they are under God's control. 2 Samuel 8 records David's victories against these three- Moab, Edom and the Philistines. After this defeat by Edom, he was being encouraged to go to battle in faith in God's grace as expressed in the covenant. LXX "the Philistines have been subjected to me" fits the chronology of 2 Sam. 8, where David first defeats Gath and the Philistines before Edom.

Psa 60:9 Who will bring me into the strong city? Who has led me to Edom?- "Strong city" can mean the fortified, strengthened city under siege (2 Kings 25:2 s.w.). The reference may be to Sela or Petra, Edom's capital, which claimed to be fortified against any invader (Obadiah 3). David seems to be arguing that the Messiah would conquer Edom (Num. 24:18). But he is surprised and even angry that God has not given him victory initially over Edom (:10). The problem was that he had failed to give due weight to the promises to him being about his son, the Lord Jesus. Instead he too quickly assumed that the promises of the Kingdom of God must be about him. Just as we all have a tendency to stray from total focus upon the Lord Jesus and to want it all about me in the right here and now.

Psa 60:10 Haven't You, God, rejected us? You don't go out with our armies, God- The Psalm is clearly related to Ps. 44, which appears to be a comment upon a temporary set back and defeat during this campaign against Edom. But despite this, the Psalm glorifies how God had come through for His people, despite the temporary reverses. So this comment that God has rejected them would be looking back to how they once felt; for this Psalm is a victory song over Edom after defeating them (:1).

God not going out with Israel's armies, and their turning back from their enemies at this time (Ps. 44:10), is all the language of the punishments for Israel breaking the covenant. But this Psalm 60 is a celebration of victory; a victory given because they had kept the covenant (:1). So the idea may be that David saw in the victory that now Israel were back in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Psa 60:11 Give us help against the adversary, for the help of man is vain- Perhaps a reference to some attempt to hire mercenaries to help them in the campaign against Edom.

Psa 60:12 Through God we shall do valiantly, for it is He who will tread down our adversaries- David sees in the victory against Edom a guarantee that God will give them victory against future adversaries. This could be argued to be over interpretation; because as noted on :9, Divine blessing was related to whether Israel kept the covenant or not. And David seems to fail to emphasize this conditional element in God's help, just as he downplayed it in his enthusiasm to see Solomon as the fulfilment of the promised Messianic seed. And this led to Solomon's arrogance and spiritual collapse. This attitude also led to David's sin with Bathsheba.

PSALMS CHAPTER 61

Psa 61:1

For the Chief Musician. For a stringed instrument. By David.
Hear my cry, God. Listen to my prayer-
David at this point was at the extremity of the land (:2), so it refers to his exile from the sanctuary at the time of Saul or Absalom. He refers to himself as "the king" (:6) so at least by that point in the psalm, the immediate reference is to his exile from the sanctuary after Absalom's rebellion.

Psa 61:2

From the end of the land I will call to You when my heart is overwhelmed. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I-
Although this is a Psalm of David (:1) it clearly has reference to the captives who were located at "the end of the land" / *eretz* promised to Abraham. He feels his own mental ("heart") and physical ("rock") strength has been overwhelmed and so he throws himself upon God. We too are brought to realize our own lack of human strength so that we might more powerfully turn to God. The rock higher than David was ultimately God, but he may also have in view the rock of mount Zion. In Absalom's time, this would have been where the sanctuary was, which he so hankered to return to.

Psa 61:3

For You have been a refuge for me, a strong tower from the enemy-
David often takes strength from God's previous deliverances to cope with whatever he was now facing (Ps. 61:3). This may sound natural, but in fact it isn't; because we are inclined to forget the great things He has done for us, as Israel did in the desert.

Psa 61:4

I will dwell in Your tent forever, I will take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Selah- Clearly David longed to be back in the sanctuary. But he feels that he is in fact underneath the cherubim wings over the ark, with the glory of God above him and the blood of atonement beneath him. And he realized that whether or not in this life he ever got back to the sanctuary, he would eternally dwell in God's tabernacle. The High Priest alone could nervously enter the Most Holy and sprinkle the blood of atonement beneath the wings of the cherubim- for just a few moments, once a year, on the day of Atonement. Aware of Israel's sins and his own sins, aware that he was before the very presence of God's glory, with a rope tied to his ankle so he could be pulled out of the Most Holy should he stumble. This rather speaks of our own highest moments of intimacy with God. We know this shall not last, the intense peaks are just that, peaks, that subside into the mire of mediocrity. We like David can look forward to living in Yahweh's tent / Most Holy presence all the time, "for ever". This to me is the greatest aspect of our future salvation. The way there has been opened with the tearing down of the veil, due to the Lord's death. For David, this ultimate future hope provided perspective on his immediate crises.

Psa 61:5

For You, God, have heard my vows- Vows were made as promises to do things for God if He came through for you. So this still suggests that David was too works based in his attitude.

You have given me the heritage of those who fear Your name- This seems another appeal to the promises to Abraham. The inheritance promised to Abraham's seed was to be experienced by David.

Psa 61:6

You will prolong the king's life; his years shall be for generations- If this Psalm originally came from the wilderness years when David was not yet king, then this reflects his deep faith in Samuel's words that he should be king. Or if the Psalm has application to Absalom's rebellion and David's exile then, we could then detect an allusion to the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7. He saw that they implied his own eternity. Perhaps by "the king" he therefore has in view the Messianic king from his seed, rather than himself. The prospect of eternity, of the Kingdom established on earth, is for all believers the perspective on current exiles and rejections.

Psa 61:7

He shall be enthroned in God's presence forever-
Whilst on the run from Saul, David was clinging on to his faith that he would in fact one day be king. But he goes beyond that to focus on the fact that what he really wanted more than anything was eternally reigning in God's Kingdom. We also need a kingdom perspective on whatever we so beg God for in this life. We believe we will indeed receive it, but that is nuanced by the ultimate desire- of eternity in God's Kingdom.

As disussed on :4, David's line of thought was on the ark of the covenant, and him as it were dwelling on the mercy seat [the lid of the ark], beneath the cherubic wings, covered with the blood of atonement. We can read his reference to being 'enthroned' in the same context, for the mercy seat was as it were the throne upon which God sat in glory. Gpd's kingship and glory was to be eternally David's, as it can be for all of us who are now "in" His Son.

This surely alludes to the word in the promises to David that his throne would be established "in the presence" (2 Sam. 7:16). The translations tend to add "in your presence", but the grammar is indeterminate. It could as well mean in God's presence, and this is how David interprets it here in Ps. 61:7.

Appoint Your grace and truth that they may preserve him-
This prayer for the "king" in the third person may read strangely. Perhaps David speaks of himself as king in the third person because at the time he wrote the Psalm he was not actually king. Or if he has his future eternity in view, or that of his Messianic seed, that had also not yet begun. But he believed that "grace and truth", a term often used about God's promises, would bring about the fulfilment of those promises. "Grace and truth" suggests that God's grace is the ultimate truth. David was way ahead of his time in appreciating this; for "the law came by Moses, but grace and truth through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:14,17). He had the spirit of Christ, even though the Lord didn't physically exist at his time.

Psa 61:8 So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may fulfil my vows daily- David's vision of eternity was praising God eternally, and every day of that eternity he would spend fulfilling the vows he had made to God in this life. Whilst his conception of "days" appears inappropriate to existence outside the space-time continuum, it is true enough that the nature of our eternity will to some degree reflect our visions of it now. If like David we have praise welling up within us and we seek to just express it far better, without the limitations of our humanity- then this is what our eternity will be like. We will not simply be "given" a form of existence, by God's sovereign choice; who we eternally shall be is who we desire to be in this life.

PSALMS CHAPTER 62

Psa 62:1

For the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm by David.
My soul rests in God alone. My salvation is from Him-
As noted on :4 and elsewhere, the Psalm seems relevant to David's betrayal by Doeg, Ahithophel and Absalom. He emphasizes that God *alone* can save; seeing he has been stabbed in the back by those he considered his own family and friends. The Hebrew is literally "My soul is silent in God alone". Perhaps the idea is as in Ps. 65:2 "to You, silence is praise". This is proof for all time that praise doesn't have to mean singing or audible music. The word for "salvation" occurs six times. The essence of the Psalm is man's desire for Yah's salvation being met in Jesus, Yahoshua.

Psa 62:2

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress-
David had a stronghold [s.w. fortress] in the cave of Adullam. But he was told by the prophet Gad to leave it and go into Judah, which seemed totally counter instinctive. As soon as David does this, his location is reported to Saul- but all this was to teach him that God was his stronghold / fortress, and Psalm 62 is perhaps his reflection upon that, leading him to conclude that God *alone* is his stronghold (1 Sam. 22:4-6). But David only got to that realization of Ps. 62:2 through losing his natural stronghold. We may lose a home, a relationship, use of a body part... all under God's hand, to bring us to Him.

"Alone" is related to the word for "one". Because God is one, the only source of power, we are to trust in Him alone. Here we see the meaning of the unity of God in practice. David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

I will never be greatly shaken-
David's faith grows as his prayer goes on, for by :6 he is saying that he will not be shaken at all. And so we find in our prayer experience too; the process of prayer is such that we rise from our knees far stronger in faith and clarity of spiritual understanding than when we knelt down. This is the path of prayer, beginning in weakness and becoming stronger

as our prayer proceeds. Heb. "I shall not falter greatly" could suggest David thought that small sins were not of great consequence. And this attitude led him to his great sin.

Psa 62:3

How long will you assault a man, would all of you throw him down, like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?- The "assault" would refer to their intentions (:4) and words. David sees their attitudes and words for what they really were. David feels his power is tottering, but is angry they seek to push him over.

Psa 62:4

They fully intend to throw him down from his high place-

The reference is to a plot to cast David down from the kingship, so the context is likely Absalom's rebellion. Yet David had been told that he would suffer trouble from within his own family as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. But now he experiences it, like so many, he bitterly complains about it. There is never any pause to confess that he was indeed deserving of it. "From his high place" is better "from his honour". David, like everyone especially at that time, feared shame and loss of honour as a fate worse than death. Yet after what he had done with Bathsheba and Uriah... how could he so fear this, if he were permanently repentant? Perhaps however we see his struggle against this native pride in the LXX renditions of :1,5: "Shall not my soul be subjected to God?... Nevertheless do thou, my soul, be subjected to God". In this case, in his self talk, David is telling himself to be more humble and to be "silent" despite wanting to speak out to defend his honour (:5). In :7 he asks God to be "my honour". Every spiritual man knows this struggle, the self talk required against the feelings and voices of pride within us. This is the real spiritual battle- within the mind, and not against some mythical external entity. The real satan / adversary is within the mind. And David's internal mind battles recorded in the Psalms, which are largely his self-talk, are perhaps the most extensive evidence of this in the Bible.

"Fully intend" is s.w. "counsel", the word used of Ahithophel, David's counsellor who was Bathsheba's grandfather, who later betrayed him and turned against him (2 Sam. 15:12; 16:23). Perhaps David is commenting upon Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom which was designed to destroy him. See on Ps. 32:8.

They delight in lies; they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah-
We may well enquire how David thought he knew the state of heart [AV "inward part"] of his enemies (Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11; 62:4; 64:6). Perhaps it was a result of his reflection upon how he had only had a right spirit or heart given by God "within" him as a result of his repentance (Ps. 51:10 s.w. where David realized God desires truth "inwardly", in the

inward parts). His enemies were impenitent, and so perhaps on that basis he knew what was in their hearts. The same idea is found in Ps. 55:21, which clearly refers to the behaviour of Absalom and Ahithophel: "His mouth was smooth as butter, but his heart was war. His words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords". And yet Uriah could have said all these things about David. David so often rants at the fact his enemies are liars, but his failures surrounding Uriah and Bathsheba were of lying.

Psa 62:5

My soul, wait in silence for God alone, for my expectation is from Him- Here again we have an example of David's self talk, which in fact comprises much of his Psalms. He tells himself to quieten down into silence, and hope and expect help from God alone. Rather like we may tell ourselves in crises to not trust in insurance, emergency services, friends... but ultimately, in God alone.
Again we note that "alone" is related to the word for "one". The unity of God implies our total trust in Him alone. And we have another example of how within prayer (for this Psalm is a prayer) we can deviate from talking to God, to addressing ourselves within our own self talk. This is the stuff of real spiritual mindedness. David's "expectation" in the context of Ps. 62:5 was the continuation of his own kingdom, despite all the threats against it from the likes of Saul, Absalom and others who would usurp his Davidic kingship and kingdom. Solomon likely uses the word for "expectation" with the same subtext; that all opposition to him was based upon a false expectation which would be dashed by God (s.w. Prov. 10:28; 11:7,23; 23:18; 24:14). The hope or expectation of David was that of all exiled Judah (s.w. Jer. 31:17; Lam. 3:29).

Psa 62:6

He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress. I will not be shaken-
As in :2, God's salvation is the basis for feelings of stability. Indeed Yahoshua, Yah's salvation, Jesus, is the rock of stability. But only is we are totally persuaded of our final, future salvation in Him will we experience this stability.

As his prayer develops, David moves from saying that he will not be very greatly moved (:2) to saying he will not be moved [so LXX] / shaken at all. This is the path of prayer that we often see in David, and should experience ourselves. Persuading ourselves deeper as we pray. But we could argue that this is an unrealistic and even narcissistic claim, for every man apart from the Lord Jesus is regularly "moved" or shaken from total faith. David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped / been shaken, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be shaken" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least

over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). But now he returns to his old failure, writing some time after the Bathsheba incident, proclaiming that he shall never be moved. Or this could simply be how it is in spiritual life; at times we are rightly aware of our possibility of slipping, other times we rejoice that God is keeping our feet from falling. Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Psa 62:7

With God is my salvation and my honour. The rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God-
The continued language of rocks and caves is appropriate to David in the wilderness, running either from Saul or Absalom.

In the shame based society of his time, David was often [wrongly] concerned about his shame. He trusts that God would be his "honour", his "glory" (AV), the restorer of him from the shame of sin, failure, his failed family and temporarily lost throne. This continual concern he has for his "honour" reflects a lack of appreciation of the consequences of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. And yet in the same breath he speaks of God as his salvation, as if he not only has immediate salvation in view but the ultimate salvation. For that is when the righteous shall inherit glory, not now. But then, all men shall bow before the judgment seat, in shame at their sins.

Our salvation being "with God" suggests there is an individual salvation for each of us. The Lord speaks of returning with rewards with Him, appropriate response for every man's works and unique life path. This is the "hope laid up in heaven" which Paul speaks of (Col. 1:5). The LXX helps us here. Verse 7 reads "he is the God of my help, and my hope is in God", but then :8 goes on to say that God is to be the help and hope of all His people: "Hope in him, all you congregation of the people... for God is our helper". David saw himself as representative of all God's people, and this is how Paul presents him in Romans.

Psa 62:8

Trust in Him at all times, you people-
David's line of thought now quickly moves from telling himself to trust in God (:7) to urging the whole world to do so. And this is the basis of our witness and evangelism to the world- the message flows from what we ourselves have come to believe in our own hearts. Having just stated that God is his personal refuge (:7), David now urges all men

to believe God is *our* refuge. "At all times" is quite a challenge- to consistently trust God "at all times", in all situations, and not just those desperate ones or ones which nudge us specifically towards faith in God.

Pour out your heart before Him. God is a refuge for us. Selah-
David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. For this Psalm clearly has some relevance to his situation whilst fleeing from Absalom. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). He wants others to find God a "refuge for *us*" as He had been for David. Indeed, Ps. 71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "Your strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others.

David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

GNB "Tell him all your troubles" is what David himself is doing here, and does so often in his psalms. For him, prayer was a telling God… about life. Pouring out the heart to God may mean an openness and freedom in prayer to express to God all your feelings, your sufferings and distress. Which is exactly how David prayed to God, holding nothing back. If he felt bitter and cranky about someone, he told God, even if later he regretted and reneged upon those feelings [we think of his death wishes for his son Absalom which he expresses to God freely].

Psa 62:9

Surely men of low degree are just a breath, and men of high degree are a lie. In the balances they will go up; they are together lighter than a breath-
David eagerly looks forward to the judgment seat (Ps. 62:9 RV, 12) as a source of comfort in his present distress. Those whom he had trusted in had betrayed him, whatever their social status. But David reasons further to perceive that in fact this is how all men are. These ideas are repeated in the context of the exiles, encouraging them

that literally all men, even the great and might of the Babylonian-Persian empire, are too light to influence the balances of Divine judgment (Is. 40:15).

The idea seems as in GNB: "great and small alike are worthless. Put them on the scales, and they weigh nothing; they are lighter than a mere breath". If all were to be placed on a balance scale, their weight would be equal to that of their vanities in the other scale. Man is his vanities, he is no heavier than them. They would be equal. Or the idea may sarcastically be that even a puff of breath on the other scale would be heavier than them, and would make their scale "go up". And yet light things, the things of vanity, are glorified in our world in the name of culture or achievement. They are wrongly weighted. They are a "lie" in that they are false weights, appearing heavier than they are. Hence LXX "the sons of men are false, so as to be deceitful in the balances". We see here how David is ever aware of God's ongoing judgment. The balances are now operating, and man is being weighed. And this was a comfort to him. The final day of judgment will be merely an expression of how God's ongoing judgment has been. Indeed that final day of judgment is really for our benefit. The weighing up of each case is going on now; the day of judgment will simply publically declare the verdict. And "we make the answer now".

Psa 62:10

Don't trust in oppression, don't become vain in robbery-
This seems to have been a characteristic of the reigns of Saul and Absalom. But the language of oppression and robbery is often used in the prophets concerning the leadership of God's people at later points (Is. 30:12; 59:13). This was the equivalent of how Saul oppressed David (Ps. 119:121,122,134). Samuel's insistence that *he* has not oppressed the people is in the context of his warning that Saul would do this (1 Sam. 12:3,4). When Solomon later condemns the 'oppressors' (s.w. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3,24), he has in view a wishing of judgment upon the house of Saul. "The poor" whom they had oppressed would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6).

If riches increase, don't set your heart on them-
The next verses explain why. Our hearts are to be set exclusively upon God and the saving power of His grace (:11,12). Increased wealth tempts people to trust in that wealth for power; but the only power is in God's free gift of grace. Gaining wealth either dishonestly [by theft] or honestly [by wealth increasing] is nothing to be compared with God's salvation, Yeshua, the salvation of Yah. This word occurs six times in this Psalm; and that is His power and grace (:11,12). This is what our heart is to be set upon- and the essence of Yah's salvation is the Lord Jesus and the things of His Kingdom. A major theme of the Psalm is that God alone can save, the word for "alone" occurs six times (:2,3,5,6,7,10). And wealth is the usual threat to trusting God "alone".

Psa 62:11

God has spoken once; twice I have heard this, that power belongs to God-
"Once… twice" appears to be a Hebraism meaning 'certainly'. "Power" is here placed in opposition to human riches and oppression (:10). The attraction of wealth is here defined as "power". And yet it is mythical that wealth can buy power, ultimately. All power is with God, and the battle is not to the strong nor the race won by the swift. The power of God is revealed above all in His grace (:12); this is His ultimate power, of an order far above human wealth.

We could translate this and :12 to the effect that God spoke once, but David heard two things. Firstly, that power belongs to God, and also, secondly, that therefore all grace belongs to God. LXX: "God has spoken once, and I have heard these two things, that power is of God; and mercy is thine, O Lord; for thou wilt recompense every one according to his works". The greatest declaration of God's power is that He, the God who judges every man according to his works, can save man- by grace. His grace is the most supreme declaration of His power, far more than anything we see in the natural creation. The sight of a huge mountain, or looking out into the vastness of the cosmos, is to be a reminder that His grace to me is even of greater power than all that.

Psa 62:12

Also to You, Lord, belongs grace, for You reward every man according to his work-
See on :11. God feels every sin, and judges it at the time, searching our hearts even for our motives- and He rewards sin with the death sentence. For the wages of sin is death. And yet, we don't die. The fact God views sin like this, and yet by grace forgives us, makes that grace and forgiveness all the more wonderful. Rom. 2:6 and Rev. 22:12 quote this about the latter day of judgment. We cannot be saved by our works. So because that day will on one hand be a reward of works and yet we shall be saved… our acceptance must therefore be by pure grace.

"Reward" is the same word translated "restore" when Nathan told David he must "restore" the lamb [Bathsheba] four fold (2 Sam. 12:6). Although David felt that at this time of Absalom's rebellion, he was being 'rewarded' according to his sins, he also saw that there was huge grace. Even when we suffer for sin, we have to realize that there is grace- for we are not being slain immediately for our sins, and are assured of eternal salvation.

We note that only now at the end of the Psalm does David address God. So far he has addressed his enemies (:3,4), himself (:6-8) and the world (:9). His prayer therefore includes all this self talk, including imagined conversations between himself and his enemies and the world. This is what prayer can be- as he says in :8, a pouring out of our

hearts to God. And the path of prayer brings us finally, as it does here with David, to personal encounter with God.

PSALMS CHAPTER 63

Psa 63:1

A Psalm by David, when he was in the desert of Judah-
This surely refers to David's experience at the hands of Saul, and yet it was appropriated by him to the situation he endured in exile from Absalom.

God, You are my God; I will earnestly seek You-
David was fleeing from Saul, but he perceives this as a fleeing towards God, a seeking for Him. We too mush see the push factors of life as in fact pull factors towards God. This theme continues in :8 "My soul has stuck close behind You", as if David is chasing after God or is following right behind Him. The Hebrew can also mean "I will early seek You", i.e. in the morning. Later in the Psalm, David speaks of how he praises God "in the night watches" too. This around the clock awareness of God is different to the idea of appearing before God only three times / year at the feasts, which is alluded to in the commentary on :2.

My soul thirsts for You, my flesh longs for You, in a dry and weary land, where there is no water-
This longing for God was in terms of longing to be able to worship Him again in the sanctuary, from which he was exiled during the persecution from Saul (:2). And yet he was to come to realize that there in the desert he was as much in God's presence, even beneath the cherubim wings of the ark, as he was in the sanctuary. The same word is used of how David felt "weary" when fleeing Absalom: "The king and all the people who were with him arrived weary" (2 Sam. 16:14). For David, and for us, one wilderness experience prepares you for the next. In his case, fleeing Saul was repeated when he had to flee his own son Absalom.

Psa 63:2

So I have seen You in the sanctuary, watching Your power and Your glory-
As David had watched the glory of God and sensed His power over the ark in the sanctuary, "so" He sees God's presence in the desert. The two clauses need inverting. He watched God's power and glory in the desert just "so" as he had once seen it in the sanctuary where the ark was. "Power and glory" are associated with the ark (1 Sam.

4:21,22 "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken"; Ps. 78:60,61 "He forsook the tent of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men; and delivered His strength / power into captivity, His glory into the adversary's hand"); but David now experiences the essence of them when far away from the physical ark. Although not a Levite, the implication is that David had somehow gotten close to the ark in the Most Holy place and had seen 'power and glory' over it in physical manifestation. Now he sees that quite apart from the physical ark. Ultimately, this is why God removed the ark and the sanctuary- so that His people would forge personal relationship with Him in exile. The sanctuary was conceived of as being where the ark was, "Yahweh's sanctuary where the ark of God was" (1 Sam. 3:3). But "let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8) is a reflection of Ex. 15:17, which states that actually Yahweh was making a sanctuary for Israel in the entire land promised to Abraham: "You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, the place, Yahweh, which You have made for yourself to dwell in; the sanctuary, Lord, which Your hands have established". Ps. 78:54 confirms this: "He brought them to the border of His sanctuary". And God's sanctuary was in fact therefore in the hearts of His people: "Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His kingdom" (Ps. 114:2). David is now coming to realize this- that the sanctuary is not just where the ark was, but anywhere in God's land. So now in Ps. 63:3 we see a spiritual development from Ps. 42:2,3 [note the same themes of thirsting for and seeking for God]: "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?", or, "come before Your face / presence". This was surely looking back to how David had obediently 'appeared before God' as all Hebrew males were to do three times / year at the feasts. David says he now has "seen" God in the desert, or come into His presence there [just as Moses did]. There David was longing to get to the sanctuary and be in God's presence, just as some who are excluded from church initially long to be back there. But he now progresses to see that he was watching God's power and glory in the desert, "so", just as, he had earlier seen it in the sanctuary. David's thirst and longing of :1 are not now for the sanctuary, but in one word, for "God", for personal connection with Him. And this in turn is a development of his thought in Ps. 68:35 "O God You are awesome from Your sanctuary", LXX "In Thy sanctuary". He now sees God's awesomeness as not being spatially limited to the sanctuary. Hence his later comment in :7 that he feels that he lives all the time on the mercy seat with the cherubic wings overshadowing him and the blood of atonement sprinkled upon him.

But David's faith in all this went up and down. In 1 Sam. 27 he decides to leave Israel and live with the Philistines, self fulfilling his complaint that Saul was driving him out of Yahweh's presence. He ought to have perceived as he did here, that Yahweh's presence was everywhere. And other Psalms reflect his sense that the sanctuary was only in a specific geographical place: "Yahweh, who shall dwell in Your sanctuary? Who shall live on Your holy hill?" (Ps. 15:1); his request that Yahweh "end you help from the sanctuary,

grant you support from Zion" (Ps. 20:2) suggests that even when king, having captured Zion Hill, David assumes that the sanctuary is specifically there. Indeed, his establishment of Zion as the place for the sanctuary was not by Divine command but a result of David's personal fondness for that hill, and God went along with that as He did with putting His shekinah glory in the physical temple. At the end of his life, he became obsessed with building a temple, despite God saying He didn't want this. He had slipped towards the pole of religion, away from the pole of personal spirituality and experience of God's presence which he experiences here in Ps. 63. Indeed this Psalm appears to be the pinnacle of his personal experience of God's presence, and he somewhat goes downhill in this aspect as his own life stabilizes. For it was when he had rest from his enemies, and was no longer on the run, that he had the idea of likewise domesticating God into a specific building in a specific place.

David was here at his peak of personal closeness to God. He saw God in the desert "as" he had experienced Him at the sanctuary. When on the run from Absalom, again into the desert, he simply laments that he so wishes he could get back to the sanctuary. He reminisces how wonderful it was to be at the tabernacle: "I remember and pour out my soul within me, how I used to go with the crowd, and led them to God's house, with the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping a holy day" (Ps. 42:4), whereas here in Ps. 63 he considers his wilderness experience as good as, and indeed far superior to, his appearances at the tabernacle. Here in Ps. 63 he is living intimately in God's presence. But in the Psalms which appear to be rooted in his later exile from Absalom, his prayer and hope is to be able to return to the tabernacle- rather than rejoicing in his present experience of God's presence. This "send out Your light and Your truth. Let them lead me. Let them bring me to Your holy hill, to Your great tent. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my exceeding joy. I will praise You on the harp, God, my God" (Ps. 43:3,4).

And as we see with Gideon, Samson and so many, man may reach a spiritual peak at some point in life, but somewhat droop from that into spiritual mediocrity in later life and death. But that doesn't mean they will not be saved.

Psa 63:3

Because Your grace is better than life, my lips shall praise You-
The idea is that 'more than my own life do I value God's love / grace, His hesed , covenant love, for me'. Even if he were to die, having known God's grace was enough, and David would ever praise God for that. Secular man sees the experience and preservation of human life is seen as the ultimate priority. But for the believer like David, there is something better than life, and that is life lived in God's covenant love.

Psa 63:4

So I will bless You while I live, I will lift up my hands in Your name-
As explained on :3, David feels that the wonder of praising God at this moment was enough for him, whether or not he was to die at the time. David earlier had thought that such lifting up of the hands in praise was done only in the sanctuary: "Lift up your hands in the sanctuary. Praise Yahweh!... Praise Yah! Praise God in His sanctuary!" (Ps. 134:2; 150:1). But as discussed on :2, he was now perceiving that sanctuary as everywhere, as this praise with uplifted hands could be given at night on his bed (:6), wherever that may be. In Ps. 141:2 he realizes that the lifting up of hands anywhere is equivalent to the evening sacrifice offered at the sanctuary: "Let my prayer be set before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice". And this thought continues into :5: "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness" (AV). We could translate this is "My soul shall satisfy [i.e. satisfy God] as with marrow and fatness". The offering of the marrow and fat was replaced by praising God with joyful lips (:5) and uplifted hands, even in the desert (:4). This for God is the very best. Marrow and fat mean the very best (Gen. 45:18; Ps. 36:9; Is. 25:6) and under the law they represented the very best parts of a sacrifice (Lev. 3:16). Man's love for God, even exiled man, in all his smallness, fallenness and moral weakness, can satisfy God and be seen by Him as they very best He could desire. That is an amazing thought. "As with marrow and fatness", "so as in the sanctuary", all reflects David's passing from the religious to the spiritual.

Psa 63:5

My soul shall be satisfied as with the richest food-
See on :4. The same word used of how Israel in the desert were "satisfied" with the food of God's provision (Ex. 16:8,12). David clearly saw them at that time as a precedent for himself whilst in the desert (:1). Being "satisfied" with food was the continual promise for obedience to the covenant (Dt. 8:10,12; 11:15; 31:20). But he speaks in the future, "shall be satisfied", perhaps ultimately with his eye upon the Kingdom of God coming upon earth; although clearly he expected some form of this in his own immediate experience in this life.

My mouth shall praise You with joyful lips-
David's joy was not in the experience of deliverance, but in his perception of God's grace (:3).

Psa 63:6

when I remember You on my bed, and think about You in the night watches-
This "bed" would have been somewhere in the desert whilst on the run from Saul (:1). David speaks of how he "meditates day and night" on God's law (Ps. 1:2), and also of how he meditates upon "God" at night (Ps. 63:6) and in the day (Ps. 71:24). "The word

was God", and still is, in the sense that our devotions to God are to be according to His word; for in practice, what we see of God is largely through His hand and statements in history which we find in His word.

Psa 63:7

For You have been my help-
In the Hezekiah context, this would have applied to how Ahaz had given money to the king of Assyria, but "he helped him not" (2 Chron. 28:21 s.w.). God was thereby revealed as the sole "hope of Israel".

I will rejoice in the shadow of Your wings-
This could mean that David was full of faith that he would return to the sanctuary; or that he felt that even in exile from the sanctuary, he was as it were right there beneath the cherubic wings over the ark, with God's glory above him and the blood of atonement beneath him. This was an encouragement to the exiles. Ps. 36:8 appears to take this even further when David comments that even the Gentile peoples could share this experience, outside the land of Israel: "All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings". But sadly David strayed from this sense in wanting to build a physical place where the ark with its cherubic wings could dwell, and the presence of these wings, seen only once / year by the High Priest, is stressed in the temple records (1 Kings 6:24; 2 Chron. 3:11).

Psa 63:8

My soul stays close to You, Your right hand upholds me-
Heb. 'cleaves' as husband and wife cleave to each other. The push factor of Saul's chasing him led to him following hard after God. Saul was "seeking" David (:9 "they seek after my soul"), but this led to David "earnestly seeking" God (:1). This intimacy with God was found by David in the desert, outside of the sanctuary. David responded to their seeking of him by seeking God more. He uses the language of the hunt and chase to describe how he was drawing closer to God: "My soul followeth hard after thee" (Ps. 63:8; Ps. 63 is a wilderness psalm, see title). "Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul… let all those that seek thee rejoice" (Ps. 40:14,16). In this sense, David felt he wasn't fleeing *from* his enemies as much as fleeing *to* God : "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies (from whom he was running): I flee unto thee to hide me" (Ps. 143:9). This fleeing *to* God didn't mean that David and Jesus didn't respond or retaliate verbally; both of them, especially the Lord Jesus, did. They both pleaded their innocence, and accused their enemies of being unfair and hypocritical. Yet this must have been done from a genuine motive of love; as David loved Saul, as the thought of Saul's death must have torn at his heart, so the Lord Jesus loved Israel,

weeping over Jerusalem, wishing to himself like a child for the impossible: that they would know him as their Saviour. Both David and Jesus had a real sense of direction, they could see that their mental, emotional and physical sufferings were leading them towards an altogether higher relationship with the Father. They took those sufferings as an almost welcome push towards the Father. They had a sure sense of spiritual direction in all their afflictions; this accounts for the human loneliness which they both felt. David felt that no one else understood (Ps. 14:2, a wilderness psalm) or was really seeking towards God as he was doing (Ps. 27:4,8). The Hebrew for "understand" here is that translated "wise" concerning David in 1 Sam. 18.

Psa 63:9

But those who seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth-
Saul *sought* to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved.

David's characteristic of self-examination cannot be unrelated to the fact that while on the run from Saul, he keenly meditated on the word of God (largely in the Law); Ps. 119 has many connections between his love of the word and the outlaw experiences. Perhaps David thought so much of the Law that he came close to the spirit of Moses in the desert; for "those that seek after my soul… shall go into the lower parts of the earth" is clearly alluding to the fate of Moses' enemies, Korah *et al* .

"The lower parts of the earth" may well be a reference to some supposed place of punishment after death. But we know from Ps. 49 and so often in the Psalms, that David believed death was unconsciousness. He may therefore have been alluding to a common curse formula, probably used by Saul against David, and wishing it to come back upon Saul.

Psa 63:10

They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be jackal food-
Heb. "poured out upon the hands / handles of the sword", a reference to Saul's suicide by leaning upon his own sword. When this happened to Saul and he was slain by his own sword, David wept deeply and genuinely. But what had happened was the fulfilment of his own prayer. Perhaps the desperate attempt to rescue Saul's body from the walls of Beth Shan was an attempt to stop the latter part of the verse coming true.

David surely learned the lesson we all have to- that we must be careful what we ask for in prayer lest we receive it.

“It is the jackal rather than the fox which preys on dead bodies, and which assembles in troops on the battle-fields, to feast on the slain” (Tristram). And yet David was at great pains to give Saul's bones an honourable resting place and rewards those who rescued his body. We see as so often that David's bitter words in the Psalms often don't match his actions in reality, which are far more gracious. And that is so true to observed reality in human life.

Psa 63:11

But the king shall rejoice in God-
This is tacit reflection of David's faith in Samuel's prophetic word that David was indeed to be king. Perhaps David speaks of himself in the third person because he is not yet the king. The king is David, as in Ps. 61:6. We have an insight here into David's self talk and self perception. Even when on the run from Saul, he clung on [at least at this point he did] to the self perception that 'one day I will be in the Kingdom, indeed that means that I am as good as in it right now'. This has exact relevance to us all now. And yet as noted on 1 Sam. 27:1 and seen throughout Ps. 119, his faith in the prophetic "word" that he would be king did indeed go up and down.

As noted earlier, this Psalm also has relevance to David's flight from Absalom, again into the wilderness. Absalom and his supporters claimed David was not "the king", but had been replaced by God with Absalom because of David's sin with Bathsheba. But David repeats to himself that he is in fact still "the king". He refused to see himself according to how others perceived him, but rather saw himself as God saw him. It's so hard to do this- because we are counted as righteous by God when we aren't, but we are to see ourselves as He sees us.

Everyone who swears by Him will praise Him, for the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped-
This may reference Saul swearing by Yahweh but lying and not keeping what he promised. David rarely seems able to express his own relationship with God without a swipe at his enemies, and in this verse we have a classic example. David lied many times in his life but he seems unaware of this at this point. And perhaps this is why Paul takes these words and applies them to every man. He reasons that the whole reason for the Law of Moses was “so that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). Paul is quoting here from Ps. 63:11: “the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped”. He’s reasoning that because we’re all sinners, we’re all liars- for untruth is the essence of sin. We are not being true to ourselves, to God, to His word, to our brethren... we profess covenant relationship with

God, to be His people, and yet we fail to keep the terms of that covenant. And the Law of Moses convicted all God's people of this, and in this way led them to the need for Christ. Yet Is. 52:15 prophesied that the crucified Jesus would result in men shutting their mouths. The righteousness and perfection displayed there in one Man, the very human Lord Jesus, has the same effect upon us as the Law of Moses- we shut our mouths, convicted of sin.

"Speak lies" reflects again David's deep sense of injustice (see on Ps. 35:7). He uses the word for "false witness", as if they were breaking one of the ten commandments; and he uses it often, heaping condemnation upon any who dare lie / bear false witness about him (Ps. 38:19; 52:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:29,69,86,118; 120:2; 144:8,11). And yet David lied and deceived in order to get Uriah killed so that he could take his wife for himself. Surely reflection upon that sin made him realize that his zeal to condemn dishonesty was at best misplaced; to lament it is one thing, but David was to be taught that he had himself done the very thing he so condemned.

PSALMS CHAPTER 64

Psa 64:1
For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David-
As noted on :2, this Psalm appears to be based during the insurrection of Absalom.

Hear my voice, God, in my complaint. Preserve my life from fear of the enemy-
Prayer is perhaps the area where it is easiest to have only a surface level of spirituality, without getting down to real faith, real perseverance in prayer, real wrestling with God. Elijah "prayed in his prayer" (James 5:17 AVmg.) reflects the Spirit's recognition that there is prayer, and real prayer. "Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer" (Ps. 64:1 AV) seems to say the same: there is our true, pleading voice: and the outward form of prayer. The form of words we use, the outward form, conceals the *real* thing; the real groaning of spirit which is counted by God as the real prayer. The tendency to multiply words in prayer without intensely *meaning* them is probably behind the Lord's teaching about faith as a grain of mustard seed, which could move a mountain (Lk. 17:20). He's surely saying that a little bit of the *real thing* can do such wonders.

Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer", although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn.

11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point.

The prayer is not simply for preservation, but for preservation "from fear of the enemy"- a prayer against anxiety. God is quite able to work within the psychology of man. The whole Psalm is about the impact of others' words upon David. And he asks for psychological strength against the impact of those words, so that his life is not dominated by those words. This kind of thing is what daily, blow by blow spirituality is all about. David concludes in :9,10 with a kingdom perspective- one day there will be a day of judgment of human words, and the upright will glory. That kingdom perspective is so necessary- otherwise we are left playing back to ourselves the unkind words of others, as if this life is the only arena in which we shall ever exist, and therefore the words of others now will seem so significant.

Psa 64:2

Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, from the noisy crowd of the ones doing evil- "Conspiracy" sounds like the time of Absalom's putsch. "Noisy crowd" is AV "insurrection". But that is the same word used of Ahithophel in Ps. 55:14: "We walked to God's house in company". "In company" is a word only used elsewhere in Ps. 64:2, where it is translated "insurrection" (AV), again in the context of Absalom. The double meaning of the word chosen reflects the duplicity of Ahithophel.

Psa 64:3

who sharpen their tongue like a sword, and aim their arrows, deadly words-
When men speak hard words against us, the situation on earth is somehow mirrored in the court of Heaven- Ps. 64:3,7 speak of how *men* "aim their arrows, even bitter words"; and God responds by shooting arrows from His Heavenly control room. The language of sharpening could suggest that David wrote this as he sensed the oncoming insurrection of Absalom (:1,2).

Psa 64:4

to shoot innocent men from ambushes. They shoot at him suddenly and fearlessly-
Nathan had told David that he was to suffer the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba for the rest of his life. But in the Psalms associated with Absalom's rebellion, which was a consequence of his sin (Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather), David often laments that he is suffering as an innocent man. This is another reason for querying whether he maintained the intensity of repentance for the sin which he had at the time. And we can likely identify with that weakness; the intensity of repentance is hard to

maintain, and we often rework the narrative of what happened in our own minds- biased of course towards our own justification. See on :6.

Psa 64:5

They encourage themselves in evil plans. They talk about laying snares secretly-
David appears to have inside knowledge of how they were congratulating themselves on their plans. Absalom's plans for rebellion were therefore more or less known to David ahead of time. And yet in love he tolerated him and Ahithophel, perhaps in desperate hope of their repentance. This typifies how the Lord Jesus knew ahead of time that Judas would betray Him and yet still lovingly tolerated him, and did not at all take precipitate, defensive action.

They say, Who will see them?-
Again we doubt whether these men really thought their plans were invisible to God. But this was the subconscious state of their minds. This was how God read their attitude and perhaps revealed it to David.

Psa 64:6

They plot injustice, saying, We have made a perfect plan! Surely man's mind and heart are cunning-
We may well enquire how David thought he knew the state of heart [AV "inward part"] of his enemies (Ps. 5:9; 36:1; 49:11; 62:4; 64:6). Perhaps it was a result of his reflection upon how he had only had a right spirit or heart given by God "within" him as a result of his repentance (Ps. 51:10 s.w.). His enemies were impenitent, and so perhaps on that basis he knew what was in their hearts.

AV has "They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search". Nathan had told David that he was to suffer the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba for the rest of his life. But in the Psalms associated with Absalom's rebellion, which was a consequence of his sin (Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather), David often laments that he is suffering as an innocent man. This is another reason for querying whether he maintained the intensity of repentance for the sin which he had at the time. And we can likely identify with that weakness; the intensity of repentance is hard to maintain, and we often rework the narrative of what happened in our own minds- biased of course towards our own justification. See on :4.

Psa 64:7

But God will shoot at them, they will be suddenly struck down with an arrow-
David rejoices that Divine "arrows" were sent to destroy his enemies (Ps. 7:13; 18:14;

45:5; 64:7; 144:6), in fulfilment of God's promise to do so to the sinful within Israel (Dt. 32:23,42). But David was failing to realize that those same arrows had been fired by God into him in judgment for his sin (Ps. 38:2). This realization was perhaps to help David understand that his rejoicing in Divine arrows of judgment being fired at his enemies had not been mature; for he himself had to realize that he was worthy of the same. But as noted on :4,6, it appears David didn't perceive this as he might have done.

The suddenness / quickness of judgment is a major Biblical theme. The suddenness of how the wicked had shot words like arrows at David (Ps. 64:4) is matched with how "suddenly" they will be struck by God's arrow in judgment. Judgment will be "sudden" (Ps. 64:7); and that may be part of the idea behind Rev. 22:12 "I come quickly / suddenly". Judgment will be a sudden surprise for the wicked, but something long and slowly awaited by the righteous. The Lord's coming will be as "thief in the night" for the wicked, "at an hour you do not expect", in that it will be unexpected, catching them off guard (Lk. 17:26-30; Mt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2,3 "While people are saying, 'Peace and security,' destruction will come upon them *suddenly*"). The sudden nature of Divine judgment is a major Biblical theme. We think of the sudden deaths of Ananias and Sapphira; Miriam's immediate leprosy after her complaint, with God speaking "suddenly" to her about it (Num. 12:4); and the sudden nature of the coming of the flood and judgment upon Sodom. It was sudden in the sense that the judged people were hit by it as a surprise. Hence calamity or judgment from God comes suddenly (Prov. 3:25; 6:15; 24:22; Ecc. 9:12). "It shall be at an instant, suddenly" (Is. 29:5), like a bowing wall "whose breaking comes suddenly at an instant" (Is. 30:13). God's historical judgments have likewise come "suddenly" on those who experienced them, even though God's people expected them. We think of Babylon "suddenly" being destroyed (Is. 47:11; Jer. 51:8; Hab. 2:7), just as Babylon "suddenly" destroyed Judah (Jer. 4:20; 6:26; 15:8; 18:22). The suddenness was in the experience of the judged people; the righteous were aware of the judgment coming and saw it coming.

Psa 64:8

Their own tongues shall ruin them; all who see them will shake their heads-
Speaking of the sudden destruction of the wicked at the future judgment, David reflected: “So they shall make their own tongues to fall upon themselves” (Ps. 64:8). Unsound speech will be condemned, or [will lead to our] condemnation (Tit. 2:8 we are to speak "sound speech, that cannot be condemned"). The implication seems to be that our words will be quoted back to us during the judgment process. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account of it in the day of judgment. By your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned", the Lord taught (Mt. 12:37). Our words are taken that seriously by God: "He who guards his mouth guards his soul" (Prov. 13:3). We ourselves comment that "I *knew* you'd say that!", because character is

ultimately reflected in our words; "for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks". All attempts to think one thing and speak another will all ultimately fail. Hence we pray for God to "put a watch before the door of my lips". Brother, sister, think about this. Ancient Hebrew had no expletives. Curses were uttered in terms of imprecations wishing Divine judgment against a person at the last day. And so David asks that these curses uttered upon him come literally true for those who spoke them.

Psa 64:9

All mankind shall be in awe. They shall declare the work of God, and shall wisely ponder what He has done-
The judgment of his opponents which David had in view was therefore that at the last day. For it is a theme in Bible teaching about judgment that the judgment of the wicked will in some sense be public, before others, and the observers are brought to God by what they see (Is. 26:9; Rev. 16:15). All men would then be "in awe", in contrast to how these men had spoken their words "without fear" (s.w. "awe"), :4. Likewise at the day of judgment, all will "see" these men and their words (:8), whereas in their lives they had used words thinking "Who shall see them?" (:5).

Psa 64:10

The righteous shall be glad in Yahweh, and shall take refuge in Him. All the upright in heart shall praise Him!-
The final difference will be between the states of heart of men. "The upright in heart" here contrast with those who spoke bitter words and made destructive plans deep in their hearts (:6).

David is seeing himself and the righteous as Job, and he here continues that connection, seeing that Job is described likewise as "upright in heart" (Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

PSALMS CHAPTER 65

Psa 65:1

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David. A song-
The context appears to be David at the time of Absalom's rebellion, thanking God for restoring him, and looking ahead to God's Kingdom coming upon earth. It has clearly been adapted further to be relevant to the exiles. Although verses 9-13 could suggest a thanksgiving song for an abundant harvest. Perhaps that indeed is how the usage of the Psalm developed- with the thanksgiving prefaced by the thought that we are all sinners, and such blessings are all of grace. Or quite possibly, there had been a lack of abundant harvest because of sin; and now that had been forgiven, and the blessed harvests had resumed. Maybe historically David was alluding to these blessings and cursings of the covenant after having experienced a bad harvest followed by a good harvest, around the time of his sin with Bathsheba.

Praise waits for You, God, in Zion. To You shall vows be performed-
Literally, "to You, silence is praise". This is proof for all time that praise doesn't have to mean singing or audible music. The idea is as in Ps. 62:1, where the Hebrew is literally "My soul is silent in God alone".

David had made various vows as to what he would do if he returned to Zion. And now he was to fulfil them, and this song is one of them. The Hebrew implies "silent praise", a way of expressing the inadequacy of the audible song which David has composed. There may be an allusion to the silence in the sanctuary (later the temple courts) as the people awaited the reappearance of the High Priest on the day of atonement to declare their forgiveness. And there was to be silent praise this had been granted. As noted on :3,4, David seems aware that his suffering at the hands of Absalom was a consequence for his sin with Bathsheba, and he thanks God for his forgiveness. I have noted elsewhere however that he seemed to struggle with it all, with some of the Absalom period Psalms reflecting his feeling that he was suffering as an innocent man.

Who we are as persons is effectively our prayer and plea to God. This conception of prayer explains why often weeping, crying, waiting, meditating etc. are spoken of as "prayer" , although there was no specific verbalizing of requests (Ps. 5:1,2; 6:8; 18:1,2,3,6; 40:1; 42:8; 64:1 Heb.; 65:1,2; 66:17-20; Zech. 8:22). The association between prayer and weeping is especially common: 1 Sam. 1:10; Ps. 39:12; 55:1,2; Jn. 11:41,42; Heb. 5:7, especially in the Lord's life and the Messianic Psalms. "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping. The Lord has heard my supplication; the Lord will receive my prayer" (Ps. 6:8,9) crystallizes the point.

Psa 65:2

You who hear prayer, to You all men will come- This refers to the coming near in sacrifice which is alluded to in :4. David saw his experience of forgiveness and grace concerning his sin with Bathsheba as programmatic for "all men", and he wanted to teach and preach it. "All men" are all those who will draw near to God (:4). We are to see the unbelieving society around us as different to the believers- they are to be "all men" to us, the environment in which we live.

It should be noted that David/Bathsheba language is used to describe Israel's spiritually fallen state (e.g. Ps. 38:7 = Is. 1:6; Ps. 51:7 = Is. 1:18; Ps. 65:2 = Is. 40:15). David recognized this in Ps. 51:17, where he likens his own state to that of Zion, which also needed to be revived by God's mercy. As David's sin is likened to the killing of a lamb (2 Sam. 12:4), so the Jews killed Jesus. The troubles which therefore came upon his kingdom have certain similarities with the events of AD67-70. They were also repeated in the Nazi Holocaust, and will yet be. Israel are yet to fully repent after the pattern of David.

Psa 65:3

Sins overwhelmed me-
The allusion to David's sin with Bathsheba which began in :1 is continued in :4. David perceives that his personal sin ("me") is representative of "our [plural] transgressions". He saw in his salvation by grace a pattern for all who would afterward sin, as he makes clear in Ps. 32. The same word used for how David's sins "overwhelmed me" (Ps. 65:3) is used of how overwhelming or "great" is God's grace (Ps. 103:11; 117:2). David felt overwhelmed firstly by his sin and then by God's grace. This explains his fragile emotional and nervous state, as often reflected in the Psalms. But his path is to be that of all God's true Israel.

But You atoned for our transgressions-
The words used for the atoning of Israel's sins, if they were to follow the pattern of David in repentance (Ps. 79:9; Is. 27:9; Dan. 9:24). Thus Paul argues in Romans that David's experience of sin with Bathsheba is that of every man, emerging justified and humbled by grace alone. We note the contrast between "me" and "our" sins. Atonement for sin has been achieved collectively for God's people, but we as individuals must as it were claim it. This is what should bind God's people together as a community- our joint experience of forgiveness. Thus in :5 he speaks of God as the God of "*our* salvation".

Psa 65:4

Blessed is the person whom You choose and cause to come near, that he may live in Your courts. We will be filled with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple-

Choosing and causing to come near is the language of election and predestination, which Paul cites as the parade example of how salvation is by grace.

"Come near" is a common idiom for offering sacrifice and worshipping God. The idea is used in Ps. 32:9 of how men ought to learn from David's example, and not be as horses who must have their mouths kept in with a bridle: "Don't be like the horse or like the mule which have no understanding, who are controlled by bit and bridle, or else they will not come near to you". God doesn't want to force men to come near to Him through using the force of bit and bridle; rather does He want genuinely repentant sinners like David, in awe of His grace, to come to Him of themselves with the "understanding" of Him as the God of all grace. But God all the same causes men to "come near" to Him (Ps. 65:4 s.w.); but not be coercion, by bit and bridle, rather by the experience of His grace, through the operation of the Holy Spirit.

The reference to the "courts" of the "temple" indicates that the Psalm was rewritten and reapplied to the exiles, in their hope for restoration if they followed the pattern of David's repentance and restoration.

Psa 65:5

By awesome deeds of righteousness You answer us, God of our salvation-
The Psalm now moves towards a greater relevance to the exiles (see on :4) and the hope of God's restored Kingdom coming on the earth. Such restoration was to be by grace alone, but was brought about in "righteousness", in justice. Paul in Romans 1-8 develops this theme; that condemned sinners are justified by grace in a way that is all the same "just". This is the wonder of God's grace and His saving work through His Son. For it was in Jesus, Yehoshua, the salvation of God / Yah, that He saves rejected sinners in total justice.

You who are the hope of all the ends of the earth, of those who are far away on the sea-
This had particular reference to the exiles dwelling in Babylon and Assyria, at the ends of the *eretz* promised to Abraham. Those "on the sea" likewise refer to God's people scattered even beyond that territory, in what is symbolically called "the sea" of even more distant Gentile areas. The term is used in that sense in :7.

Psa 65:6

who by His power forms the mountains, having armed Yourself with strength-
The implication could be that God would form new "mountains", perhaps an intensive plural referring to the one great mountain, of Zion. He would take His strength to Himself in restoring and reforming Zion. It's the same argument as found throughout second Isaiah. As discussed on :3, the "salvation" in view in :5 is forgiveness of sin, and the

subsequent reflections on God's huge power in creation are in that context. The God who forms and levels mountains can easily bring His people into His Kingdom. His physical strength seen in creation is a guarantee that He can do literally anything, including saving and restoring sinners to His Kingdom. So often we read an appeal to nature as the basis upon which God can save me... "I lift up my eyes to the hills, from whence shall come my aid" etc.

Psa 65:7

who stills the roaring of the seas, the crashing of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations-
As noted on :5, the seas refer to the Gentile nations beyond the *eretz* or territory promised to Abraham. Those nations worldwide would be stilled, when God forms or reforms the great mountain of Zion (:6). The Lord Jesus spoke of the situation just prior to His return as the sea and waves roaring, apparently alluding here (Lk. 21:25). "Stills" is literally 'to speak loudly to', and is usually translated "praise". The Lord Jesus fulfilled this, on God's behalf, by addressing the roaring of the storm on Galilee. This was a microcosm of the coming of His Kingdom. The language used here (and in Ps. 74:23) is that used of the gathering of the Assyrian and Babylonian armies against Zion (Is. 13:4; 17:12,13; 25:5; Jer. 25:31). But God's word was to calm that, in order to reestablish His Kingdom. And that is what we now read of in this Psalm.

Psa 65:8

They also who dwell in distant places are afraid at Your wonders. You call the morning's dawn and the evening with songs of joy-
The picture is of the knowledge of the God of Israel spreading worldwide, from sun rise to sunset, so that dawn and evening would be accompanied by songs of praise from the Gentiles to the God of Israel. It was in this sense that the roaring of the Gentile seas would be made calm (:7).

Psa 65:9

You visit the earth, and water it; You greatly enrich it. The river of God is full of water. You provide them grain, for so You have ordained it-
Fecundity within the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham is part of the blessing for obedience to the covenant. Here David envisages it as happening abundantly- because the people of the earth / land had followed his pathway of repentance and restoration. This is the picture of Eden restored, with the river of God providing enrichment; the picture is repeated in the final visions of God's Kingdom at the end of Revelation. "The

river of God" is specifically envisaged as flowing from Zion (Ps. 46:4), lending weight to my suggestions elsewhere that Eden was based around Zion.

Psa 65:10

You drench its furrows, You level its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless it with a crop-
The impression is of superabundant blessing, with God's hand working to create the optimal topography of the land [although "ridges" may refer to the furrows] and provide the optimal rainfall for maximal fruitfulness. "Soften" is the word used of the melting away of the Canaanite tribes before Israel entered the land.

Psa 65:11

You crown the year with Your bounty, Your carts overflow with abundance-
"Crown" is better 'encircle'. The idea is that God's bounteous blessing is experienced all around the year- and not just at the time of harvest, as understood by the pagan religions. His blessing is not just occasional, but every moment. God's harvest or "carts" is that of His people, such is their identity in His Kingdom. But "carts" is s.w. "paths". The idea also is that this Kingdom situation would come about only when God's paths or ways were followed.

Psa 65:12

The wilderness grasslands overflow, the hills are clothed with gladness-
The perspective on the land is as it were an aerial view, with the hills and valleys (:13) apparently clothed with blessing. David is seeing things from God's heavenly perspective; this is a vision of the Kingdom of God upon earth.

Psa 65:13

The pastures are covered with flocks, the valleys also are clothed with grain. They shout for joy! They also sing-
LXX "Sing hymns", as if David's Psalms of the Kingdom would be sung by the valleys, as it were; in that they would echo the sounds of those singing those hymns.

PSALMS CHAPTER 66

Psa 66:1

For the Chief Musician. A song. A Psalm-
I assume from Ps. 72:20 that this is still one of the Psalms of David. It is a Psalm of praise to God for all He has done in saving David from some specific situation (:10-12), but it has clearly been reused by a later inspired hand, given the reference to the temple (:13).

Make a joyful shout to God, all the earth!-
The invitation is to the entire *eretz* to convert to Israel's God. This Psalm imagines that David's invitation to them to praise God will be positively responded to (:4). The "shout" as in Ps. 47:1 could imply that all the earth is now accepting Yahweh as their king; to shout and sing was typical of a coronation. The idea is that the Gentiles will accept Israel's God as their king. The Psalm can be read as a vision of how people in the Kingdom of God will feel. They will realize their prayers finally were answered, they will see like Paul in Romans 7 that they did not cherish sin but hated it, they will see all God's works were "awesome" rather than struggling with God's actions. And outside the space-time continuum, they will be able to go back to events like the Red Sea deliverance and thank God for them and rejoice with Israel there. They will be able to declare the good which God had done for their soul. They will realize that being in "prison", literally or figuratively, being treated like a door mat with men walking over them, going through fire and water- was all part of the refining fire which brought them into the "place of abundance" (:12) of God's eternal Kingdom. So the Psalm can be read about our final understanding of all things, our making sense of our lives, which is necessary to make eternal life wonderful.

Psa 66:2

Sing to the glory of His name! Offer glory and praise!-
By singing along with the words of David's Psalms, the Gentile nations within the *eretz* (:1) would be praising His Name. David perceived that the offering God really wanted was not so much animals slain upon the altar in Zion, as the sacrifice of praise. David had learned this from his own experience of sinning concerning Uriah and Bathsheba. Unable to offer any sacrifice to atone for what he had done, he concluded that the sacrifice required was a humble heart.

Psa 66:3 Tell God, How awesome are Your deeds! Through the greatness of Your power, Your enemies submit themselves to You-
Here David is as it were teaching the Gentiles how to pray to God in praise, putting

words in their mouths. The submission of God's former enemies was therefore not forced upon them by God, but was rather a voluntary submission in awe at His power and works, especially His fearsome deeds of judgment upon sinners (s.w. Ps. 64:9). The submission however is not of the kind usually imposed upon the conquered- these who are laying down ['submitting'] to Yahweh are pictured as worshipping Him and singing to His Name from the heart (:4), identifying with Israel to the point that they can rejoice at the historical acts of Yahweh for Israel as having been done for them.

Psa 66:4

All the earth will worship You, and will sing to You; they will sing to Your name. Selah-
This Psalm imagines that David's invitation to the Gentiles within the *eretz* to praise God will be positively responded to (:1). They would appreciate God's Name, His essential character and purpose.

Psa 66:5

Come and see God's deeds- awesome work on behalf of the children of men-
David invites us to come and see the works God did at the Red Sea, commenting: "there *we* rejoiced in Him" (Ps. 66:6). He praises God for saving him in the language of Israel's Red Sea deliverance, speaking of it as "the day of *my* trouble" (Ps. 86:7,8 = Ex. 15:11). He saw how their circumstances and his were in principle the same; he personalized the Scripture he had read, inviting us to play "Bible television" with the text. We are to go and see the Red Sea all over again.

Psa 66:6

He turned the sea into dry land, they went through the river on foot. There we rejoiced in Him-
The Psalms so often encourage Israelites to feel as if they personally had been through the Red Sea experience. Generation would tell to generation the Passover story, and would also sing of God's greatness as Israel did in Ex. 15 (Ps. 145:5-7). Hence: "He turned the sea into dry land...there *let us* (AV: did we) rejoice in him" (Ps. 66:6 RVmg.). We too are enabled by Scripture to feel as if we were there, and to rejoice in what God did for *us* there. This of course depends upon our sense of solidarity with God's people over time, as well as over space. The message here has special appropriacy to the exiles, who were encouraged to make a similar exodus to the promised land.

Psa 66:7

He rules by His might forever-
The idea is that God has not only been occasionally active by His might in history, such as at the Red Sea (:6). His saving activity is constant and not occasional.

His eyes watch the nations-
Very relevant to the exiles. God's Angelic "eyes" watch and guide the nations as part of His continual activity towards the salvation of His people. The Hebrew conception of an "eye" was that if it is watching you, then it is guiding and manipulating you (hence the concept of the "evil eye"). The allusion is how to God looked at the Egyptians at the Red Sea, made their chariot wheels get bogged down in the mud, and made the sea return over them: "in the morning watch Yahweh looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud" (Ex. 14:24). Yahweh "looked" at the time of the morning "watch". And He continues to do so today.

Don't let the rebellious rise up against Him. Selah-
"Rebellious" is indeed how Israel were in the wilderness (s.w. Neh. 9:29; Ps. 68:6; 78:8). David is urging Israel to learn from this and not be rebellious but accept God's guidance of them towards the promised land; especially relevant to the exiles. But sadly they remained rebellious (s.w. Is. 65:2).

Psa 66:8

Praise our God, you peoples! Make the sound of His praise heard-
David invites the Gentiles to praise "our God", Yahweh of Israel, and in turn to spread the knowledge of Him to others.

Psa 66:9

who preserves our life among the living, and doesn't allow our feet to be moved-
God's preservation of Israel was by grace, and was intended to be a witness to the nations amongst whom they had been scattered. For the context is of witness to the Gentiles (:8). God had allowed the feet of His people to be moved out of their land, but the intention was that this was to be temporary, and their return would be a witness to the Gentiles amongst whom they lived- leading them to join in and also come to Zion in penitence and faith. And then He would not again allow their feet to be moved from their land (s.w. Ps. 121:3). The Jews were kept alive as a people amongst the nations. But the origin of the Psalm is in David's feelings that he would now not "be moved" when in fact he was moved and his feet "slipped" at the time of his sin with Bathsheba, and he later accepts that only God's grace held him up. Likewise God did allow the feet of His people "to be moved" for they were taken away into exile by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans.

Psa 66:10

For You, God, have tested us. You have refined us, as silver is refined-
These are the intended feelings of the exiles upon restoration, perceiving their captivity as a time of refining and "testing", just as the fathers were tested by Joseph / Jesus (s.w. Gen. 42:15,16). But the exiles failed to be refined as intended (Is. 1:25), and it must be repeated (s.w. Zech. 13:9).

Psa 66:11

You brought us into prison, You laid a burden on our backs-
The imagery of the exile as a prison from which the exiles could be "brought out" is often used in later Isaiah. But most refused that redemption, and preferred to remain in Babylon. The burden laid on their backs is describing their exile in the language of the abuse in Egypt. But their experience there was nowhere near as bad, and the book of Esther reveals the Jews as wealthy and prosperous there.

Psa 66:12

You allowed men to ride over our heads. We went through fire and through water, but You brought us to the place of abundance-
This is indeed what happened when Israel were brought out of Egypt, passing through the fire and water of the pillars of cloud and fire leading them. But the exiles for the most part declined this great salvation offered. Instead of men riding over their heads they could have had God's cherubic chariot doing so (s.w. Ps. 68:4,33; Hab. 3:8). The imagery is very much that of the exile, when the Babylonians said: "'Bow down, that we may walk over you;' and you have laid your back as the ground, and as the street, to those who walk over" (Is. 51:23). But this was "allowed" by God. Isaiah's prophecies of the restoration spoke in terms of a second exodus, now from Babylon rather than Egypt, and that explains the allusions here to being brought through fire and water to a "place of abundance". But the reality was that this Psalm was not felt nor believed by the exiles. For most declined that exodus and remained in Babylon, and those who did return did so for their own ends and without the experience implied here.

Psa 66:13

I will come into Your temple with burnt offerings. I will pay my vows to You-
David desired to offer sacrifice in the sanctuary because of some great deliverance received. This is therefore reworked, under inspiration, with relevance to the time when the temple was built. The restored exiles ought to have vowed to offer sacrifice there in

thanksgiving for their deliverance, but the record of the restoration indicates that they did so at best only half heartedly.

Psa 66:14

which my lips promised and my mouth spoke, when I was in distress-
David had apparently promised that if he was preserved, he would go to the sanctuary and offer sacrifice, and he was eager to do this. His time of "distress" or AV "trouble" therefore looks ahead to the time of Jacob's trouble in the last days.

Psa 66:15

I will offer to You burnt offerings of fat animals, with the offering of rams, I will offer bulls with goats. Selah-
Whenever this Psalm was originally written, it was presumably before David had come to the conclusion that God doesn't want animal sacrifice as much as He desires the sacrifice of a broken heart (Ps. 51:17). Israel unfortunately didn't learn that lesson; for the few exiles who did return did so without contrite hearts, and offered merely tokenistic sacrifices. Or perhaps, if this Psalm is written after the Bathsheba issues (as suggested on :16), David is slipping back from his earlier understanding that God didn't really want sacrifice.

Psa 66:16

Come and hear, all you who fear God; I will declare what He has done for my soul-
David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "Your strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men. David's desire to declare

what had been done for his "soul" was not simply the message of forgiveness; rather it was of spiritual and psychological restoration through the work of the Holy Spirit (Ps. 23:3; 51:12). The intention was that the exiles would follow his path of repentance toward such restoration of their soul.

Psa 66:17

I cried to Him with my mouth. He was extolled with my tongue-
*T*he idea is that David prayed for help and at the same time praised God for already answering him, such was his faith. Hence GNB "I cried to him for help; I praised him with songs".

Psa 66:18

If I cherished sin in my heart, the Lord wouldn't have listened- This appears self righteous. For apart from the Lord Jesus, there is no heart in which there has been no cherishing of sin. In the matter of Bathsheba, David is set up as the parade example of a man who lusted in his heart, and then performed the fantasized sin. And yet here he predicates God's answer to his prayer as being on the basis of his spotless heart. He fails to perceive that his deliverance or salvation was by grace. This raises the question as to whether this Psalm originated before or after the sin with Bathsheba. If after (see on :16), then again we wonder as to the extent of his repentance; he apparently failed to maintain the intensity of his grasp of grace and his own sinfulness. And we all have that same tendency.

Psa 66:19

But most certainly, God has listened. He has heard the voice of my prayer-
As discussed on :18, David wrongly predicates God's listening to his voice upon his apparently spotless heart (:18). We can note that he speaks of the voice of his prayer, as if within verbalized prayer there is an essence of our spirit which is the true voice of the prayer, and God hears this. Therefore it is wrong to think that we cannot pray well or effectively because we aren't good at verbalizing.

Psa 66:20

Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His grace from me-
David had a theoretical understanding that the salvation given him was by grace alone; and yet as noted on :18,19, he still maintained an inappropriate self-righteousness. And our professed understanding of grace can be similar.

PSALMS CHAPTER 67

Psa 67:1

For the Chief Musician. With stringed instruments. A Psalm. A song-
This appears to have initially been a thanksgiving song for a good harvest, but it clearly has been developed to understand the harvest as the spiritual harvest of Gentiles for God's Kingdom, with God's blessing of Israel by grace leading to Gentiles being converted to the God of Israel.

May God be merciful to us, bless us, and cause His face to shine on us. Selah-
Heb. 'shine with us', as if God's joy is now that of His people. Blessing is often understood as forgiveness; this was the "mercy" implicit in the promises to Abraham and David. The shining of God's face with His people suggests restoration of fellowship and loving acceptance of them by grace. And this was what led to the harvest now to be celebrated in the Psalm.

The allusion is clearly to the Priestly blessing of the people in Num. 6:24,25. But that blessing was to be shared with all the Gentiles. This is the same idea with which Ps. 68 begins, supporting the suggestion that the Psalms are often paired. This Ps. 67 would thus be an introduction to Ps. 68.

The allusion to the High priestly blessing is very clear: "Speak to Aaron and to his sons, saying, 'This is how you shall bless the children of Israel'. You shall tell them, 'Yahweh bless you, and keep you. Yahweh make His face to shine on you, and be gracious to you. Yahweh lift up His face toward you, and give you peace'. So they shall put My name on the children of Israel; and I will bless them" (Num. 6:23-27). We note the stress is on "and I, I will bless them" (Heb.). Nothing magical was done by the priest himself, just as blessing is not achieved by wearing amulets or jewellery or having certain tattoos. He simply asked Yahweh to bless the people, and Yahweh would do so- and that is the spirit of this prayer in Ps. 67. But the difference is that the people being blessed are to pronounce these words. Not asking God to e.g. "make His face to shine on *you*", but rather, "cause His face to shine on *us*". "May God be merciful / gracious to *us*" rather than asking Him to be "gracious to *you*". The ordinary people, whoever was praying this prayer, is being given the job of the priests, indeed of the High Priest. Perhaps this was a psalm used by the exiles when the priesthood and temple cult didn't function; we see something similar in Daniel's prayer "cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary that is desolate" (Dan. 9:17). Perhaps it originated in the prayers of David and his men when they were unable to have access to the sanctuary and priesthood; LXX calls it a prayer

of David. This is the path to maturity in us all; for whatever reason, we end up having to be the priest or the pastor. For indeed we are to be a kingdom of priests, and the 'priesthood of all believers' is very real. We are led to be the ones who take spiritual responsibility for others as well as ourselves. Perhaps the local church declines or breaks up, our pastoral figures die without replacement, we become disillusioned with them, or for whatever reason we move out of their sphere. In the bigger picture, that too is all of God. The priestly blessing was not to be repeated just as a form of words- the psalm concludes: "God *will* bless us" (:7). It's like praying for forgiveness, or a place in the eternal Kingdom of God, and concluding "I *am* forgiven... I *will be* saved. Amen! So it is!". The priestly blessing, however, was being prayed by individuals for not just Israel, but the Gentiles too.

Psa 67:2

That Your way may be known on earth, and Your salvation among all nations-
The "blessing" upon "us" God's people was *in order that* all nations would know God's salvation. Verse 7 concludes the same way. Indeed this is the major theme of the psalm- that God's blessing upon His people leads to the salvation of the nations. And the idea of "blessing" is largely associated with forgiveness, grace, the gift of the Spirit and salvation. The shining of God's face is now the experience of every believer filled with the Spirit: "He shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). The experience of these things cannot remain with the recipient- we have to share them with the world. This psalm is a prayer that this happens, at least for the individual praying the prayer. Under the old covenant, "blessing" was in terms of the increase of the earth in harvest (:6), but under the new covenant, those blessings are of forgiveness, grace and salvation. I suggest this Psalm was relevant to the exiles, who had been offered the new covenant. Hence the "blessing" is defined as God's face shining upon man- fellowship with Him, with the barrier of sin now dealt with. And all God's people are now individually the equivalent of the old covenant's priests, mediating and pronouncing this blessing upon the world around us. The new covenant is based upon the promises to Abraham, which revolve around the idea of his seed being blessed in order to be a blessing to all nations of the earth (Gen. 12:2,3 "I will bless you... You will be a blessing... All of the families of the earth will be blessed in you"). This idea is clearly central to this psalm.

God's "way" is His "salvation". His driving purpose with the earth, His way amongst men, is in order to bring men to salvation. He is not indifferent but proactive in this work, and we His people are to reflect that and also be part of it. God's grace in forgiving Israel (:1) was to reveal His way to the rest of the nations in the *eretz*, and serve as an advertisement for the fact that Yahweh is a God who saves; a principle brought to final articulation in the person of the Lord Jesus, Yehoshua, Yah's salvation. This was based upon the experience of David, who wished to advertise to the world his forgiveness and

experience of God's grace after his sin. The idea was that the exiles would follow his pattern of repentance and his path to restoration. They didn't, but finally they will, at the last day.

Psa 67:3

let the peoples praise You, God. Let all the peoples praise You-
This may be an invitation for the "peoples" of the *eretz* to praise Israel's God for His characteristic salvation and mercy (:1,2). "Let" can as well be translated "May...". Although "let" might suggest David was asking that Yahweh extend His saving plan to the Gentiles even at that stage.

Psa 67:4

Oh let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for You will judge the peoples with equity, and govern the nations on earth. Selah-
This verse is at the centre of the Psalm, the verses before and after are the same. The point of the psalm is that the priestly blessing is to be wished by all God's people individually upon not only Israel but the Gentiles too. Sadly the exiles became xenophobic rather than welcoming to Gentiles, so this prayer was not prayed from the heart by God's individual people as intended.

The vision was of God's kingdom or governance being over all the nations of the *eretz* / earth; and because of their acceptance of this, they would be glad. The justice of His judgments would be a cause for joy. This vision of kingdom or empire building was totally opposite to that understood at the time, where nations were militarily and economically dominated and forced into submission. Yahweh's Kingdom would extend by the choice of the subjected peoples, who would be awed by God's grace to Israel, who would become the parade example of what it meant to have Yahweh as King.

Psa 67:5

Let the peoples praise You, God. Let all the peoples praise You-
"Let" might suggest David was asking that Yahweh extend His saving plan to the Gentiles even at that stage. But David was well ahead of his time in this desire. For Israel failed to be the example of God's kingship over a people, and the Gentiles therefore weren't encouraged to repent. We note the emphasis upon "*all* the peoples"- including their recent abusers, those whom Israel might consider beyond God's saving purpose.

We began by observing that Ps. 67 is based upon the High Priestly blessing of the people, but every individual Israelite is now asked to pronounce the blessing. We have an example of Aaron pronouncing the blessing in Lev. 9:22-24: "Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people, and blessed them... and Aaron went into the Tent of Meeting,

and came out, and blessed *the people*; and the glory of Yahweh appeared to *all the people*. There came forth fire from before Yahweh... and when *all the people* saw it, they shouted, and fell on their faces [in worship]". Now, the individual Israelite was to act as Aaron the High Priest, with the intention that "all the people", not just Israel but the entire Gentile world, would be moved to worship Yahweh. Again we see the huge elevation of importance of the individual, to have as much power in blessing as the High Priest, and over far more people.

Psa 67:6

The earth has yielded its increase. God, even our own God, will bless us-
The God of Israel would bless "us", Israel, with great harvests, and this would be a visible testament to His grace toward them- and was intended to lead the Gentile nations to Israel's God (:7). For blessing of harvests was seen then as the function of a nation's God. Therefore the Psalmist envisages a bumper harvest for God's people [we can render "May the earth yield its increase"], so that others would be drawn to Him. But the restored exiles experienced failed harvests; because they didn't repent. Perhaps "God" rather than "Yahweh" is used at this point because this would be the perspective of the observing Gentiles.

The earth / land yielding its increase was a blessing for obedience to the covenant (Lev. 25:19; 26:4); and if the exiles accepted the new covenant, they would experience the same as a visible sign of God's pleasure with them in the restored Kingdom (Ez. 34:27; Zech. 8:12). The idea was that this visible blessing would lead the Gentiles to Israel's God. This wasn't the scenario that happened, but the psalmist wishes for it and prays for it.

Psa 67:7

God will bless us. All the ends of the earth shall fear Him-
This again points up the issue; God would bless Israel ("us") by grace because of their repentance and obedience to the covenant; and therefore all the ends of the *eretz* promised to Abraham, including the nations like Assyria and Babylon at the very ends or boundaries of that territory, would also "fear Him" in the sense of accepting covenant relationship with Him. The Psalm concludes with another reference to the high priestly blessing (see on :1). We could translate: "May God bless us *so that* all the ends of the earth shall fear Him".

PSALMS CHAPTER 68

sa 68:1

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David. A song-
This appears to be a song sung as the Israelites went out to battle. They took courage from God's previous marchings forth to victory, both from Egypt and then through Canaan; and the spirit of those victories was to be repeated, and come to ultimate term in the victory of the Lord Jesus and the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth.

I have discussed on 1 Sam. 4:3 how there was always a tendency to use the ark as a talisman; and God was against that. The religious eclipsed the spiritual as regards the ark, several times in Israel's history. And I suggest David was not immune to this. He brings the ark to Zion without any Divine command to do so and without consultation with Him [David earlier asks God for guidance about his decisions in 2 Sam. 5, but not in the context of the ark]; and there was the disaster with Uzzah the first time he attempted it. This is to be compared to Israel's defeat when they took the ark with them into battle against the Philistines in the time of Eli. David clearly also veered towards seeing the ark as a talisman. It was almost as if he wanted to underwrite his own enthronement in Jerusalem by having Yahweh enthroned there also over the ark. Likewise David's desire to permanently locate the ark in a physical temple in Jerusalem can be seen as a desire to legitimate the enthronement of his dynasty in that city. But on the other hand, David often 'gets it' about the lack of need for the ark's physical presence. His psalms speak of how he lived permanently beneath the shadow of the cherubic wings, as if he lived on the mercy seat, on the sprinkled blood. In 2 Sam. 15:24-29 he flees from Absalom, and refuses the suggestion he take the ark with him. But, so true to real spiritual life, he also had tendencies towards needing the physical and religious when it came to the ark. Just as we pine for the religious at times, whilst also rejoicing in God's presence in our hearts quite regardless of religious context. David wrote at least two Psalms about bringing the ark to Zion, Ps. 68 and Ps. 132. Ps. 68 clearly expects God to bring victory to Israel because of the ark's presence in Zion, and Ps. 132 seems to reason that once the ark is in Zion it will be there forever. This wasn't to be the case. But we see in David's reasoning that he still considered the ark as some kind of physical guarantee of God's presence, and the legitimization of his own enthronement in Jerusalem- and that of his dynasty after him, as he imagined. He was proven wrong- the ark disappeared, his dynasty was cut off, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. But God's spiritual presence in human hearts continued and became the stronger after these things. We marvel at how God works through human weakness to achieve His wider purposes.

Let God arise! Let His enemies be scattered! Let them who hate Him also flee before Him-
The allusion is clearly to the High Priestly blessing of the people in Num. 6:24,25, given

whenever they began their onward journey to the promised land. This was how Ps. 67:1 begins, but the point is made in that Psalm that the blessing was to be shared with all the Gentiles. This is the same idea with which Ps. 68 begins, supporting the suggestion that the Psalms are often paired. Ps. 67 would thus be an introduction to Ps. 68.

God sees those who love the world as hating Him. Likewise the Bible speaks of the world as being sinful and actively hating God, whereas to human eyes the world is for the most part ignorant. Thus the Canaanite nations did not know much about the God of Israel, and yet they are described as actively hating Him (Num. 10:35 NIV; Ps. 68:1).

These words specifically refer to the setting forward of the ark [“So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said, ‘Rise up, O Lord! Let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you’”, Num. 10:35), and I will suggest on :17 that the Psalm was originally used for David's bringing the ark to Zion. This would explain the references to Yahweh's victories over His enemies, because David brought the ark to Zion after having defeated the Philistines and the local inhabitants of Zion. The ranting against foreign deities in Ps. 68 would then be understandable given Samuel's appeal for them to be dropped (1 Sam. 7:2,3), and the obvious fact they had been unable to defend mount Zion from David's men. The triple emphasis in Ps. 68:3 upon "joy" can be understood against the background of the ark being brought up to Zion with great joy and hymns, one of which was surely Psalm 68 (2 Sam. 6:12). Ps. 68:11,25 stresses the role of the women in praising God, and it seems from David's exposure in front of the virgins of Israel at the time that women also had a specific role in the celebrations when the ark was brought to Zion (2 Sam. 6:20).

Psalm 68 alludes throughout to Deborah's song of Judges 5, which according to some scholars may well be one of the oldest parts of the Hebrew Bible and would therefore have been well known to David as he wrote Ps. 68. However, the points of connection are not sequential; words and ideas from various parts of Jud. 5 are alluded to in Ps. 68. Here the allusion would be to Jud. 5:22, where Sisera and his men are scattered and flee before God's people. The subsequent reference to the wicked 'perishing' (:2) connects with Jud. 5:31 "so let all Your enemies perish". "Sing… sing praises" (:4,32) is Jud. 5:3,12 "Sing… sing praises". "Kings of armies fled" (:12) is Jud. 5:3,19 where the same happened to Sisera and his armies. "You led captivity captive" (:18) is clearly Jud. 5:12 where Barak is to lead captors captive. God wounding the head and scalp of His enemies (:21) is what was done to Sisera when Jael smote him in the head (Jud. 5:26). "Benjamin, Zebulun, Naphtali" (:27) are the same three tribes glorified in Jud. 5:14,18. The similarities are so close that Judges 5 can then be used to illuminate some of the otherwise more obscure phrases of Ps. 68. The gushing rain of :9 alludes to the clouds gushing water in Jud. 5:4. And the enigmatic "while you men sleep among the campfires / cattle stalls" (:13) is now understandable when we see the connection with Jud. 5:16, where Reuben is rebuked for remaining in his sheepfolds rather than joining in the rout

of the enemy. The publishing of God's word (:11) is seen to refer to publishing the good news / Gospel of salvation from enemies- once we see the connection with Jud. 5:11, where the faithful would "rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord" after the victory.

Psa 68:2

As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God-
This is the language used by David of the final judgment (Ps. 1:4; 112:10) but he sees in every victory of God's people a foretaste of the final victory. It was this kind of victory which could have been granted to the exiles over Babylon (s.w. Is. 41:2)- had they desired to really leave and restore the Kingdom. But they didn't, and so this kind of victory over the nations surrounding Zion will be finally given to the Lord Jesus at the last day (s.w. Mic. 1:4). "As wax melts before the fire" is the same image we have in other depictions of the last judgment- the rejected are ashamed from before Him, they slink away (1 Jn. 2:24 Gk.). The whole heaven and earth of this present world will likewise flee away. Ps. 112:10 has echoes of the scenario: "The wicked shall see it (the Kingdom) and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth (judgment day language), and melt away". In similar vein the apostle speaks of the rejected as those who even now "*draw back* unto perdition" (Heb. 10:39). This is the idea behind Heb. 12:15 RVmg: "...man that falls back from the grace of God". What they did in this life in slinking away from the reality of pure grace will be what is worked out in their condemnation experience. There seems a certain similarity between this and how the combined Gospel records imply that men initially mocked Jesus on the cross, and then eventually slipped away in silence (Heb. 6:6).

Psa 68:3

But let the righteous be glad, may they rejoice before God; yes, let them rejoice with gladness-
The conflicts between Israel and other nations are seen by David as a struggle between the righteous and the "wicked" (:2). But Israel themselves were never totally righteous; the dichotomy is over simplistic and even self-righteous. But it will ultimately be this way when the Lord Jesus returns.

Psa 68:4

Sing to God! Sing praises to His name! Extol Him who rides on the clouds: to Yah, His name! Rejoice before Him!-
God "rode upon the heavens" to save Israel from Egypt and the Egyptians (s.w. Dt. 33:26; Hab. 3:8). David felt this was how God had delivered him personally (s.w. Ps. 18:10). The

allusion is clearly to the cherubim, the chariots upon which God rode. In the context of the exiles, God was ready to ride forth upon the cherubim which Ezekiel had seen in vision in Babylon by the Chebar river. But Israel would not.

Psa 68:5

A father of the fatherless, and a defender of the widows, is God in His holy habitation-
The exiles were those who had been left as fatherless and widows in the destruction of Jerusalem (s.w. Lam. 5:3), because they had despised the fatherless (Ez. 22:7). But God was prepared to arise and deliver the fatherless. But the reality was that they precluded this potential operation of God by preferring to remain in Babylon.

Psa 68:6

God sets the lonely in families. He brings out the prisoners with singing, but the rebellious dwell in a sun-scorched land-
The allusion is to how Israel in Egypt were saved through uniting in family units around the Passover lamb. Those without families were set together with families, and were delivered as families. And God was willing to repeat the Exodus deliverance for the captives in Babylon / Persia. See on Ps. 107:41. There is also allusion to the blessing of the Hebrew midwives at the time of the Exodus with families. And yet the rebels amongst Israel died in the desert, despite all this saving activity of God at the Exodus.

We forsake all human relationships to follow the Lord Jesus (Mt. 19:27-29). And He promises to compensate for this even in this life. But it depends to what extent we are willing to accept and perceive it. Through meaningful fellowship with our brethren we will find those relationships which we have given up compensated for, even if we aren't physically close to our brethren. To be set in a new family is paralleled with being brought out from slavery. Part of the process of our redemption is that we are set in a new ecclesial family. The implication of Ps. 68 could be that it was in these family groups that they travelled through the wilderness. The N.C.V. reads: "God is in his holy Temple. He is a father to orphans, and he defends the widows. God gives the lonely a home. He leads prisoners out with joy…". The very house / family of God becomes the house / family of the lonely. Hence the ecclesia *is* the house of God (1 Cor. 3:16). We find true family in the new family of God.

LXX "leading forth prisoners mightily, also them that act provokingly, even them that dwell in tombs". This connects with a wider theme in this Psalm: that God's saving activity for His people is also for the spiritually weak amongst them. See on :18 "You have received gifts to distribute among men, yes, *among the rebellious also*". And the reference to "even them that dwell in tombs" clearly looks ahead to the Lord's saving

work for Legion. Nobody was left behind in this great work of salvation, not even a schizophrenic living in tombs on a cliff side in rural Galilee.

Psa 68:7

God, when You went forth before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness... Selah-
As God went before the people in the pillars of fire and cloud, so He would lead His people to victory again. And the particular reference was to the possibility of delivering the exiles from captivity and leading them through the wilderness, perhaps also led by Angels, to the promised land.

Psa 68:8

The earth trembled. The sky also poured down rain at the presence of the God of Sinai-at the presence of God, the God of Israel-
Earthquake and rain was sent at the time of the exodus. This was in fact to soften up Canaan for the arrival of the Israelites; they could have entered a land well watered by these rains, with harvest ready to be picked (:9). But because of their rebellion, this great potential didn't come about; because they in their hearts turned back to Egypt. And so it was with the exiles.

Psa 68:9

You, God, sent a plentiful rain. You confirmed Your inheritance when it was weary-
As noted on :8, this rain was to prepare Canaan to be full of fruit by the time the Israelites arrived there; hence in the next verse we read in the context of Israel's arrival in Canaan: "You, God, prepared Your goodness for the poor". They left at Passover, and were intended to arrive in Canaan at harvest time. But such great potentials are wasted all the time by the desire to remain in Egypt / Babylon. There may also be allusion to Ps. 78:24 "He rained down upon them manna to eat".

Psa 68:10 Your congregation lived therein. You, God, prepared Your goodness for the poor- This 'preparation' is as explained on :8,9. The language of inheritance (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:4) and preparation of reward (Mt. 25:34; Jn. 14:1) in the NT is alluding to the OT background of the land being prepared by the Angels for Israel to inherit (Ex. 15:17 Heb.; 23:20; Ps. 68:9,10 Heb.). We must be careful not to think that our promised inheritance is *only* eternal life; it is something being personally prepared for each of us. The language of preparation seems inappropriate if our reward is only eternal life.

Psa 68:11

The Lord announced the word; the women who proclaimed it are a great company-
There is the implication that a great number of Angels- perhaps the guardian Angels of each of the Israelites- were with them too: "great was the company of those that published it... even thousands of Angels" (Ps. 68:11 AV). This "great company" is defined in :17 as "the chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels". These Angels were the cherubic chariots which are envisaged as going out with the Israelites to every battle. The word published was the word concerning Israel leaving Egypt and overcoming every obstacle that lay in the way to entering and possessing the promised land. The same promise is to each of us in our journey from the Red Sea of baptism to the Kingdom (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

If we prefer the rendering "the women...", then the reference is to Miriam and the women of Israel proclaiming God's word of deliverance as already fulfilled. And it was women who first proclaimed the Lord's resurrection, the surmounting of all that may appear to lie in our way towards possession of the Kingdom.

Psa 68:12

Kings of armies flee! They flee! The women who wait at home divide the spoil-
We note the emphasis upon the women (:11). The Canaanites did indeed flee, but Israel failed to believe that. They preferred to think that the Canaanites were invincible, and to return to Egyptian bondage. It was the same in principle at the restoration. Enemies would turn their backs and flee only if Israel were faithful to the covenant.

Psa 68:13

while you men sleep among the campfires-
This appears to allude to the rebuke of Deborah that the men of Israel were cowards and not using the great Divine potential for victory (Jud. 5:16). This would fit the context of the praise of women at this time (:11,12). As noted on :1, the enigmatic "while you men sleep among the campfires / cattle stalls" (:13) is understandable when we see the connection with Jud. 5:16, where Reuben is rebuked for remaining in his sheepfolds rather than joining in the rout of the enemy. The GNB seems to make better sense of :12,13: "The women at home divided what was captured: figures of doves covered with silver, whose wings glittered with fine gold. (Why did some of you stay among the sheep pens on the day of battle?)". Only in the Kingdom will we perceive all our missed opportunities in this life. And that is a powerful thought, to urge us to ever greater labour for the Lord whilst it is called today. LXX gives "Even if ye should lie among the pots, ye shall have the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her breast with yellow gold". This

would suggest that the reward is still shared even with those who were nervous or self centred and didn't do what they could and should have done. This is a theme continued in :18- the gifts / spoils are shared amongst "men, yes, among the rebellious also".

the wings of a dove sheathed with silver, her feathers with shining gold-
Israel is the turtle dove (Ps. 74:19). Perhaps this is an allusion to some poem known at the time, lamenting the glory which could have been Israel's but was wasted potential. In which case this battle cry is urging the male warriors to not be like their historical counterparts and fail to use all the Divine potential for victory. Or the idea may be to rebuke a love of silver and gold rather than arising and fighting to possess the land- a rebuke appropriate to the exiles who preferred the wealth of Babylon.

Psa 68:14

When the Almighty scattered kings in her, it snowed on Zalmon-
The scattered kings in the land ("her") would drop their weapons and armour and flee (:12). With the sun shining off all those items, it would appear like the snow which fell on Salmon, a hill near Shechem (Jud. 9:48), the central point in the land. Or perhaps there is reference to a snowstorm assisting the rout of enemies.

Psa 68:15

The mountains of Bashan are majestic mountains, the mountains of Bashan are rugged-
LXX "The mountain of God is a rich mountain; a swelling mountain, a rich mountain". This would refer to Zion (as in :16), which was to be elevated as the central focus of God's Kingdom. "Mountains" would then be read as an intensive plural for the one great mountain. The one great mountain of Bashan, if we retain that reading, would be Hermon.

Psa 68:16

Why do you look in envy, you rugged mountains, at the mountain where God chooses to reign? Yes, Yahweh will dwell there forever-
The Psalm now moves in focus away from being a battle song as the troops marched out (:1) to describing the Kingdom of God to be restored in Israel. For this was to be the final outcome of all Israel's battles. Yahweh will dwell there eternally only when the Kingdom is reestablished in Israel. The surrounding hills around Zion represent therefore the nations surrounding Israel. They were not to be envious, but rather to accept Israel's God enthroned in Zion (:30,31).

Psa 68:17

The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands. The Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the sanctuary-
As explained on :11, the huge Angelic activity of God at the time of the exodus could have been replicated for the exiles, and for Israel in any of their conflicts. There is the implication that God would again gather Israel through those Angels to make another covenant with them. Jer. 31 and Ez. 20 offered a new covenant to the exiles, seeing they had broken the old covenant. But they refused it. These things were all reapplied and rescheduled. For the huge cherubic activity of God now works to bring individuals of all nations to a point, as at Sinai, where delivered from Egypt they can accept the new covenant.

We can read with GNB "the Lord comes from Sinai into the holy place". The picture then is of the ark journeying from Sinai to Zion, from one mountain to another. And then (:18) ascending the hill of Zion. The first reference of the Psalm may have been to this; and the distribution of gifts to men, indiscriminately (:18), would then refer to David's gift of bread and wine to all the men of Israel. David's procession in bringing the ark to Zion would then be the reference of :24,25. And that would explain why the Psalm begins with an allusion to the language used whenever the ark set forward.

Psa 68:18

You have ascended on high, You have led away captives in your victory train, You have received gifts to distribute among men, yes, among the rebellious also, that Yah God might dwell there-
As discussed on :1, the primary reference of the Psalm is to David's bringing the ark to Zion. The ark 'ascended' on its journeys. In the context of the ark, "the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy Yahweh God? and to whom shall He *go up* from us?" (1 Sam. 6:19). Finally the ark was "brought *up*" to Zion (2 Sam. 6:2,12). But the ark was to later be understood as representative of the Lord Jesus; and David's giving of gifts, indiscriminately, to the giving of the gifts of the Spirit at the Lord's ascension- both His 'ascent' on the cross, and to Heaven. Both of which events are connected to the giving of the Spirit gifts. We note that "Zion" is not specifically mentioned in Ps. 68 as where the ark / Yahweh ascended to. Perhaps that's because the ascent of the ark was designed to be understood as speaking of something far greater, a greater ascension, captives and gifts- the ascent of the Lord Jesus to the cross and to Heaven itself. Verses 19,20 will go on to say that this ascent of Yahweh will result in "salvation" and "escape from death"- far greater things than achieved by the ascent of the ark to Zion.

The ascension of the Lord Jesus resulted in the gift of the Spirit to men. Not only Eph. 4, but also Acts 2:33,38: "being exalted by the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear... repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". Likewise Acts 5:31,32: "Him did God exalt with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those that obey Him".

These words are quoted specifically about the victory of the Lord Jesus on the cross, His ascension to Heaven and gift of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:8 "to each one of us was the grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He says: When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men"). The argument of Ephesians 4 is that these gifts are given in order to bring us to maturity in and as the Lord Jesus: "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). And the context of Ephesians is the language of being built up a spiritual temple for God's habitation (Eph. 1:20-2:22; Ephesians 3 is largely a digression and so the theme of building the spiritual temple for God continues directly). This is saying the same thing as Ps. 68:18 "You have received gifts to distribute among men, yes, among the rebellious also, that Yah God might dwell there". The gifts were to sanctify God's people, including the rebellious, so that God might dwell in them. The historical basis was the giving of bread and wine by David to all Israel after the 'ascent' of the ark to Zion. And Ps. 68 frames this within the language of a victory celebration; for it was normal for victors to give gifts to their supporters after the victory. And so the 'ascent' of the ark is both the ascent of the Lord lifted up on the cross; and also His ascent to Heaven, both of which events are associated with the gift of the Spirit. When He was glorified, the gifts of the Spirit were given: "this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (Jn. 7:39). Bear in mind John's language of His ascent / lifting up on the cross and final outbreathing of His breath / Spirit towards His disciples. The element of unreality is that the captives led captive are us, the former enemies led joyfully into captivity to the Lord Jesus, and receiving gifts from Him. This explains the otherwise odd way that Paul changes "he receives gifts from rebellious people" (Ps. 68:18) to "he led captivity captive and gave gifts to men" (Eph. 4:8). Paul makes the Lord the giver rather than the receiver of the gifts. He was given gifts by those He had conquered; but Paul changes this to Him giving gifts to the captives. This subtle change makes perfect sense once we understand that the captives are us, His former enemies now themselves rejoicing [rather than bedraggled and ashamed] as they are led in the victory triumph: "You have led away captives in your victory train". The gifts are given to them, and are shared with the former rebels now defeated: "You have received gifts to distribute among men, yes,

among the rebellious also". Those 'rebels' are the condemned of :6, as if the idea is that all God's people, the rebels included, are to be saved. Although of course they each have to claim their part in that salvation; hence Ps. 66:7 "Don't let the rebellious rise up against Him". We could however read more simply that the Lord ascended, was given gifts [by God] and then gave them to His people.

As noted on :17, the exiles generally refused the scenario made possible for them. And yet the offer of a new covenant remains and has been extended to individuals of all nations, brought through the Red Sea of baptism to a point (cp. Sinai, :17) where they can enter covenant.

Israel were slaves in Egypt, and then after the Red Sea baptism became slaves of God. Ps. 68:18 pictures them as a train of captives being led out of Egypt, merging into the image of a train of a captivity led into a different captivity. Romans 6 powerfully brings home the point: we were slaves of sin, but now are become slaves of righteousness. The gifts of the Spirit which were given were initially revealed in a miraculous form, but the essential purpose of the gift of the Spirit is so that God might dwell among us, even in the hearts of the formerly rebellious. And this is just as much His activity today as ever before.

Psa 68:19

Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens, even the God who is our salvation. Selah-
LXX "Blessed be the Lord God, blessed be the Lord daily; and the God of our salvation shall prosper us". Israel's deliverance and salvation from Egypt become the spiritual experience of all those saved in Christ. "Burdens" were associated with the slavery in Egypt; it was as if God was with them in that slavery, carrying their burdens with them. And this would have had special relevance to the exiles in Babylon and Assyria. "The God who is our salvation" is ultimately Yah-hoshua, Yah saves, 'Jesus'. And He daily bears our burdens, because He is still in essence a cross carrier. We are to daily take up our cross, each man is to bear his own burden in one sense (Gal. 6:5). But the Lord Jesus also bears them.

Psa 68:20

God is to us a God of deliverance; to Yahweh the Lord belongs escape from death-
Remember that this was initially a battle song as troops began to march to war (see on :1). The comfort was that God would save them from death, because that is the lead characteristic of Yahweh. And that would be ultimately true- even if they died in battle, the Israelites had the unique hope of the resurrection of the body.

Psa 68:21

But God will strike through the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of such a one as still continues in his guiltiness-
This would suggest that the Israelites were only marching to war against the impenitent who had refused God's calls to repent. The allusion is to the striking of the serpent upon the head (Gen. 3:15), and Israel were to be as the seed of the woman bringing this about.

Psa 68:22

The Lord said, I will bring you again from Bashan, I will bring you again from the depths of the sea-
This appears to reference words of God unrecorded in the previous historical records. Or the idea may be that as God had saved Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea, so He would do so "again" in every struggle of the Israelites. And this will come ultimately true at the last day. But "the depths of the sea" is the consistent Biblical image used for the condemned, cast like millstones to the bottom of the sea. The idea may well be that God would save His people even from their condemned status.

Psa 68:23

that you may crush them, dipping your foot in blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from your enemies-
The taking of a portion or inheritance may allude to the conquest of Canaan, which the Israelite soldiers were to replicate every time they marched to battle (:1). These words were used by David of how God had wounded all his enemies under his feet (Ps. 18:38) and he wished this to be the experience of all God's people. So often he sees his life as a pattern for God's people to follow.

Psa 68:24

They have seen Your processions, God, even the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary-
The "they" may refer to God's enemies (:23), but it is hard to understand how they had seen the processions in the sanctuary. Perhaps the processions were victory parades after the victory, with the captive enemies seeing them in shame (see on :25). Or we may go with LXX "Thy goings, O God, have been seen; the goings of my God, the king, in the sanctuary". We note that David repeatedly calls God "my king" or "the king". He

realized that he was only king on God's behalf, and all the desire of Israel for a human king had been a rejection of Yahweh.

Psa 68:25

The singers went before, the minstrels followed after in the midst of the ladies playing with tambourines, singing-
We note the repeated focus upon the role of women (see on :11,12). The reference to tambourines recalls Miriam and the women of Israel rejoicing at the salvation from Egypt. The processions in the sanctuary of :24 were therefore envisaged as processions of praise for victories granted in the spirit of that over Egypt.

Psa 68:26

Bless God in the congregations, even the Lord in the assembly of Israel!-
This could be an invitation to the Gentiles to praise God along with the Israelites. This is a common theme of David. The "congregations" may be an intensive plural for the one great congregation of Israel. David often talks of how he wishes the congregation to praise God. It is the struggle of every spiritually minded and righteous man to humble himself to accept he is only part of a far wider congregation, comprised of believers who may frankly be less spiritually minded than himself (Ps. 26:12; 35:18; 68:26). David and the Lord Jesus are parade examples of achieving this sense. LXX "Praise God in the congregations, the Lord from the fountains of Israel".

Psa 68:27

There is little Benjamin, their ruler, the princes of Judah, their council, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali-
The idea may be that the two and ten tribe kingdoms were represented together. LXX "There is Benjamin the younger one in ecstasy, the princes of Juda their rulers, the princes of Zabulon, the princes of Nephthali". Perhaps Zebulun and Naphtali were chosen because they were commended for their bravery at the time of Deborah (Jud. 5:18), and she has been in view in :13, in her criticizing of the other tribes for *not* being as Zebulun and Naphtali. Or in the context of the exiles, it could be that they are mentioned as the areas which suffered most from the invaders (Is. 11:1). But they are envisaged here in glory in Zion.

Psa 68:28

Your God has commanded your strength. Strengthen, God, that which You have done for us-

There may be an allusion here to 'Hezekiah', strengthened by Yah. From here to the end of the Psalm, the vision is of God's future Kingdom to come on earth. But the idea is, from the allusions throughout the Psalm so far, that as God led His people out of Egypt and through the wilderness, as He gave them victory over Sisera, despite all their dysfunctions, missed opportunities (see on :13) and failures, so finally He will bring His people to His Kingdom.

Psa 68:29

Because of Your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bring presents to You-
Clearly this was rewritten at some point after David, or maybe David was looking forward to the temple which Solomon would build. In this case, his vision for that temple was as a focal point for the Gentiles to come to and learn of Yahweh. Instead it became filled with their paganic images. Quite possibly this Psalm originated in the bringing of the ark to Zion, but under Divine inspiration was re-written and reapplied to Solomon's time and subsequent processions during the feasts. Similar language to Ps. 68 is used by Solomon at the dedication of the temple: "arise, Yahweh God, into Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength: let Your priests, Yahweh God, be clothed with salvation, and let Your saints rejoice in goodness" (2 Chron. 6:41).

Psa 68:30

Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may they bring tribute of bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war-
The vision was that entity which had abused God's people, be it Babylon, Assyria or Egypt, would be humbled and come to Zion in repentance with tribute to Yahweh; and those who refused to repent would be scattered in condemnation. But LXX has "Rebuke the wild beasts of the reed: let the crowd of bulls with the heifers of the nations be rebuked, so that they who have been proved with silver may not be shut out: scatter thou the nations that wish for wars". Those refined as silver refer to the exiles after their spiritual education in Babylon; but the truth was that they did not respond as intended, and remained not purified.

Psa 68:31

Princes shall come out of Egypt, Ethiopia shall hurry to stretch out her hands to God-
What began as a battle song ends up with a vision of the Gentile enemies accepting the God of Israel. This was the intended outcome of the campaign, rather than mere punishment for its own sake.

Psa 68:32

Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth! Sing praises to the Lord! Selah-
This appears to be encouragement to the Gentile enemies to praise Israel's God. This was ever David's vision, as it is God's.

Psa 68:33

To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which are of old; behold, He utters His voice, a mighty voice-
LXX "Sing to God that rides on the heaven of heaven, eastward: lo, he will utter a mighty sound with his voice". The reference to "eastward" would allude to the east wind which destroyed the Egyptians, associated with the clouds upon which the cherubim as it were rode. The mighty voice of God may be that which is verbalized in :34; it is an appeal for repentance and acceptance of Yahweh. "Which are of old" suggests that how God has acted in history, He will do again; a major theme of this Psalm.

Psa 68:34

Ascribe strength to God! His excellency is over Israel, His strength is in the skies-
This is an appeal for the enemies to repent; to perceive that He is king over Israel, they are His Kingdom; and the Gentile peoples can likewise become part of that Kingdom. For that was ever God's intention.

Psa 68:35

You are awesome, God, in Your sanctuaries. The God of Israel gives strength and power to His people. Praise be to God!-
The reference to "the God of Israel" is because as noted in the previous verses, the appeal is for the Gentiles to become part of God's Kingdom. "Your sanctuaries" may refer to the one great sanctuary, Zion. It was David's vision that Zion with the temple upon it should become the parade example of God's manifestation, and would serve as a magnet for the Gentiles to come to. This vision is repeated in the prophets.

PSALMS CHAPTER 69

Psa 69:1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Lilies. By David-

This Psalm has verses in it which are quoted about the Lord Jesus by Peter, Paul and each of the Gospel writers. They clearly understood it as a major prophecy of His sufferings.

Paul confirms this Davidic authorship (Rom. 11:9). But the Psalm seems so relevant to Jeremiah sinking in the mud. Perhaps David's Psalm was edited under inspiration to be relevant to Jeremiah, or was prayed by him and then rewritten by him. It is clearly appropriate to the Lord's crucifixion and is cited several times about Him in the New Testament. The parallels with Ps. 22 mean that it likely has the same original context- in the sufferings experienced by David as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. The Lord Jesus on the cross was so identified with sinners that although personally innocent, He fully entered into the feelings of condemned sinners. And therefore the words and thoughts of David when at this point are appropriated to Him on the cross.

Save me, God, for the waters have come up to my neck!-
David was at a point where he felt death was imminent. But as suggested above, it could well be that the Psalm was rewritten by Jeremiah on reflection at his experiences in the dungeon.

Psa 69:2

I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold. I have come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me-
This is the picture of a man treading water with the last of his strength as he faces death by drowning. The exact historical reference within David's life isn't clear. It could be, as suggested on :1, that his general sense of being overcome by troubles has been developed by Jeremiah.

Psa 69:3

I am weary with my crying. My throat is dry. My eyes fail, looking for my God-
The idea seems to be that he has put his last energy into appealing for God's salvation, but this had not been forthcoming. The Lord's desire for a drink because "I thirst" was therefore only so that He could continue praying. Ps. 119:82 has the same idea, in that David's eyes failed for looking for the fulfilment of God's word that he would become king and his kingdom be established. Perhaps that was the original reference here, as David faced the loss of his kingdom to usurpers like Absalom and Adonijah.

Failing eyes is not necessarily literal. It is an idiom used for the wicked now being deprived of their hope (Dt. 28:32; Job 11:20). With reference to the Lord, we have a

similar sense as in Ps. 22 where the Lord although sinless feels like a sinners, so close was His identification with us as He died.

Psa 69:4

Those who hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head-
See on :8. As with "my enemies wrongfully" later in this verse, the continued emphasis in David's psalms upon "without cause" surely reflects a self righteousness (Ps. 35:19; 69:4; 109:3; 119:161), and a refusal to accept that what happened to him was a result of his sin with Bathsheba- as Nathan had explained. For David's righteousness was only impressive relative to the wickedness of his enemies; before God, it was filthy rags. It was true that Saul persecuted David "without cause" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5), but the experience of "without cause" persecution can lead us to an inappropriate self-righteousness. This is what happened to Job, who also suffered "without cause" (s.w. Job 2:3), and had to be convicted of self-righteousness at the end of the story. And it seems this happened to David. David himself intended to shed blood "without cause" and was only saved from it by grace (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:31).

In the context of the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba, David says that his sins and their consequences are "more than the hairs of my head" (Ps. 40:12). But he uses the same phrase in saying that his "without a cause" enemies are "more than the hairs of my head" (Ps. 69:4). But again we note that he considers those consequences of his sin to be "without cause", and we wonder at the depth of his repentance and sense of culpability.

Those who want to cut me off, being my enemies wrongfully, are mighty-
It is inevitable that to someone of the Lord's intellectual ability as the Son of God, to a man with His sense of justice and with His knowledge of the Jews and their Law, everything within Him would have cried out at the protracted injustices of His trials. He had the strong sense within Him at this time that He was hated without cause, that the Jews were "mine enemies *wrongfully*" (Ps. 69:4). I suggested on Ps. 22 that this struggle with injustice and the apparent inconsistency of God was the Lord's final struggle in the moments before He died, and was required to bring Him to the acme of humility required for His final moment of death (Phil. 2:7-10). However, on the level of David, he was wrong to consider that it was somehow unfair that he was suffering the results of his sin with Bathsheba; for such troubles were exactly what Nathan had predicted would happen.

Some texts read "More numerous than my bones are they that are mine enemies falsely". The crucifixion psalms repeatedly talk of the bones. The Lord's bones were not broken but in great pain. The crucifixion process tortured the bones. And we are of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

I have to restore what I didn't take away-
"Take away" is the term used for stolen or lost goods which were to be restored. Perhaps there is reference to some false accusation against David which he felt aggrieved about. The allusion is to Jacob having to make good for the lost cattle of Laban during *his* time of exile, which David often looked to as representative of his experiences. But I suggested on :1 that this Psalm may have been rewritten by Jeremiah, so maybe there was some such incident in his life, perhaps concerning the property be redeemed. But these possible incidents are all typical of the way the Lord Jesus restored salvation and ultimately the garden of Eden, suffering in order to restore that which He took not away, and epitomized in the way He restored the ear of Malchus just before His death. That incident was perhaps providentially used by the Father to prepare His Son for His death to restore that which He had not taken away.

It seems that "that which I had not plundered" is a proverbial expression for suffering unjustly, as if he had been falsely accused of theft and made to 'pay back' what he hadn't stolen (see Job 20:18; 22:6). David had indeed taken away Uriah's wife, Uriah's life, the lives of other soldiers... in Nathan's parable, David had taken away Uriah's one sheep, and he himself had declared "He shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing" (2 Sam. 12:6). But now he complains that he is having to restore what he didn't steal. He had forgotten the reality of his sin and its consequences, just as men do today. In the initial application, the Psalm reflects David's self righteousness. But the language of innocence is applicable to the Lord Jesus especially in His death.

Psa 69:5

God, You know my foolishness. My sins aren't hidden from You-
I noted on :4 that David was failing to accept the consequences of his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah. But true to our own experience, we can in one breath struggle to accept consequences of sin, minimizing what we did long ago- and yet almost in the same breath, accept full responsibility for them. But again, we may well enquire whether "foolishness" is not rather a mild term for what he had done (also used in Ps. 38:5); surely "wickedness" would have been more appropriate. "Foolishness" is often used in Proverbs to refer to unwisdom and even silliness. But what David did surely requires more extreme language. We note that David has been quick to use a wide range of harsh adjectives and ideas in describing the wickedness of others like Saul who had tried to murder the innocent. And David had actually done so.

"*Why* (oh *why*) hast Thou forsaken me?" is surely the Lord Jesus searching His conscience with desperate intensity, finding nothing wrong, and crying to God to show Him where He had failed, why the Father had forsaken Him. It may be that initially He assumed He had sinned (Ps. 69:5), going through the self-doubt which David went through at the time of Absalom's rebellion (Ps. 3:2). As David had felt then that God had

cast him off, even though "my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail", so the Lord felt (Ps. 89:33,38). But then with an unsurpassedly rigorous self-examination, He came to know that He really hadn't. This means that once over the crisis, our Lord died with a purity of conscience known by no other being, with a profound sense of His own totality of righteousness. Again, this enables us to better enter into the intensity of "*It* is finished".

Psa 69:6

Don't let those who wait for You be shamed on my account, Lord Yahweh of Armies. Don't let those who seek You be brought to dishonour through me, God of Israel-
"Wait" is better "hope". Perhaps David has in view those who were hoping for the fuller establishment of God's Kingdom on earth under his kingship, which hope appeared to be dashed whilst he was now exiled during the rebellion of Adonijah or Absalom. David had supporters at the time of Absalom's rebellion, who remained in Jerusalem pretending to be on Absalom's side, but working to bring down his coup. And David here prays for them.

Psa 69:7

Because for Your sake I have borne reproach. Shame has covered my face-
But David's shame was surely because of his own sake, and not for God's sake. He always seems to struggle in taking full responsibility for the consequences of his sins. But it could be argued that he means that his reproach was because his enemies were jealous of his spirituality, and therefore they reproached him for the sake of his relationship with God.

Psa 69:8

I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's children-
Absalom's rebellion had been orchestrated over many years, and it seems he got David's own brothers onside with him. Ahithophel was Bathsheba's grandfather and it seems he too had fomented opposition to David amongst his own family. But suffering consequences of his sin within his own family was exactly what Nathan had said would happen; and now it happens, David appears to rail against it. But the human pain of it all must not be thereby minimized. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters (Ps. 27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18). All this was after the pattern of Job, to whom David here alludes (see on Job 19:12-14).

The essence of all this happened to the Lord Jesus, whose brothers initially did not believe in Him. "Stranger" implies a Gentile. The Lord Jesus was accused of being the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier. The way He compared Himself to a Samaritan, half Jew and half Gentile, shows that especially on the cross, this is how He felt. He was mindful of both Jewish and Gentile aspects of His future body as He died. Mary was a woman, a real mother, and her special love for Jesus would have been noticed by the others. This probably had something to do with the fact that all her other children had rejected Jesus as a "stranger", i.e. a Gentile; perhaps they too believed that this Jesus was the result of mum's early fling with a passing Roman soldier.

In Gethsemane the Lord spoke of drinking the cup of His final death and suffering. But earlier He had spoken in the present tense: “the cup that I drink of… the baptism that I am baptized with" (Mk. 10:38). The drinking of the cup of death was ongoing. Likewise there are several verses in Psalms 22 and 69 which are evidently relevant to both the Lord's life and also His final hours on the cross. "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" is in the context of the cross, but is applied to an earlier period of the Lord's life (Ps. 69:9 cp. Jn. 2:17). "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children" is another example (Ps. 69:8); it is a prophecy about the final sufferings of the Lord in crucifixion, and yet it is elsewhere quoted about the experiences of His ministry. And “they hated me without a cause" (Ps. 69:4) was true throughout the Lord’s life (Jn. 15:25) as well as particularly in His death.

Psalm 119 gives us the impression that David loved God's commandments, but lamented he had not followed them in his life- indeed he fears some kind of shame if his sins catch up with him. His fear of shame is often repeated (:6,22,31,39,46,51,80,116,141); this could refer to some public shame for an openly revealed sin. Or it could reference his sense of shame that "in sin did my mother conceive me" and his sense of shame that he was a poor man now in the opulence of court life. Possibly his illegitimate background had been hushed up, although it was known by "the one who taunts me… the arrogant mock me… utterly derided me" (:42,51); but when his sin with Bathsheba is revealed, he openly states for all the world to know that his mother conceived him "in sin". Yet despite this potential shame, David says he will cling to God's word of promise that he would be king. If his mother were a Moabite or non-Israelite, accounting for his red hair, he may have assumed that he as an illegitimate Gentile could never be king of Israel- if that were known about. We recall how Jephthah and Abimelech were the sons of prostitutes and how this militated against their leadership (Jud. 8:29-31; 11:1,2). Jesse was asked to parade his sons before Samuel in order for a king to be chosen. None of them are chosen; but when asked if he has any other sons, Jesse answers rather awkwardly and obliquely that there is David who is minding the sheep. That sounds an excuse as the family did have a "keeper" of the sheep apart from David (1 Sam. 17:20). This would be appropriate if David were in fact illegitimate. He was therefore "a stranger to my brothers, And an alien

to my mother's children" (Ps. 69:8). "Stranger" is Hebrew *muzar* which is related to *mamzer* or bastard / illegitimate. All this rejection and lack of attention set David up for what was likely some form of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Dt. 23:2-4 was clear that a Moabite could not enter the congregation of Israel until the 10th generation. And David was descended from Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:13-17). And so his faith in God's word of promise, that he would really be king, is in tension with his fear that he would be shamed and never accepted as Israel's king- seeing he was illegitimate, and not fully Hebrew. In addition to this Dt. 23:2 likewise says that an illegitimate man couldn't enter for ten generations: "One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of Yahweh".

Psa 69:9

For the zeal of Your house consumes me-
In the application to the Lord on the cross, we see His total mental focus upon us, the house of God. Psalm 22 likewise gives insight into how the Lord seems to have died with a strong vision of us, the great congregation. See on :8. On a human level, David seems to have become obsessed with preparing for the physical building of the temple in his old age. He truly commented: "The zeal of Your house has eaten me up" (Ps. 69:9). The RV margin of 1 Chron. 28:12 makes us wonder whether the dimensions of the temple were in fact made up within David's own mind: "David gave to Solomon his son the pattern... the pattern that he had in his spirit [AV "by the spirit"] for the... house of the Lord". But here David cites his obsession with building a temple as a kind of reason for considering that his suffering the consequence of sin was unreasonable. But the New Testament reapplies these words to the Lord's zeal for cleansing the temple.

The Law taught that a man had to bring a burnt offering, of his own voluntary will, in symbol of his own dedication to his God. It was to be consumed by the flames of the Christ-altar, until all that was left was a pile of ashes. And he was to see in this a parable of his own life; totally consumed in service, until at the end, we're left a pile of ashes. We are as water spilt upon the ground that cannot be gathered again. The Man we follow is the supreme example. He knew himself that "the zeal of Your house consumes me"; the same Hebrew word is used as in Lev. 6:10: "take up the ashes which the fire has *consumed*".

The idea of deferral of fulfilment is common enough in Scripture once you look for it. "The wrath of the Lord was upon Judah" in Hezekiah's time; but he made a covenant with God and cleansed the temple "that his fierce wrath may turn away from us" (2 Chron. 29:8,10). But this day of the Lord's wrath was deferred until 90 years later (Zeph. 1:18; 2:2). Hezekiah's zealous cleansing of the temple (2 Chron. 29:12-16) cannot fail to have been one application of Ps. 69:9 "The zeal of Your house has eaten me up"- and yet these words are applied to the Lord's cleansing of the temple and His death in the first

century. Could it not be that the Lord Jesus cleansed the temple fully understanding these things, and seeking to defer God's wrath upon Judah, to give them a chance to repent? And it was delayed- in that there was no immediate wrath from Heaven against the Jews for murdering the Son of God. And yet the days were shortened as well as deferred for the elect's sake. An amazing Father somehow builds all these various factors into His time periods. Truly everything happens in our lives at the 'right' time!

The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me-
Scriptures which were relevant to Christ are actually directly applicable to us too, who are in Christ. Thus Paul reasons: "Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written (he quotes Ps. 69:9), The reproaches of them that reproached You fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for *our* learning...." (Rom. 15:3,4). So here Paul points out a well known Messianic prophesy, applies it to Christ, and then says that it was written for *us*. This is exactly Peter's point, when he says that the words which were spoken to Christ at the transfiguration were also for our benefit, and that the word of prophecy which we have is to be treated in the same manner as if we had been cowering with Peter on the mount, hearing the words which Moses and Elijah spoke to Jesus.

Psa 69:10

When I wept and I fasted, that was to my reproach-
I suggested on :7 that the subconscious reason for David's reproach was his relationship with God. And this was certainly true for the Lord Jesus whom he typified, as it was true for Jeremiah (see on :1). David had earlier observed that when Saul was sick he had wept and fasted for him (Ps. 35:13), and he did so again at Saul's death; and perhaps this was being politically used against him.

Psa 69:11

When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them-
In the context of the Lord Jesus, we see this fulfilled in the continual usage of the words "Jesus" and "Christ" as bywords to this day. Becoming a byword was the punishment for breaking the covenant (s.w. Dt. 28:37). The Lord Jesus was therefore suffering as representative of a sinful, condemned Israel. The exiles ought to have found comfort in these prophecies. On the level of David, he was mocked as one suffering for breaking the covenant. When in fact it was quite the other way around.

Psa 69:12

Those who sit in the gate talk against me; I am the song of the drunkards-
This is another allusion to Job, whom David continually sees as his pattern (see on Job 19:12-14). It was David's own son who stood in the gate talking against his own father (2 Sam. 15:2-6). This was the typical consequence of David's sin with Bathsheba which Nathan had predicted; and yet when it happened, David complains about it, as if still struggling to accept Nathan's words, and not focused enough upon the simple wonder of the fact he had been forgiven and his life preserved by God's amazing grace.

David despises drunkards- but tried to make Uriah drunk in order to cover David's sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 69:13

But as for me, my prayer is to You, Yahweh, in an acceptable time. God, in the abundance of Your grace, answer me in the truth of Your salvation-
In the context, these are the thoughts of Christ on the cross. As He prayed on the cross, so we should arm ourselves with the same attitude of mind in prayer (cp. 1 Pet. 4:1). These words are alluded to in 2 Cor. 6:2, where *we* are told to draw near to God (and encourage others to do so), because now is the accepted time and the day of *our* salvation. The crucified Lord reflected there that His prayer was offered to God "in an acceptable time". And yet this very passage is taken up in 2 Cor. 6:2 concerning the necessary vigour of *our* crying to God for salvation. That the intensity of the Lord's prayerfulness and seeking of God on the cross should be held up as our pattern… the very height of the ideal is wondrous.

Psa 69:14

Deliver me out of the mire, and don't let me sink. Let me be delivered from those who hate me, and out of the deep waters-
This suggests a man at the very end of life, facing imminent death. I suggested on :1 that there is no particular time in David's life where this is recorded of him. Yet the words are so relevant to Jeremiah, who it seems reused this Psalm. Perhaps Jonah did likewise, for death in "the deep waters" applied to him. And they were exactly relevant to the Lord Jesus on the cross. These words are alluded to in Ps. 18:17, where at the end of his life David reflects that he has been delivered from those who hated him (s.w.). At the time, he wept bitterly for Absalom's death; but in maturity he realized that this was in fact an answer to his prayers.

Psa 69:15

Don't let the flood waters overwhelm me, neither let the deep swallow me up. Don't let the pit shut its mouth on me-
The reference may be to Ahithophel's plan to swallow up David at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 17:12,16 s.w.). David's prayer of Ps. 35:25; 69:15; 124:3 not to be swallowed up / destroyed was answered, but he was devastated at the answer- for it meant the death of his son Absalom. Again David has Job in mind, who had his 'brethren' arguing that he should be swallowed up / destroyed without cause (Job 2:3 s.w.).

As discussed on Ps. 22, the Lord's prayers for immediate deliverance death, and here for Him not enter a sealed grave, were unanswered. But here we have a parade example of how an unanswered prayer brought the greatest blessings. The fact God did allow His Son to die, and the grave to briefly shut its mouth on Him, brought about the greatest salvation.

Psa 69:16

Answer me, Yahweh, for Your grace is good. According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, turn to me-
Although earlier David has complained that he is suffering unfairly (see on :4), he again returns to his awareness that he can only be saved by grace; for he is indeed a sinner suffering the consequence of his sins. True to our own experience, we can in one breath struggle to accept consequences of sin, minimizing what we did long ago- and yet almost in the same breath, accept full responsibility for them (see on :5).

Psa 69:17

Don't hide Your face from Your servant, for I am in distress. Answer me speedily!-
David feels that his suffering at the hands of Absalom and his group was because God was hiding His face. But this was not the case. He is failing to give due weight to the words of Nathan. He was to suffer these consequences for his sin, but that didn't mean God was hiding His face from him; for he was really and truly forgiven and restored before God. The exiles appear to have likewise struggled with the issue of consequence for sin. David had asked God not to hide his face from him, David personally, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's sins (Ps. 51:9). But it seems that in crisis he wondered whether he had in fact been forgiven.

Psa 69:18 Draw near to my soul, and redeem it. Ransom me because of my enemies-
David often speaks of drawing near to God, and yet he invites God to draw near to him (Ps. 69:18). Yet David also recognizes that God "is" near already (Ps. 75:1). I take all this to mean that like us, David recognized that God "is" near, and yet wished God to make

His presence real to him. Truly can we pray David's prayers. So often, prayer is described as coming near to God (Ps. 119:169 etc.)- and yet God "is" near already. Prayer, therefore, is a way of making us realize the presence of the God who is always present. You are not alone, I am not alone; "For I am with you". God is with us and for us in His Son. Of course, we must draw near to Him (Ps. 73:28); and yet He is already near, not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27).

And yet it could be argued that God had already forgiven David, ransoming and redeeming him. But he was left to suffer the consequences of those sins, and because of that, in crisis he starts to wonder whether he has indeed been forgiven. And we can do the same so easily. The consequence of sin is death, and we can squirm against this when we or others face it… forgetting the wonder of the fact that we are indeed redeemed and ransomed from the power of the grave, although we must still take the consequences. The exiles likewise had to understand that they had been redeemed (s.w. Ps. 74:2) but were suffering the consequence of sin. God was indeed their redeemer (Is. 41:14; 43:1 s.w.). At the very end of his life, David realized that he had in fact been redeemed (s.w. 1 Kings 1:29). He could give up his spirit to God in death, knowing that He was redeemed from the power of the grave (s.w. Ps. 31:5; 49:15). His sure hope in the resurrection of the body looked ahead to the attitude with which the Lord Jesus died.

Psa 69:19

You know my reproach, my shame, and my dishonour; my adversaries are all before You-
The tone of the Psalm begins to change from this point. This so often happens in the Psalms; David begins by praying desperately for help, and then within the same Psalm, becomes calmer, and ends up rejoicing. Perhaps there was some dramatic Divine revelation to him during the prayer. But rather I suggest that this is simply true to our spiritual experience in prayer; we too within the course of prayer become calmer, seeing God's hand, aware that He does know precisely all our situation, better than we do; and shall finally bring us to the great salvation of His eternal Kingdom. And thus we conclude the prayer in joy and peace before Him.

Psa 69:20

Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness-
The Lord didn't just passively enduring the polemics of the Pharisees; they were His chicks, He really wanted them under His wings (cp. Israel dwelling under the wings of the cherubim). We must ever remember this when we read the records of Him arguing with them and exposing their hypocrisy. He wasn't just throwing back their questions,

playing the game and winning, just surviving from day to day with them. He was trying to gather them, and their rejection of His words really hurt Him. Their reproach broke His heart; He didn't just brazenly endure it as we might the ravings of a drunken man (Ps. 69:20). David here alludes to Job's experiences (see on Job 19:12-14).

The shame of the cross is a theme of the records. The reproach broke the Lord's heart (Ps. 69:20). It could even be that He suffered a heart rupture, a literal broken heart, some hours prior to His death- hence when His side was pierced, blood flowed out- and corpses don't usually bleed. It has been commented that severe emotional trauma is enough to cause such a rupture. He wasn't hard and impervious to it all. He knew who He was, and where He was going. To be treated as He was, was such an insult to the God of all grace. And He keenly sensed this. Heb. 12:2,3 parallels the Lord's enduring of the cross with His enduring "such contradiction of sinners against Himself".

It is likely that the Lord was crucified naked, thereby sharing the shame of Adam's nakedness. The *shame* of the cross is stressed (Heb. 11:26; 12:2; Ps. 31:17; Ps. 69:6,7,12,19,20). And we are to share those sufferings. There *must*, therefore, be an open standing up for what we believe in the eyes of a hostile world. Preaching, in this sense, is for all of us. And if we dodge this, we put the Son of God to a naked shame; we re-crucify Him naked, we shame Him again (Heb. 6:6). He was crucified naked, and the sun went in for three hours. He must have been cold, very cold (Jn. 18:18). Artemidorus Daldianus (*Oneirokritika* 2.53) confirms that the Romans usually crucified victims naked. Melito of Sardis, writing in the 2nd century, writes of "his body naked and not even deemed worthy of a clothing that it might not be seen. Therefore the heavenly lights turned away and the day darkened in order that he might be hidden who was denuded upon the cross" (*On the Pasch* 97). The earliest portrayals of the crucified Jesus, on carved gems, feature Him naked.

I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; for comforters, but I found none- "*But* there stood by the cross..." makes the connection between Mary and the clothes. It seems that initially, she wasn't there; He looked for comforters and found none (Ps. 69:20- or does this imply that the oft mentioned spiritual difference between the Lord and His mother meant that He didn't find comfort in her? Or she only came to the cross later?). His lovers, friends and kinsmen stood far off from Him (Ps. 38:11), perhaps in a literal sense, perhaps far away from understanding Him. If Mary wasn't initially at the cross, John's connection between the dividing of the clothes and her being there would suggest that she had made the clothes. In any case, the four women at the cross are surely set up against the four soldiers there- who gambled over the clothes. Perhaps the other women had also had some input into the Lord's clothing.

Psa 69:21

They also gave me gall for my food; in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink-
It is hard to find an occasion in David's life which would have been relevant to this. But I suggested on :1 that the Psalm was rewritten by Jeremiah. Perhaps they passed down gall and vinegar to him in the dungeon. But the Psalm clearly refers to the Lord Jesus, supremely. The Hebrew can stand the translation 'poison' (see RSV). Given the extended, agitated torture of crucifixion, there was a custom for close friends to get close enough to the cross to lift up a poisonous substance which the crucified would lick, and thereby die quickly. It is just possible that a friend (or even his mother?) or a sympathetic soldier did this. Again, in this case it would seem that the Lord chose the highest level; our salvation would surely have been theologically achievable if He had taken it. But He chose to attain for us not only salvation, but "such *great* salvation" by always taking the highest level. He became obedient not only to death, but "even the death of the cross".

Psa 69:22

Let their table before them become a snare, may it become a retribution and a trap-
A "table" is literally that which was spread forth, and need not refer to a piece of wood with legs. The idea is that their table, in the sense of a piece of material unrolled and spread upon the ground, was to turn into an animal trap into which they themselves would fall. The verse is quoted from the LXX in Rom. 11:9 and applied to the Jews who refused to accept the Lord Jesus as Messiah and king. Those who treated David likewise represented the Jews of the first century. Thus again David at this point is understood as a type of the Lord Jesus.

Psa 69:23

Let their eyes be darkened, so that they can't see; may their backs be continually bent-
This is quoted in Rom. 11:10 about the Jews who rejected the kingship of the Lord Jesus, whom David typified. This darkening of Jewish hearts / eyes has been spoken of in Rom. 1:21 (s.w.), and I have argued on Romans 1 that 'Jews' and 'Gentiles' refer specifically to the Jewish and Gentile Christian converts within the church at Rome- rather than to Jews and Gentiles in some generic, global sense. As noted on Rom. 11:10, what is in view here is the stumbling of Jewish Christian believers out of the way, leading to their being cut off from the Christ-olive tree. '"Bend the back" uses the same word as just used in Rom. 11:4 for those who bowed the knee to Baal. They would be confirmed in their idolatry. And perhaps the reference is to how the Christian Jews who fell away from faith would eternally bow down at the last judgment (Rev. 3:9).

Psa 69:24

Pour out Your indignation on them; let the fierceness of Your anger overtake them-
This is the language used about God's judgment upon the Gentiles (Ps. 79:6; Jer. 10:25). David often sees the apostate within Israel as no better than Gentiles. And yet when Absalom did die, David was heartbroken, even though it was the answer to prayers like this. Being "overtaken" suggests being overtaken by military defeat, which is what happened to Absalom.

Psa 69:25

Let their habitation be desolate, may no one dwell in their tents-
These words are quoted about Judas in Acts 1:20, who is clearly typified by Ahithophel, who was a main mover in Absalom's rebellion. The condemnation of Jewry for crucifying Christ in Ps. 69:25 ("let *their* habitation be desolate") is quoted in the singular about Judas in Acts 1:20. What was true of Judas was also true of Israel in general; in the same way as the pronouns used about Judas merge from singular into plural in Ps. 55:13-15 ("a man mine equal… let death seize upon them"), as also in Ps. 109:3 cp. :8.

Psa 69:26

For they persecute him whom You have wounded. They tell of the sorrow of those whom You have hurt-
The parallel between "him" and "those" reflects David's awareness that his sufferings were representative of those of God's people. This is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus on the cross, who was "wounded" for our sins on the cross (s.w. Is. 53:5; Zech. 13:6), with the "wound" of the judgment for sin which was the just desert of His people (s.w. Jer. 30:14; Lam. 2:12). The Lord's wounding is paralleled with that of His people. There on the cross, we were all in Him.

Psa 69:27

Add iniquity to their iniquity; don't let them come into Your righteousness-
It is a feature of God's dealings with men that He confirms the degree of spiritual success or failure which we achieve or aim for by our own freewill effort. Thus we read nine times that Pharaoh hardened his own heart; but ten times that God hardened his heart. Similarly, God adds iniquity unto the iniquity of those who willfully sin (Ps. 69:27; Rev. 22:18). Conversely God imputes righteousness, adding His own righteous characteristics to us, in response to our faith. This is the key idea of 'justification by faith', being counted righteous although personally we are not.

Both sin and righteousness can be imputed. The conclusion is that whatever moves we make spiritually are magnified and multiplied in significance by God. And this adds endless meaning to every life decision and position, every single thought and action.

Psa 69:28

Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written with the righteous-
The suggestion is that they had been in the book of life, they were part of the Israel of God, but David wishes for them to be removed from it. This wishing of condemnation upon enemies, even when they include your own son [Absalom], seems so far from the spirit of the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and instead wishes that all men come to repentance. Desire for repentance in his enemies is rarely seen in David; we find only death wishes, and even a desire for their eternal damnation. He continues to divide his world into the sinners and "the righteous", forgetting that he was only righteous after his sins of adultery and murder because he was counted righteous. The spirit of Moses was so different, wishing himself blotted out of the book of life so that sinful Israel might enter the land (Ex. 32:32).

Psa 69:29

But I am in pain and distress. Let Your salvation, God, protect me-
"Protect me" is AV "set me up on high". David sees the contrast between his present lowness and the height of his ultimate exaltation. David again sees himself as following the pattern of Job (s.w. Job 5:11). This was ultimately true of the Lord Jesus in His ascent to Heaven and Divine nature. Solomon presents his father David's being 'set on high' (Ps. 69:29) as programmatic for the exaltation of all the righteous; he sees David as the epitome of the righteous, and thereby justifies the Davidic dynasty (s.w. Prov. 18:10; 29:25).

Psa 69:30

I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving-
Again we note the change in tone of the Psalm. As noted on :19, David begins by praying desperately for help, and then within the same Psalm, becomes calmer, and ends up rejoicing. Perhaps there was some dramatic Divine revelation to him during the prayer. But rather I suggest that this is simply true to our spiritual experience in prayer; we too within the course of prayer become calmer, seeing God's hand, aware that He does know precisely all our situation, better than we do; and shall finally bring us to the great salvation of His eternal Kingdom. And thus we conclude the prayer in joy and peace before Him.

Psa 69:31

It will please Yahweh better than an ox, or a bull that has horns and hoofs-
David had earlier come to realize that a broken and contrite heart was worth more to God than any animal sacrifice (Ps. 51:17). Here he develops the idea to say that praising God for His grace (:30) was worth more than sacrifices; and that praise offered from a humble heart is hugely valuable to God. Hence the theme of humility continues in :32.

Psa 69:32

The humble have seen it, and are glad. You who seek after God, let your heart live-
As noted on :31, a humble heart full of praise of grace is so valuable to God. The idea may be that the humble "see" or perceive that God wants praise of His Name rather than sacrifices; and this is what God had Himself wanted. It was this attitude of heart which would live for ever (Heb.). Although we have no immortal soul, the righteous have an immortal spirit in that who we are in our hearts now is who we shall eternally be. These thoughts are also presented as the Lord's thoughts on the cross in Ps. 22:26: "The humble shall eat and be satisfied, they who seek after Him shall praise Yahweh. May your hearts live forever".

Psa 69:33

For Yahweh hears the needy, and doesn't despise His captive people-
This has clearly been rewritten with reference to the captive exiles; see on :35. The captives were despised (s.w. Neh. 2:19) as David was for his sin (s.w. Ps. 22:6,24), and as was the Lord Jesus on the cross (s.w. Is. 53:3), but God did not despise them and would destroy that opposition. Yet perhaps it had a historical basis in David appreciating that although he had despised God in his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (s.w. 2 Sam. 12:10), God by grace had not despised him. Because God did not despise David's contrite and broken heart (s.w. Ps. 51:17, a passage also alluded to in :31). The exiles had likewise despised God (s.w. Ez. 16:59) but would not be despised by God.

Psa 69:34

Let heaven and earth praise Him; the seas, and everything that moves therein!-
David associates the salvation of Zion with the "seas" praising God, the Gentiles beyond the "earth" / land promised to Abraham. This is the prophetic vision; of Zion's redemption being a powerful example for the Gentiles to accept Israel's God.

Psa 69:35

For God will save Zion, and build the cities of Judah. They shall settle there, and own it-
David saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). This is how we are to make sense of suffering- by understanding that it plays a role in the salvation of others, and is part of a wider nexus of Divine operation. We suffer so that we may be able to minister the comfort we receive to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Job likewise came to realize that his sufferings were not so much for his personal maturing, but for the teaching and salvation of the friends.

Or we can understand this reference to Zion as an example of a Psalm of David being rewritten and reapplied, under Divine inspiration, to a later historical situation- perhaps to the restoration, when the exiles again lived in the cities of Judah. See on :33. "Own it" is the word for "Drove out" in Ps. 44:2. It is the word for "inherit" in the promises that Abraham's seed would "inherit" the land (Gen. 15:7,8; 28:4). As in our experience, there is always a primary fulfilment of God's promises and eternal covenant, which was based around the promises to Abraham. This was of particular comfort to the exiles. Although God appeared not to be coming through for them at the time, they were to take comfort in the covenant with Abraham; God's hand had worked in the past and would do so again, and the land was ultimately theirs. Even if at the moment their enemies were in the ascendancy.

Psa 69:36

The children also of His servants shall inherit it. Those who love His name shall dwell therein-
No longer would the inheritance of Zion be predicated upon belonging to the tribe of Judah, in whose inheritance Jerusalem fell. Zion, the beloved temple mount, would be inherited by all who truly love God's Name, who love His characteristics. All who love the Lord's appearing will be saved by Him (2 Tim. 4:8). Simple love of God and His ways and character is the lead characteristic of those who shall be saved eternally.

PSALMS CHAPTER 70

Psa 70:1

For the Chief Musician. By David. A reminder-
This is a fragment from Ps. 40:1-17*,* although here "Yahweh" is used instead of "elohim". And the final verse changes Psalm 40:17 "Yet the Lord thinks upon me" to an appeal for urgent help. It could be that David recalls his earlier successful prayer for urgent help in a situation and repeats it, although without the praise for an answer, which has not yet been received. Perhaps this is the sense of the Psalm title "a reminder", to act as God had done previously. Psalm 40 is an appeal for help with the consequences of the sin with Bathsheba, and maybe Psalm 70 was related to facing another such consequence.

Hurry, God, to deliver me. Come quickly to help me, Yahweh-
David repeatedly asks God to "hurry to help me" (Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 141:1). But David had hurried (s.w.) to be obedient to God, always wanting to 'say yes straight away' (Ps. 119:60). Our response to God's voice is therefore related to His response to our voice; if His words abide in us, then we experience positive experience in answered prayer (Jn. 15:7).

Psa 70:2

Let them be disappointed and confounded who seek my soul. Let those who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace-
Saul *sought* to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved. These words perhaps originated in the wilderness Psalm of Ps. 35:4. But David repeats them here, in this Psalm which appears to reference to David's sin with Bathsheba, which provoked the plotting against David's life referred to here. And yet we wonder as to how David could so bitterly wish the destruction of his opponents, when he himself had been saved by grace.

Psa 70:3

Let them be turned back because of their shame who say, Aha! Aha!-
David's repeated desire to see the condemnation of those who were judging him seems inappropriate for a man saved by grace; for they were the vehicles for receiving the consequences of his sins. "Aha!" suggests malicious pleasure at another's misfortune as in Ps. 35:21,25. The implication could be that before his sin with Bathsheba, David

had enemies who wanted to see his fall- and the Bathsheba affair was ideal for their purposes. GNB of :2 suggests the same: "May those who are happy because of my troubles be turned back". Although Nathan had basically told David that his troubles from his own family would not be "turned back". They would remain with him all his days. And yet we have these prayers recorded- as a lesson to us. It has often been said that God's response to prayer is "Yes", "No" or "wait". David here is unwilling to accept "No" nor "wait". He wants the "yes", and right away. Continually he asks God to not delay but to "hurry" in responding to the problems made by his family who are against his continued kingship. Even though God through Nathan had said that these problems were to continue all David's life.

Psa 70:4

Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You. Let those who love Your salvation continually say, Let God be exalted!-
Again we query why and how David continues to see people in such black and white terms, divided between the righteous and unrighteous, when he himself had been revealed as a righteous man who had sinned seriously.

The faithful are described as "those that *seek* (God)... such as *love* Your salvation". But in another sense, there is not one that truly seeks God (Rom. 3:11- the context concerns all of us, believers and unbelievers); and yet we are those who seek Him. We must be ambitious to do the impossible. Those who truly *love* righteousness and the Kingdom will be rewarded with it. Likewise Paul in 1 Cor. 8:2,3 describes the faithful man as one who accepts he knows nothing as he ought to know, but truly loves God. Heb. 9:28 is clear: "Unto them that look for (Christ) shall He appear the second time... unto salvation". Those who truly look for Christ will be given salvation. All who truly love His appearing will be saved (2 Tim. 4:8). Those who want salvation and love it, will get it. It is loving God that is so critical; we are to be “they that love His name”, loving all the characteristics that He stands for (Ps. 69:36).

David responded to their seeking of him by seeking God more. He uses the language of the hunt and chase to describe how he was drawing closer to God: "My soul followeth hard after thee" (Ps. 63:8; Ps. 63 is a wilderness psalm, see title). “Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul... let all those that seek thee rejoice" (Ps. 40:14,16). In this sense, David felt he wasn't fleeing *from* his enemies as much as fleeing *to* God: "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies (from whom he was running): I flee unto thee to hide me" (Ps. 143:9). This fleeing *to* God didn't mean that David and Jesus didn't respond or retaliate verbally; both of them, especially the Lord Jesus, did. They both pleaded their innocence, and accused their enemies of being unfair and hypocritical. Yet this must have been done from a genuine motive of love; as David loved Saul, as the thought of Saul's death must have torn at his heart, so the Lord Jesus loved

Israel, weeping over Jerusalem, wishing to himself like a child for the impossible: that they would know him as their Saviour. Both David and Jesus had a real sense of direction, they could see that their mental, emotional and physical sufferings were leading them towards an altogether higher relationship with the Father. They took those sufferings as an almost welcome push towards the Father. They had a sure sense of spiritual direction in all their afflictions; this accounts for the human loneliness which they both felt.

Psa 70:5

But I am poor and needy. Come to me quickly, God. You are my help and my deliverer. Yahweh, don't delay-
See on :1. This final verse changes Psalm 40:17 "Yet the Lord thinks upon me" to an appeal for urgent help. It could be that David recalls his earlier successful prayer for urgent help in a situation and repeats it, although without the praise for an answer, which has not yet been received. Perhaps this is the sense of the Psalm title "a reminder", to act as God had done previously. Psalm 40 is an appeal for help with the consequences of the sin with Bathsheba, and maybe Psalm 70 was related to facing another such consequence.

"The poor and needy" is a common phrase in the Bible; the word for "needy" really means a beggar. In a family based society like Israel, beggars were those without families, who had been cast out from their extended family. Quite possibly they were in their isolated position because of their own bad behaviour. David at this time when on the run from Absalom was not necessarily materially poor. But he felt he had the mentality of a beggar, cast out from his family because his sons wanted to take his power and kill him. Hence his repeated plea to God that "I am poor and needy" (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1).

The Lord Jesus would later speak of ultimate salvation for "the poor in spirit", and this spiritual need is clearly also present even in the Old Testament conception of being "poor". Thus Ps. 109:16 "he... persecuted the poor and needy man, the broken in heart". The poverty was in the spirit or heart. Likewise Ps. 109:22 "I am poor and needy. My heart is wounded within me".

It is no bad thing to simply list the huge stress upon God's special interest in the "poor and needy"; this is what makes Him so great. His ultimate highness is shown by His special interest in the very lowest: "Yahweh, who is like You, who delivers the poor from him who is too strong for him; yes, the poor and the needy" (Ps. 35:10). Here is only a partial list:

Dt. 15:11 You must surely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and to your poor, in your land.

Dt. 24:14 You must not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy
1 Sam. 2:8 He raises up the poor out of the dust. He lifts up the needy from the dunghill, to make them sit with princes and inherit the throne of glory.
Ps. 9:18 For the needy shall not always be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor perish forever.
Ps. 72:4,12,13 He will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy… He will deliver the needy when he cries; the poor, who has no helper… He will have pity on the poor and needy
Ps. 74:21 let the poor and needy praise Your name.
Ps. 113:7 He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the needy from the ash heap;
Prov. 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours Him.
Prov. 22:22 Don't exploit the poor, because he is poor and don't crush the needy in court;
Prov. 30:14 There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and their jaws like knives, to devour the poor from the earth, and the needy from among men
Prov. 31:9 Open your mouth, judge righteously, and serve justice to the poor and needy.
Prov. 31:20 She [The Worthy Woman] opens her arms to the poor; yes, she extends her hands to the needy.
Is.10:2 to deprive the needy from justice, and to rob the poor among My people of their rights
Is. 14:30 The poor will eat, and the needy will lie down in safety
Is. 25:4 For You have been a stronghold to the poor, a stronghold to the needy in his distress
Is. 26:6 The foot shall tread it down; even the feet of the poor, and the footsteps of the needy.
Is. 41:17 The poor and needy seek water, and there is none, their tongue fails for thirst. I Yahweh, will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
Jer. 22:16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Wasn't this to know Me? says Yahweh.

PSALMS CHAPTER 71

Psa 71:1

In You, Yahweh, I take refuge. Never let me be disappointed-
Typical of men of his time, David seems to fear shame [s.w. "disappointed"] more than death itself. Defeat meant shame, and he desperately begged not to be shamed. Perhaps it was the function of his failure with Bathsheba to help him redefine the

motives for his trust in God. This Psalm repeats language from Ps. 22,31,35,40- which were all in the context of his sin with Bathsheba. It seems that this Psalm 71 is his plea for help as he continues to face the consequences of that sin even in his old age.

The idea is that God was David's city of refuge. These cities were for those who needed to flee when being chased by the avenger of blood (Num. 35:26). The imagery is very appropriate to David when fleeing from Saul and Absalom. David's constant meditation upon God's law would have included the sections about the cities of refuge; he realized that actually no such city was available for him, but the spirit of the law led him to reflect that Yahweh was his refuge, wherever he was. David tends to open wilderness Psalms with this reflection, just as we may tend to begin prayers with the same opening phrase and thoughts (Ps. 7:1; 11:1; 16:1; 31:1; 57:1; 71:1). But here he now reuses this lesson learned in the context of Absalom's rebellion.

A case can be made that the whole of book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) was written / edited in Babylon. The Psalms of Korah (83-87) seem to reflect the longing of the righteous remnant in Babylon for the temple services. And it is just possible that the entire Psalter was re-edited there in Babylon, under inspiration- for so *many* Psalms have elements of appropriacy to the exiles in Babylon and the restoration. The LXX titles of Psalm 56 [“Concerning the people that were removed from the Sanctuary”] and 71 [“Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first that were taken captive”] speak for themselves. Likewise the LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah. David's experience of grace and appeal for salvation by grace was therefore intended to be programmatic for the exiles in Babylon.

Psa 71:2

Deliver me in Your righteousness and rescue me. Turn Your ear to me and save me-
David appealed to *God's* righteousness for deliverance from the consequence of his sins (Ps. 71:2). This was appropriate, seeing that David had been saved from death by God's imputation of His righteousness to David (Ps. 32:1-4), by grace through faith; seeing David's sins left him with no righteousness of his own. And it was on this basis that David believed he would continue to be saved / delivered / rescued (s.w. Ps. 51:14 in the Bathsheba context). But Solomon failed to learn from his mother and father's experience of grace, teaching instead that personal righteousness is what saves (Prov. 10:2; 11:4,6).

Psa 71:3

Be to me a rock of refuge to which I may always go-
David had often used this image in the wilderness Psalms. But he asks that God will

continue to be his refuge, now that in later life he faced another crisis. This is the force of "always", throughout his life.

Give the command to save me, for You are my rock and my fortress-
David envisages a Divine command being issued in the court of Heaven, and then this being operationalized on earth (presumably by the Angels). Verses 1-3 are the same as in Ps. 31 so we can assume this is a psalm of David. I suggest the initial reference is to God's dramatic deliverance of David from Saul in the wilderness of Maon at the cliff and mountain. "Refuge is 'maon', so the allusion is clear. God was David's "rock" (*sela'*) and "fortress" (*matsud*). David had stayed in a "rock" (*sela'*) in Maon (1 Sam. 23:25). Saul had David trapped there, but messengers came telling Saul that the Philistines had invaded, and so he left chasing David when he almost had caught him. David then goes and lives in the "fortress / stronghold" (*matsud*) of Engedi (1 Sam. 23:29): "Saul and his men went to seek him. When David was told, he went down to the rock and stayed in the wilderness of Maon. When Saul heard that, he pursued David into the wilderness of Maon. Saul went on one side of the mountain and David and his men on the other, and David hurried to get away for fear of Saul, for Saul and his men surrounded David and his men to take them. But a messenger came to Saul saying, Hurry and come, for the Philistines have made a raid on the land! So Saul returned from pursuing David and went against the Philistines. Therefore they called that place Sela Hammahlekoth. David went from there and lived in the strongholds of En Gedi". But Ps. 71 is David in older age, recalling this deliverance, asking God to again give a command to save him; and asking God to be the rock where he could "always" go, just as he had in earlier life. This could hint at David not being as strong in faith in his older age; he seems to fear God may somehow not come through for him.

Psa 71:4

Rescue me, my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man-
This may have originated in his thoughts about Saul, but the context is now of salvation from Absalom and Ahithophel, and as noted on :1, it becomes the intended appeal of the exiles for deliverance from Babylon, then Haman, and indeed from all their captors. "The hand of the wicked / unrighteous" is the term used for the Babylonians in Ez. 7:21, "cruel and evil people" (GNB). The LXX title of the Psalm claims it was the thoughts of those who first arrived in exile in Babylon. Quite possibly it is therefore a psalm of Daniel or another exile close to him.

Psa 71:5

For You are my hope, Lord Yahweh; my confidence from my youth-
As noted on :3, David is asking that God will continue to be his refuge as he was when on the run from Saul, now that in later life he faced another crisis. This is the force of "always" in :3, throughout his life. We note that the Hebrew idea of "hope" is not 'a hope for the best', but rather an absolute confidence; hence "hope" and "confidence" are here paralleled. The "hope of Israel" is the utter certain confidence of Israel. The same idea is implicit in the Greek word *elpis*.

Psa 71:6

I have relied on You from the womb. You are He who took me out of my mother's womb-
"Relied" is the word for "upheld". David feels that God has 'upheld' him from babyhood until old age. And he wants God to continue. The desire for God to still uphold him again looks back to his feelings after the sin with Bathsheba, when David asks God to "uphold me [s.w.] with Your spirit" (Ps. 51:12). Ps. 71 shows David wanting the same things as he did after the sin with Bathsheba, and we could possibly conclude that he had not really learnt his lessons. Here, in old age, he presents as insecure and uncertain about God's grace continuing to him.

David here likens God to a midwife, who gently eased and took him from his mother's womb. This usage of female imagery about God was unusual for the time, indeed quite a paradigm breaker, and reflects David's relatively high view of women- compared at least to contemporary attitudes. If David was the youngest of many sons, his mother may well have had difficulties in his birth, and so his very survival was perhaps seen by him as a reflection of grace.

I will always praise You-
The force of "always" in :3 is as here; David will praise God on his harp as he did in the wilderness years in exile from Saul, right to the end of his days.

Psa 71:7

I am a marvel to many, but You are my strong refuge-
"Marvel" is the usual word for "miracle". David may mean that "many" considered his survival to be miraculous, but he attributes that to God as being his "strong refuge". But the word can occasionally mean a man of sign or symbol to others (s.w. Ez. 12:6,11). In this case, David would be again aware (as he often is) that his life and experience of Divine grace was representative of that of all God's true people.

But "marvel" is the word used in Dt. 28:46, where the punishment of Israel for its sins is spoken of as "a sign and a wonder / marvel". David in this case would be saying that he knows he is seen by "many" as suffering for his sins, punished by God- but despite

bearing the consequences for his sins, he asks God to be his strong refuge as he endured the consequences. Which really is how we all are in enduring the results of our mortality.

David [we can assume Davidic authorship from the quotations from Psalm 31 and many other Psalms] began this prayer by asking "*Be to me* a rock of refuge" (:3). This is so often the path of prayer in the psalms- they begin with a request, and then as the prayer proceeds, the conclusion is reached that what was asked for, has in fact been granted.

Psa 71:8

My mouth shall be filled with Your praise, with Your honour all the day-
Despite fears for his immediate future (:9), David's vision is of himself in the Kingdom, eternally praising God for His saving grace. This is the perspective we must have before us. He began the psalm asking for his own honour to be preserved (:1). Now he comes to think of God's honour and how He will eternally praise it. Again, this is the path of prayer; beginning with our own personal concerns; but coming to be more God centered as we proceed.

Psa 71:9

Don't reject me in my old age. Don't forsake me when my strength fails-
David frequently expresses his aloneness, and the comfort He therefore finds in God. But this had to grow over time. His fears were those of the exiles (see on :1). Is. 46:4 seems almost to be in answer to David's fear, and is addressed to the exiles: "Even to old age I am he, and even to grey hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; yea, I will carry, and will deliver". Possibly he feared being cast off / forsaken by God just as old people tend to be by society and family. There is the illusion amongst younger people that at some point in later life, and certainly in older life, they will be able to put their feet up and enjoy life, being cared for by their family. But actually life is full of trials and out of left field tests from God. They don't stop. But "cast me not away" ["reject"] is the language of Ps. 51:11 "Don't cast me away from Your presence". Being cast away from God is the language of condemnation (Dt. 29:28; Jer. 7:15). They were his fears after his sin with Bathsheba. And it seems now in older age, he is haunted by the same fear. Likewise "my strength fails" is now he felt after the sin with Bathsheba: "My strength fails because of my iniquity" (Ps. 31:10). This is all another indication that his 'repentance' regarding the sin was not total; for his later psalms frequently chafe at the consequences which God had given him, and he often asks God to change them. And now he has the same fears of ruptured relationship with God, the fear of condemnation as he drew closer to death and then, next waking moment, the judgment. But that of

course was a good sign- to fear being cast away by God shows he currently felt "with" God, and the one thing he wanted was eternal relationship with God. Not having that was the one thing he feared more than death itself. See on :12.

Psa 71:10

For my enemies talk about me, they who watch for my soul conspire together-
"Conspire" is s.w. "counsel", the word used of Ahithophel, David's counsellor who was Bathsheba's grandfather, who later betrayed him and turned against him (2 Sam. 15:12; 16:23). Perhaps David is commenting upon Ahithophel's counsel to Absalom which was designed to destroy him. See on Ps. 32:8. Old age was always coped with through family caring for the elderly person. But God had promised that as a result of his sin, David would face bitter grief from his own family. Now he was old, he realized this meant he would be left without carers. It's possible that "they who watch for my soul" refers to those who should care / watch out for him in his old age- his sons. But instead, they conspired to kill him and take power from him. David feared the powerlessness of old age; not for him the death surrounded by loving children and grandchildren. Rather did they persecute him to the end. His throne was hardly secure even at the time of his death. His old age brought so many other problems, as his sons and others tried to grab the throne even before he had died.

Psa 71:11

saying, God has forsaken him. Pursue and take him, for no one will rescue him- The Hebrew for "pursue" is found on the lips of Ahithophel at the time of Absalom's rebellion: "I will pursue after David" (2 Sam. 17:1). It was at this time that David felt God *had* forsaken him (Ps. 22:1). But He had not, ultimately. So we have here an example of false guilt being placed upon a man even of David's faith and spirituality. We must take guilt for sins we have done. This is the true guilt. But the world is full of those who place false guilt upon others, and we can too easily absorb it. And yet I suppose it is impossible, at least by any intellectual process, to precisely divide false guilt from true guilt. We can take comfort that the Lord Jesus was our guilt offering, for all our guilt, of whatever kind. We note that they pursued David because they thought God had forsaken him and would not therefore judge them.

Psa 71:12

God, don't be far from me. My God, hurry to help me-
The plea for God not to "be far from me" is common (Ps. 22:11,19; 35:22; 38:21; 71:12). The emphasis perhaps is to be placed upon David not wanting *God* to be far from him, seeing that he felt others were 'far' from him (s.w. Ps. 88:8,18). He accepted his social

and psychological isolation from others, but he didn't want God to be likewise far off from him. In the context of the exiles, God was willing to not be 'far off' from the exiles if they repented (Is. 46:13).

As discussed on :9, David now in older age seems to be thinking back to his sin with Bathsheba and fearing the consequences, and condemnation. For he asks for God not to be far from him, just as he asked at that time: "Don't forsake me... My God, be not far from me" (Ps. 38:21). GNB "Don't stay so far away, O God" certainly implies that at this point, he felt a distance from God. And he blames God rather than himself. It's easy to assume that retirement, old age, or at least some point in our future will be easier for us than now, that crises will not happen. But that wasn't the case for David, neither is it for any spiritual person. Indeed, it can be that the intensity of our preparation is intensified as we draw to the end of our race.

Psa 71:13

Let my accusers be disappointed and consumed-
LXX "Let those that plot against my soul be ashamed and utterly fail". The plotting was clearly by Ahithophel and Absalom. David's desire was heard in that the sword and the forest devoured or consumed Absalom and his forces (2 Sam. 18:8). But when the prayer was answered, David wept bitterly for the loss of Absalom. We are thereby warned to be careful what we pray for, lest we receive it- which in some form we will.

Let them be covered with disgrace and scorn who want to harm me-
Saul *sought* or 'wanted' to take David's life. So many of the Psalms contain imprecations against those who were seeking David's soul- not just his physical life, but seeking to destroy his very being (e.g. Ps. 35:4; 40:14; 54:1; 63:9; 70:2; 71:13). These imprecations expose the evil of Saul, and asks God to condemn him. Some of those Psalms appear to have been written by David in the Saul days, and then rewritten at the time of Absalom's rebellion- another man who sought David's soul, and yet whom David loved.

Psa 71:14

But I will always hope, and will add to all of Your praise-
The tone of the Psalm begins to change from this point. This so often happens in the Psalms; David begins by praying desperately for help, and then within the same Psalm, becomes calmer, and ends up rejoicing. Perhaps there was some dramatic Divine revelation to him during the prayer. But rather I suggest that this is simply true to our spiritual experience in prayer; we too within the course of prayer become calmer, seeing God's hand, aware that He does know precisely all our situation, better than we do; and

shall finally bring us to the great salvation of His eternal Kingdom. And thus we conclude the prayer in joy and peace before Him. "I will always hope" doesn't mean he would hope for the best; rather he speaks of the certainty of his expectation of final salvation. This is the Kingdom perspective we must always hold.

Psa 71:15

My mouth will tell others about Your righteousness and Your salvation all day, though I don't know its full measure-
David had vowed the same at the time of his forgiveness for the sin with Bathsheba. Now he promises it again, if God delivers him from the consequence of that sin. We note that he vows to tell others that which he admits he cannot fully fathom. Full intellectual grasp of the message of grace is not possible nor required to be able to share it with others. The Hebrew words for "tell" and "measure" are the same. The idea is that he cannot re-tell all the things of God's salvation; they are too many. Even if he spends all day telling or [Heb.] counting up all God's salvations, he cannot get to the number of it. The same word is used for "tell" when God promises that Abraham's seed cannot be told for multitude, they cannot be numbered (Gen. 15:5; 16:10). Abraham's singular seed [the Lord Jesus] would be told or multiplied more than man can count; not just in becoming many, but in the Hebraic sense of becoming so great, beyond human counting. He often gets to this point of admitting that his mind is tripping, faced with eternity, with all the countless number of thoughts that God has had regarding it. And every believer surely has this sense: "Many, Yahweh my God, are the wonderful works which You have done, and Your thoughts which are toward us. They can't be declared back to You. If I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Ps. 40:5); "How precious to me are Your thoughts, God! How vast is their sum! If I would count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I wake up, I am still with You" (Ps. 139:17,18). God's love, the eternal nature of His salvation, is indeed something we should talk of and praise, but going through it aspect by aspect, realizing that it is the final outcome of an infinite amount of Divine thinking… trips the mind. We feel our inevitable inadequacy, as gratitude and praise melt our hearts.

Psa 71:16

I will declare the mighty acts of the Lord Yahweh. I will make mention of Your righteousness, even of Yours alone-
David appealed to *God's* righteousness for deliverance from the consequence of his sins (Ps. 71:2). This was appropriate, seeing that David had been saved from death by God's imputation of His righteousness to David (Ps. 32:1-4), by grace through faith; seeing David's sins left him with no righteousness of his own. And it was on this basis that David believed he would continue to be saved / delivered / rescued (s.w. Ps. 51:14

in the Bathsheba context). This salvation by grace of a condemned sinner was and is "the might acts of Yahweh", as dramatic as what He did at the Red Sea or in any visible miracle.

Psa 71:17

God, You have taught me from my youth. Up until now I have declared Your wondrous works-

As noted on :3, David could look back and perceive the continuous action of God in his life, and despite his sin with Bathsheba, he rightly perceived that he had made a continuous positive response to His hand. From his youth, David had asked to be taught God's way (Ps. 119:7,12,26,64,66,68,73,108,124,135), and at the end of his life David recognized that indeed God had "taught me from my youth" (s.w. Ps. 71:17). In secular life, teaching is something experienced in youth, and then life is spent practicing what was learned. But in spiritual life, David perceived that the God who had taught him from his youth was continuing to teach him (Ps. 71:17). This is part of the "newness of life" experienced in Christ, the ever fresh spring water that we drink.

Psa 71:18

Yes, even when I am old and gray-haired, God, don't forsake me, until I have declared Your strength to the next generation, Your might to everyone who is to come-

The phrase "I am old and gray-haired" is a quote from David's mentor Samuel: "I am old and grey-headed and my sons are with you, and I have been your leader from my youth to this day" (1 Sam. 12:2). And Samuel goes on to protest his utter integrity all his life, and his skepticism about the next king. It's hard to think that David didn't have the same feelings in mind- when he should have realized that he had sinned and was living out the consequences for them which he had agreed with God in return for God sparing his life. Whether or not that is the case, we see the power of mentorship- David, now in old age, uses the very words he had heard as a young man from the old man Samuel.

This seems to mean that David is writing this when he is old. I discussed on :11 how David was picking up and absorbing the attitude of his critics that God had forsaken him- when God hadn't. He wishes to stay alive so that he might spread the knowledge of God's grace to the next generation (:15,16). His entire purpose of living was in order to evangelize God's grace; and that should be why we wish to stay alive. God's might and strength, as discussed on :16, are revealed in His gracious forgiveness and salvation of condemned sinners.

One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we

find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

Psa 71:19

Your righteousness also, God, reaches to the heavens; You have done great things. God, who is like You?-
As discussed on :16, the "great things" performed by God were His forgiveness and salvation of a condemned sinner like David. He did this by His righteousness, by imputing it to sinners; and David was the parade example of this (Ps. 32:1-4). This is described in Ps. 71:19 as God doing "great things", the phrase used of the great things worked in visible miracles in Egypt (Ps. 106:21) and at creation (Ps. 136:7). But the forgiveness of people like David is no less a great miracle. Such great things are done because of His mercy / grace (Ps. 136:4).

Psa 71:20

You, who have shown us many and bitter troubles, You will let me live. You will bring us up again from the depths of the earth-
The confusion between "me" and "us" is intentional, because as noted on :1, these personal experiences of David are being reapplied to the exiles, and ultimately to the entire community of God's people. We too can therefore personalize the Psalms as we read them. "Troubles" is the word used of Jacob's time of trouble (Gen. 35:3; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). David's experience of trouble was representative of how the exiles and all God's people could ultimately follow the path of Jacob to deliverance out of exile and from his strong enemies. But in Ps. 71:20 David sees his deliverance from the day of trouble as ultimately being in the resurrection of the body, being 'brought up again from the depths of the earth'. We note David doesn't speak of coming down from heaven, but

of resurrection out of the earth and only then, at that point, being allowed to live [eternally]. "Many bitter troubles" is literally 'evil troubles', and the same three Hebrew words are used of how "many [s.w.] evils [s.w. "bitter"] and troubles [s.w.]" would befall Israel if they broke covenant (Dt. 31:17,21). Hence the change of pronoun to "us". Perhaps David's idea is that the God who would resurrect and save an Israel who had broken His covenant... would "let *me* live". If God were so gracious to Israel His people, surely He would be to David too. And we can rejoice in that same logic. That seems one reason why we have so much information in the Bible about Israel, their sinfulness and God's amazing grace towards them. It is all to encourage me personally... that this gracious God surely has room for me too.

"You will let me live" is another harking back to his experience of grace after he had sinned with Bathsheba. The God who had let him live then, rather than exacting the death penalty, could be trusted to save him from eternal death at the last day. This is how we have to face death and the prospect of judgment to come; to think back on the experiences of grace and deliverance we had throughout our lives.

Psa 71:21

increase my honour, and comfort me again-
This is in the context of the clear statement of faith in the resurrection of the body in :20. David was perhaps concluding that Nathan was right after all about the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba. He would not be honoured nor comforted in this life as he wished, but only at the last day. And yet we again sense his concern at his dishonour, resulting from his sins regarding Bathsheba. All his life, he couldn't live it down. His standing in the eyes of others assumed far too high an importance for him. But the context of this persuasion that God will "increase my honour" is the resurrection at the last day (:20). In this case, we again see a kingdom perspective emerging as he continues in the path of prayer. He begins the prayer worried about his honour (:1), but now comes to see that what matters more is having honour in God's future kingdom.

Psa 71:22

I will praise You with the harp for Your faithfulness, my God. I sing praise to You with the lyre, Holy One of Israel-
The context of :20,21 appears to speak of David's position after the resurrection he looked forward to. He imagines himself continuing to praise God on the harp as he had done in this life. Whether that shall literally happen is a question and interest only for literalists. But the idea is established- that the essence of how we have served God in this life is how we shall eternally serve Him. Hence the Lord Jesus can invite us to live

"the eternal life" right now; in that we can live the kind of life we shall eternally live in God's Kingdom.

As noted on :1, this Psalm was the thoughts of those who first went into captivity in Babylon [according to the LXX]. The Psalmist wants to take a harp and praise God. Whereas the psalmist of Ps. 137 says that he felt unable to sing Yahweh's songs. This Ps. 71 is the response of faith.

Psa 71:23

My lips shall shout for joy! My soul, which You have redeemed, sings praises to You!-

The redemption from Babylon [see on :1] is the great theme of second Isaiah. This psalmist appears to have accepted that good news in faith.

The context is of the resurrection from the dead (:20,21), when David shall finally be "redeemed". It seems he had looked in vain for redemption from the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba, and concludes that his house / kingdom / family in this life "is not so with God" (2 Sam. 23:5). And so he focuses himself here upon his final redemption in the last day at the resurrection (:20). In that day "with my whole being I will sing because you have saved me" (GNB); and we shall all feel and do the same.

Psa 71:24

My tongue will also talk about Your righteousness all day long, for they are disappointed and they are confounded who want to harm me-
David speaks of how he "meditates day and night" on God's law (Ps. 1:2), and also of how he meditates upon "God" at night (Ps. 63:6) and in the day (Ps. 71:24). But as noted on :20-23, David here speaks of how he shall do this in God's Kingdom. He was living the Kingdom life now; as the Lord Jesus would put it in John's Gospel, he "had eternal life".

Those "who want to harm me" are those of :13, where David asks that they "who want to harm me" will be confounded. Now he says that they "are" confounded". This again is the path of prayer- he begins asking for things which by the end of the prayer, he feels he has received. And is at peace about them. During prayer we too can calm down and conclude, as David does here, with a Kingdom perspective and with calm faith that what we have asked for, we have received.

It has to be said that we are somewhat disappointed that David concludes his prayer with a contrast between his own prospect of eternal life, and the shame of his enemies at the last day: "when they shall be ashamed and confounded that seek my hurt" (LXX). He repeatedly asks for his enemies to be ashamed, and we bear in mind that shame is associated with condemnation (Ps. 35:4,26; 40:14; Ps. 70:2 etc.). And so again we see a

man imperfect at his end, just as were so many- Lot, Gideon, Jacob, Samson all had visible, recorded elements of spiritual weakness at their ends. We shall die imperfect. "We shall be changed" at the resurrection, not only our structure, but also morally.

PSALMS CHAPTER 72

Psa 72:1

A Psalm for Solomon-
This Psalm has many similarities with coronation hymns of the surrounding nations. I suggest on :5 that the Psalm was written by David in the closing months of his life, and was likely intended as a coronation hymn for Solomon.

David's hopes and expectations for Solomon are expressed in Psalm 72, "A Psalm for Solomon". The Hebrew title can equally mean "A Psalm *of* Solomon", although the Davidic authorship is clinched by the final verse "the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended". David was so certain that his expectations would be fulfilled. David's prediction that Solomon would wisely judge his people (Ps. 72:2) was perhaps why Solomon asked God to give him wisdom to judge God's people. His wise judgment of the prostitutes, and his willingness to consider such cases, was surely a living out of David's expectation that he would deliver the poor, needy and those with no helper (Ps. 72:12). The prediction that Solomon would be given of the gold of Sheba (Ps. 72:15) was fulfilled by Solomon's willful trading with Sheba to get gold from there, and one wonders whether he in fact invited the Queen of Sheba to visit him in order to fulfil the prediction that the rulers of Sheba would come to him with gifts (Ps. 72:10).

God would only have a permanent physical house when His people were permanently settled, never to be moved again (2 Sam. 7:10), i.e. in the Kingdom. Yet Solomon perceived that his kingdom was in fact the final Kingdom of God. David made this mistake, in assuming in Ps. 72 that Solomon’s Kingdom would undoubtedly be the Messianic one... and Solomon repeated the error, yet to a more tragic extent.

Solomon abused his people and turned away from God (1 Kings 12:14). David's vision of his son as the Messianic ruler didn't come about. But these words were inspired, and they will come true- through reapplication to the Lord Jesus, his greater son. David had many sons, but clearly Solomon was the favourite, the love child, effectively, of David's relationship with Bathsheba, the married woman he had become besotted with. It was this favouritism which no doubt provoked Absalom and his other sons to make the rebellions they did, no doubt deeply irked by prophecies like this in Ps. 72, which served the same function as Jacob's giving the priestly coat to Joseph. And it led Solomon to

ultimate spiritual failure, because he came to assume that he would automatically fulfil the promises to David about a Messianic son. And so he came to consider himself spiritually inviolate, and came to live a life of debauchery rather than spirituality. David of course claimed that God had chosen Solomon out of all his sons (1 Chron. 28:5), but there is no record of that happening; rather do we suspect that David came to imagine that his own choice was in fact God's. Psalm 72 was David's declaration that he believed Solomon would be the Messianic ruler; but that was proven wrong, because Solomon did not reign with justice and turned away from Yahweh. The words will come true in the person of the Lord Jesus, but David was wrong to insist they must apply to Solomon.

God, give the king Your justice; Your righteousness to the royal son-
The idea of a gift of righteousness had been learned by David after his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 32:1-4)- when he had no righteousness of his own. But righteousness was imputed by grace through faith, and Solomon knew little of grace and faith. The Proverbs, true as they are so far as they go, reveal a self-congratulatory, works-based spirit which has little to say about grace. This Psalm was written at the end of David's life, and again reflects how he has failed to learn the lessons from his sin with Bathsheba. He assumes righteousness can be inherited and just given by God to someone because of their father. He seems to have quite forgotten his death sentence and the wonder of being counted righteous by grace through faith.

The prayer in this verse for "justice" to be given to Solomon is tantamount to asking God to give Solomon the wisdom to judge Israel justly. Solomon's request for exactly this was therefore a living out of this parental hope and expectation. Yet still God was thrilled that Solomon did ask for this wisdom, rather than assuming he would be made wise because David had prayed he would be. "The King's son" David understands as the promised Messianic son.

"Give the king Your justice" with the result of being able to "judge Your people" (:2) is all language echoed by Solomon when he as "the king's son" [NEV "royal son"] asks God for wisdom exactly in order to do this (1 Kings 3:5). His request for wisdom, followed immediately by the account of his wise judgment of the poor prostitutes, all fulfilled this. But it shows that his request for wisdom, whilst commendable and pleasing to God, was a living out of David's parental expectations for him expressed in this Psalm. And perhaps that's why the wisdom wasn't absorbed by him personally, and he turned away from personal faith in Yahweh.

Psa 72:2

He will judge Your people with righteousness, and Your poor with justice-

"He will..." can be rendered "Let him..." . Actually most of the verbs in Ps. 72 can be read like this, as optatives, rather than simple statements of the future. The Psalm therefore wishes that this is how Solomon will reign; but it has its real fulfilment in the true seed of David, the Lord Jesus, and His Kingdom. The Psalm repeatedly wishes Solomon to rule with justice. God had told David in 2 Sam. 22 that he who rules over men must be just, and thus cut down David's claims to have been a glorious Messianic ruler in 2 Sam. 23. For David had not been "just". We think of his behaviour to the descendants of Saul when the Gibeonites complain, of how the cunning woman of Tekoah manipulates him, of his unjust refusal to discipline his sons, of his assigning equal blame to Mephibosheth and Ziba and many other things- that led to Absalom's rebellion on the basis that David was not judging Israel justly. David's humbled response had been to interject "Truly my house [family] is not so with God". He now seeks to change outcomes by praying that Solomon will be just.

The poor or "afflicted" could refer to the prostitutes whom Solomon judged, as the parade example of those to whom he would bring justice and righteousness. We have an interesting window as to what these things mean, in that he didn't condemn them to death but let them live. This was justice to the spiritually poor. Despite the clear condemnation of prostitution in the Mosaic law.

Solomon ultimately failed to do this, whipping the people and abusing them to complete his endless, obsessive building projects. The prophecy had possibility of later fulfilment in Zerubbabel, but that too didn't come about; and so it was reapplied finally to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Or we can simply understand that these are David's wishes for Solomon which he failed to fulfil; but they will come true in David's greater descendant, the Lord Jesus.

The majestic prophecy of Jer. 23:5-7 had prophesied that when Israel returned from Babylon, “the branch” would rise and save them “and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth”, i.e. establish the Messianic Kingdom (cp. Ps. 72:2; Is. 9:7). But Zerubbabel, the “branch-from-Babylon”, lead the people back from Babylon, half heartedly built a temple- which faithful men wept at, when they saw how feeble it was compared to that which should have been (Ezra 3:12). And then he beat it back to Babylon.

David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her... will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and

felt this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to " every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. See on Ps. 41:12.

Psa 72:3

The mountains shall bring prosperity to the people, the hills will bring the fruit of righteousness-
This is better translated to the effect that the mountains [an intensive plural for the one great mountain, Zion] would bring peace to the little hills. The vision was of the surrounding nations, the hills, being brought to peace with God through the function of the sanctuary in Zion which David planned for Solomon to build. But Solomon intermarried with the surrounding peoples, and was influenced by them to idolatry rather than bringing them to Israel's God. And David is wrong to predicate blessing upon the existence of a grandiose temple in Zion.

David hopes and prays that the conditions of the future Kingdom of God would be experienced in Solomon, whom he wrongly assumed would be the Messianic son of David (:1).

Psa 72:4

He will judge the poor of the people, he will save the children of the needy and will break the oppressor in pieces-
See on :2. These poor and afflicted were epitomized in the two prostitutes whom Solomon judged with grace and not condemnation. His judgment concerned their children. Those women are thus seen as "the needy" rather than simply sinners.

The RV says that Ps. 72 is a Psalm *of* Solomon (although see on :1)- in which case we have David or Solomon asking God to give him the throne, in return for which he would establish the Messianic Kingdom. His judging of the poor harlots would therefore have been in conscious fulfilment of the predictions he himself had made as to what his Messianic Kingdom would be like- as a time when the poor would be judged by him (Ps. 72:4,13). He came to articulate God's Kingdom in terms of how he wanted *his* Kingdom to be. It could be truly said that there is an urgent need for us to be convicted - deeply convicted - of our desperate need for the person of Jesus, His second coming and Messianic Kingdom. Solomon was so obsessed with himself, so inward-looking, so sure of his spiritual pedigree, so sure of the intellectual correctness of his spiritual knowledge that his *need* for salvation didn't enter his heart. Because he never publicly sinned (unlike David) he lacked the awareness of his own sinfulness which would have

helped him realize he was only a primary fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Lack of awareness of our own sinfulness is connected with a lack of true enthusiasm for the Messianic Kingdom. Because he thought the kingdom was with him, Solomon evidently failed to discern the chronic need of his own nature, both physically and morally.

Psa 72:5

They shall fear You while the sun endures; and as long as the moon, throughout all generations-

David imagined Solomon's kingdom morphing into the eternal Messianic kingdom. This was parental obsession, overlooking the fact that all men sin and must die, and are saved from the grave only by grace through faith. David's assumption that Solomon would live eternally reflects a total refusal to accept the connection between sin and death; and a lack of gratitude for his own salvation from death for his sins. When Shimei threw stones at him to remind him that he deserved death, he accepted that; but at his end, David demanded Shimei be slain for pointing that out. Likewise he envisages Solomon's kingdom as spreading out from beyond the Euphrates worldwide (:11,17). This eternal kingdom was that promised to his son who would be born after he had slept with his fathers, and who would be God's only begotten Son. David has lost his focus on the things of the Kingdom and the name of the Lord Jesus. Instead he has become obsessed with creating his own narrative, that these things applied to Solomon. Solomon appears in the historical narrative at the end of David's life, when Bathsheba manipulates him to make Solomon king. He then spends the last months of his life in making speeches about Solomon, falsely claiming that Solomon had been named by God as the promised Son of the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7. As discussed on 2 Sam. 23 and 1 Kings 1,2, the last words from God through David are in 2 Sam. 23 and the speeches we have recorded in 1 Chron. 23-29 are all David's false claims about what he says God has said about Solomon. Psalm 72 was likely written in this same period. Indeed the final verse "the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended" could mean that this is the final Psalm of David- because there are several psalms attributed to David later in the book of Psalms.

Psa 72:6

He will come down like rain on the mown grass, as showers that water the earth-

The allusion is to God's last words to David in 2 Sam. 23:4. God had clearly stated that David was not the great Messianic king, and David had agreed, interjecting that "Indeed my house [family] is not so with God". But again he loses that peak of contrition and the insight that comes with true contrition. For now he again seeks to apply those Messianic

images to his son Solomon. And in Prov. 16:15 Solomon applies the images to himself: "In the light of the king's face is life. His favour is like a cloud of the spring rain".

In Prov. 19:12 Solomon speaks as if his own wisdom was like the dew coming down- as if he felt that the mere possession of wisdom made him the Messiah figure which his father had so hoped for him to be in Ps. 72:6. And he says as much in Prov. 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom [exactly what Solomon was commended for doing] rejoiceth his father". He saw his wisdom and knowledge as some sort of a reward in themselves: "the prudent are crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:18). This is of course true in a sense, as all the Proverbs are. But Solomon surely had the idea that he, who was so renowned for his knowledge, was somehow thereby rewarded by having it. This assumption by Solomon was likely behind each of the many references he makes to the value of wisdom and the blessedness of the man who has it. It is rather like feeling that 'we have the truth' because somehow our correct understanding of doctrines is a reward for our righteousness, and mere possession of doctrinal truth means that we are acceptable to God.

Micah's description of how "the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass" (Mic. 5:7) is consciously alluding to the then-famous Messianic prophecy of Ps. 72:6: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth". The blessings Messiah brings are to be articulated through the witness of those in Him.

Psa 72:7

In his days, the righteous shall flourish-
Solomon's later statement that the righteous would flourish is therefore a reference to this (Prov. 11:28), assuming that David's fantasy of Solomon having an eternal kingdom was going to be fulfilled in him. In Ps. 92:11,12, David thinks that he himself will see the righteous flourishing (s.w. Ps. 72:7). So he may be imagining that he would somehow be resurrected and see this happening in Solomon's reign. His hope will come ultimately true, but through the kingdom of the Lord Jesus and not Solomon.

And abundance of peace-
This had been David's vision of the future Kingdom of God (s.w. Ps. 37:11), but he assumes and wishes that Solomon's kingdom would have become that. David seems to now fail to understand that "peace" is primarily peace with God, achievable only through a Saviour. "Solomon" means 'man of peace' and this accounts for the emphasis upon peace in this picture of the Kingdom of God. But God had named David and Bathsheba's child Jedidiah, and actually Nathan came to reinforce this message to David when he insisted on calling him 'Solomon'. David set his son up for failure by projecting onto him his expectations that "Solomon" would be the Messianic man of

peace. "Peace" in the Bible is peace with God, and only the Lord Jesus could achieve that. Life more abundant with God means "abundance of peace" with Him.

Until the moon is no more- As discussed on :5, David liked to imagine that Solomon's kingdom would be eternal.

Psa 72:8

He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the land- Solomon followed his father David in trying to establish his kingdom up to the Euphrates (1 Chron. 18:3), but he never retained it, and certainly not for ever. He lost Damascus and never got it back. If we read "the land" as 'the earth', the idea may be that the kingdom was to expand from the limits of the promised land, i.e. the Euphrates, to the entire planet.

Solomon was intended by David to fulfil the promises to Abraham; for Israel had never fully inherited the land area promised to him. This was David's prayer for Solomon; that he should have been the Messiah, and his Kingdom should have been Messiah's. 1 Chron. 28:6,7 definitely seems to imply that Solomon could have lived for ever had he been obedient: "I will establish his kingdom for ever, *if* he be constant to do my commandments". But Solomon failed, what was potentially possible didn't come true, due to his apostasy. But these words are alluded to in Zech. 8:5, as if to say that now, again, it *could* come true through the work of Joshua and Zerubbabel, and the priesthood and people being obedient to the temple prophecies of Ezekiel. If they wanted the Kingdom to come, then they had to live the Kingdom life. The coming King (and Joshua was prophesied as a king) was to free Judah from Persia's dominion, and establish God's Kingdom, with boys and girls playing in the streets of Jerusalem (Zech. 8:5). "From sea even to sea" is a conscious quote of this famous Messianic prophecy of Ps. 72:8.

David had prophesied that his great son would "have dominion from sea to sea" (Ps. 72:8). 'Have dominion' is the Hebrew word translated 'rule over' in 1 Kings 5:15. David's vision of his Messianic son having a world-wide Kingdom, in which all people blessed him for his grace and beneficence, was abused by Solomon into justifying 'having dominion' over people as his personal slaves; and they certainly didn't bless him for it but rather complained (1 Kings 12:11). It's as if Solomon grabbed the word 'rule over / have dominion', wrenched it out of context, and used it to justify his actions, giving a quasi-Biblical justification to his pure selfishness. This is where knowledge of God's word can be a dangerous thing; leading people into a stronger self-justification than they would otherwise have had if they were guided by self-recognized greed alone.

Psa 72:9

Those who dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; his enemies shall lick the dust-
We must read :9-11 in the context of David's vision of Solomon ruling over the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham (:8). The references to the Bedouins of the desert, the kings of Tarshish and Sheba (:10), therefore refer to the nations on the boundaries of that territory. The idea is that Solomon was to rule over the entire *eretz*- and even beyond, even over the peoples just over the borders of it.

Psa 72:10

The kings of Tarshish and of the islands will bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts-
See on :9. These were the areas on the edge of the *eretz* promised to Abraham, and indeed the queen of Sheba did come to Solomon with gifts. We note that "Tarshish" here doesn't refer to the United Kingdom. The earth was understood as the territory promised to Abraham, and anything beyond it is spoken of as the sea or islands. The queen of Sheba did indeed bring such gifts, but the reference to 666 talents of gold coming to Solomon in one year shows how fake was his kingdom.

Psa 72:11

Yes, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him-
This homage and the gifts of :10 were not to be because these nations have been forced into submission, as was usually the case in kingdom building at that time. They fall before him with their gifts because ["for"] of his justice (:12,15). The queen of Sheba brought her gifts from respect (:10), not because she was forced to. And so it is and shall ever be in the extension of God's Kingdom upon earth. There can be no question that these words did have some fulfilment in Solomon: “All kingdoms brought presents and served Solomon... All the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom... and they brought every man his present”. But this was a surface level imitation of God's Kingdom and was hollow within. The annual amount of gold brought to Solomon was 666 talents, and there are many other connections between the descriptions of Solomon's kingdom and that of Babylon in Rev. 17,18.

Psa 72:12

For he will deliver the needy when he cries; the poor, who has no helper-
The primary fulfilment was in Solomon's delivery of the poor prostitutes who cried to him; they had no moral helper, spiritually and socially despised. And this was what the

Lord did in His ministry and shall ever do, breaking bread with whores and moral outcasts. Solomon's pity (:13) and gracious judgment of those women thereby gives us a window onto how the Lord fulfilled these words to the ultimate.

As noted on :11, the astounding justice and loving care of the king of the kingdom would bring other nations to willingly submit and offer gifts (:10,11); not as signs that they had been forced into submission by military prowess. All visions of the Lord Jesus at His return forcing nations to accept Him at the point of a sword... are out of step with all we have seen and known of Him, as well as of these prophecies. These words were not fulfilled in Solomon as David confidently expected; Solomon whipped the people rather than delivering the needy who cried for help. And his throne hardly endured as long as the sun.

Psa 72:13

He will have pity on the poor and needy, he will save the needy persons-
See on :4. Pity on the surrounding Gentiles is the language of Jonah 4:11 about Nineveh. The old covenant required that Israel show no pity to the nations of the *eretz* promised to Abraham, lest they lead the people into idolatry (s.w. Dt. 7:16). David, as so often, is looking beyond this to a new situation whereby Israel's king would show them pity, if like Nineveh they were repentant. But Solomon mixed with those nations and accepted their idols. David had seen himself as "poor and needy", needing grace after his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:16,22). He wished Solomon to likewise have pity on the "poor and needy" amongst the Gentiles, those who had likewise repented (Ps. 72:13). And David was especially desirous to himself see the "poor and needy" blessed and accepted as he had been (Ps. 82:3,4; 113:7). It is our personal experience of needing grace which leads us to have a heart for those like us, the poor and needy. Any other motivation will ultimately not abide. Solomon appears to glorify his mother Bathsheba for likewise pitying the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9,20).

Psa 72:14

He will redeem their soul from oppression and violence, their blood will be precious in his sight-
The Hebrew word *hamas* [basically meaning 'physical violence arising from wicked plans'] is quite common in Scripture, and the usages speak of how God is provoked by *hamas* to bring judgment upon the enemies of His people (Gen. 6:11-13; Mic. 6:12; Zeph. 1:9) and also to intervene in order to save His people (Ps. 18:49; Ps. 72:14). How amazingly appropriate that an organization actually called *hamas* has arisen in these last days to do violence to Israel! If Biblical history means anything to us, clearly enough God's intervention in appropriate judgment and salvation cannot be far off. Note how

Hagar's persecution of Sarah- typical of the Arab-Jew conflict- is described as her *hamas* (Gen. 16:5).

In Ps. 49:8 David had used the same words for how the soul or life of persons should be treated as "precious". Saul used the same phrase of David's saving his life: "My soul was precious in your eyes" [s.w. "life is costly"] (1 Sam. 26:21). David is alluding to this; Saul's human life had been precious or costly to him, but he was unable to redeem Saul eternally. Only God could do that, if Saul by faith accepted God's grace. David wished that Solomon would have the same perspective, considering the soul or life of people to be "precious" or "costly", appreciating the value and meaning of human persons. But sadly Solomon abused his people later, as it were whipping them with whips. David's rule had been characterized by not generally seeing human life as precious, although he did achieve it in his view of Saul. He is wishing his son repeat his better side and not follow him in his bad side. But Solomon like David did show some value to human life in not slaying the prostitutes, but generally abused his people.

Psa 72:15

They shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba. Men shall pray for him continually, they shall bless him all day long-
As discussed above, an ominous 666 talents of gold came to Solomon in one year. Solomon only had a surface level fulfilment of these things, and there was a spiritual void behind the exterior.

The idea is that because the poor and needy would be allowed to "live" and would be treated with justice and grace (:14), Sheba would give her gold and continual prayer be made for the king. It was usual that conquered peoples were forced to pray to the gods of their conquerors, and to give their gold. But as noted on :10,11, the growth of this Kingdom of God would be on a quite different basis. Peoples would be awed by the grace displayed, and would voluntarily come to worship Israel's God, acting as if they had indeed been conquered by Him- but by His love and grace, rather than His sword.

Psa 72:16

Abundance of grain shall be throughout the land, its fruit sways like Lebanon. Let it flourish, thriving like the grass of the field!-
As a result of just kingship, the blessings for obedience to the covenant would come about, in terms of agricultural fecundity. "Abundance of grain" recalls the situation in the seven years of plenty in Egypt, the implication being that this grain would be shared with the Gentile world around them, in order to lead them to Israel's God.

AV "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon". The image is of how small beginnings grow into

an abundant harvest, a mere handful of grain, sown on the top of a mountain- on a place unlikely to produce anything, usually barren and unproductive. This is the same teaching as in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed, and the parable of the leaven. We are like that handful of corn, born with all against us for spiritual growth. But the Kingdom age will see us flourish eternally.

Psa 72:17

His name endures forever, his name continues as long as the sun-
Again David is imagining Solomon ruling eternally, but without due regard for the results of sin and the need for the grace of resurrection and forgiveness. And it was surely Yahweh's Name which should have been spoken of in this way and not Solomon's.

"Continues" is literally to re-sprout. "The idea is that of a tree which continues always to sprout, or put forth leaves, branches, blossoms; or, which never dies". God had promised to make David a great name, through his Messianic descendant. But David wants his name perpetuated now through Solomon. The idea is that God's Name / personality / character would keep growing or flourishing. His essential being is therefore not static. As Jn. 17:3 puts it, we shall eternally grow in knowing Him as He Himself grows. There will be no boredom in the eternal relationship. His Name shall be renewed (Heb.) for ever suggests that His Name or personality/ character will not remain static.

Men shall be blessed in him, all nations will call him blessed-
LXX “All the families of the earth shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him happy”, clearly alluding to the promise of the seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:3). David had lost focus on his own promised seed, who was to be the same Messianic seed promised to Abraham; and instead become obsessed with his narrative about his own son. The allusion is to the Abrahamic promise of Gen. 18:18: "All the nations of the earth will be blessed in him". But the promise about Abraham personally and his seed is too quickly assumed by David to be relevant to Solomon personally. There is an intended ambiguity in the grammar, as to whether "be blessed" is purely a prediction, or a command- to chose to become blessed in him. That choice is now made in terms of choosing to be baptized into the Lord Jesus, the true seed of Abraham, so that we might receive the blessing of forgiveness and life eternal inheriting the earth (Acts 3:25,26; Gal. 3:27-29).

Psa 72:18

Praise be to Yahweh God, the God of Israel, who alone does marvellous deeds-
This is an invitation for the "nations" of :17 to praise the God of Israel, not because they have been forcefully subjugated, but because they recognize that He is the one and only God, who can do such marvellous things as restoring His sinful people.

Psa 72:19

Blessed be His glorious name forever! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory! Amen and amen-
As noted on :18 this is David's desire that the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham be filled with peoples who genuinely wish to bless the name of Israel's God and thereby give glory to Him.

Psa 72:20

This ends the prayers by David, the son of Jesse-
I suggested on Ps. 1:1 that this means that for sure Psalms 1-72 were all written by David, although most of them were edited and reapplied, under inspiration, to later situations; and I gave reasons for thinking that the majority of the later Psalms, although not all, were likewise originally his inspired work. Although above I have suggested that "this ends..." could suggest Ps. 72 is the last of David's prayers, written for Solomon in the closing months of David's life. We note there are many psalms of David later in the psalter.

PSALMS CHAPTER 73

Psa 73:1

Book III. A Psalm by Asaph-

This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

A case can be made that the whole of book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) was written / edited in Babylon. The Psalms of Korah (83-87) seem to reflect the longing of the righteous remnant in Babylon for the temple services. And it is just possible that the entire Psalter was re-edited there in Babylon, under inspiration- for so many Psalms have elements of appropriacy to the exiles in Babylon and the restoration. The LXX titles of Psalm 56 [“Concerning the people that were removed from the Sanctuary”] and 71 [“Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first that were taken captive”] speak for themselves. Likewise the LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah.

Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart-
This redefines "Israel" away from ethnic definition; the Israel of God are the "pure in heart". This Psalm may initially have been David's thanksgiving for God's restoration of his kingdom after the rebellion of Absalom. It describes a struggle with the problem of evil, but begins and ends with triumph that God ultimately is good to Israel. This was particularly relevant to Judah in captivity. But again we query why David so simplistically divides people into the very righteous, of pure heart [which none have ultimately], and the worst sinners.

Here we have the conclusion stated at the beginning; those who cleanse their hearts are the true Israel, and God is finally "good" to them. But the psalm explains the path of moral and intellectual failure that led the psalmist to this conclusion, at one point feeling equally "surely" that having a pure or clean heart was pointless (:13). See on :13.

Psa 73:2

But as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had nearly slipped-
David recognizes that his steps and feet had been stabilized by God (s.w. Ps. 40:2). He saw God's active involvement in helping him see through the problem of evil, and praises God for it. This internal psychological stabilizing of faith and understanding is just as much seen today, through God's work through the Holy Spirit.

Psa 73:3

For I was envious of the arrogant, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked-

Surely Asaph as praise leader of Israel was aware of the copious commands not to envy the wicked, e.g. “Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away. Trust in Yahweh and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture” (Ps. 37:1–3). Proverbs says the same very often, e.g. “Do not envy the wicked, do not desire their company” (Prov. 24:1). To say "I was envious..." of the wicked is to admit to not having let God's clearest words have any real impact. We can all be the same. And we likewise

could save ourselves so much grief if we just accepted God's simple words, rather than like Asaph having to learn the empirical way. This is what it is to believe God's word, rather than just read and be aware of it.

"Prosperity" is *shalom*. The psalmist has the same struggle as Job in Job 21:9, “their houses are in peace without fear”. Yet clearly true "shalom" is a gift from God to the righteous, as so many Bible passages make clear, e.g. "Yahweh turn His face toward you and give you peace” (Num. 6:26). We only have to slowly and carefully read these words of Asaph to see that he isn't reasoning right. He is misperceiving. The wicked do not have *shalom*. They only appear to have it; behind the nonchalant good life is all the stress and anxiety that comes from not being right with God. Nobody in the world really has *shalom* . And so it was by speaking these words out loud in prayer that Asaph came to see his error. We may live with the subconscious impression that the wicked are doing so well and life isn't fair to the righteous; but if we verbalize those thoughts before God in prayer, our error becomes apparent.

Envy of the arrogant / proud, imagining them to be happy, is exactly the feelings of the returned exiles in Mal. 3:14,15: "You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God;’ and ‘What profit is it that we have followed His instructions, and that we have walked mournfully before Yahweh of Armies? Now we call the proud happy; yes, those who work wickedness are built up; yes, they put God to the test and escape". It could be that Psalm 73 is an appeal to the returned exiles to follow Asaph's example and repent of their perspectives.

David had calmly urged not to be envious of the wicked (s.w. Ps. 37:1), but he himself almost failed in this (Ps. 73:3 s.w.). We can profess clearly how much we are not envious of others; and then find ourselves like David, caught in a pang of crisis when we wonder why our lives cannot be like those of the world around us. Solomon simplistically commanded not to be envious of the wicked, drawing a simple contrast between the wicked, and the righteous who are not envious of them (Prov. 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19 s.w.). But this is not how it was in reality with his father David, who admits to almost having given in to envy of the wicked (Ps. 73:3) despite his earlier simplistic condemnation of such envy (Ps. 37:1), and was only saved from that by God's gracious action on his heart (Ps. 73:2). Solomon's proverbs seem to fail to address this complexity of situations because of his own self-righteousness; and yet all he says is inspired and true so far as it goes.

Psa 73:4

For there are no struggles in their death, but their strength is firm-
"Firm" is the word used of the prosperous wicked amongst the exiles (Ez. 34:20). But as Ezekiel points out, this was only a temporary illusion. Ultimately, death is indeed a fetter (s.w. "struggles"), broken only by God's grace in Christ. The Psalmist is for a moment

forgetting the Biblical picture of death, just as we can. He is thinking that a peaceful death means they were blessed; whereas by implication, he expects a difficult death.

Psa 73:5

They are free from the burdens of men, neither are they plagued like other men-
Dt. 26:7 uses the word for "burdens" of the judgment of those who break covenant. And God is not unmindful of who breaks covenant with Him. David had earlier confidently stated that the "mischief" (s.w. "burdens") of men would return upon their own heads at death and judgment (Ps. 7:16; 140:9). But in Ps. 73:5 he momentarily doubts this. Our understanding of basic truths can suddenly be eclipsed by moments of doubt, just as we see happening with the disciples on the lake during the storm. We could render "They have no share in the misery of mortals", as if the psalmist is thinking that they actually are not sharing in the results of the curse in Eden. But he is forgetting that all the same they die, and will be raised to judgment- they are not at all exempt from the curse on Adam. And he is forgetting some words in Job, which as one of the oldest Bible books he surely was aware of: “man is born for misery / burden” (Job 5:7). It's one thing to know God's word, quite another to feel and live it as felt reality.

Psa 73:6

Therefore pride is like a chain around their neck, violence covers them like a garment-
The conclusion therefore is that awareness of the reality of death leads to humility, and those who refuse to perceive Divine judgment in this life become proud and violent, believing they will not face judgment for their actions. Chains were worn around the neck by leaders and governors (we think of Joseph and Daniel being given one); so the implication is that such men were in leadership positions within Israel. Perhaps David has in view Saul and the Absalom-Ahithophel group.

Psa 73:7

Their eyes bulge with fat, their minds pass the limits of conceit-
This recalls the spirit of Job's complaints at the present prosperity of the wicked. "Conceit" is the word usually translated "image", with reference to idols. David perceives that idolatry is essentially a matter of the heart, and he sees materialism as idolatry- a conception absolutely relevant to our age. LXX "Their iniquity cometh forth from the heart: the imaginations of their mind overflow".

Psa 73:8

They scoff and speak with malice; in arrogance, they threaten oppression-
The LXX appears to reference the crafty counsel of Ahithophel at the time of Absalom's rebellion: "They have taken counsel and spoken in wickedness: they have uttered unrighteousness loftily".

Psa 73:9

They have set their mouth in the heavens, their tongue walks through the earth-
The idea may be that they speak as if they are God; it is playing God which is the basis for arrogance and price. But LXX has "Against the heavens".

Psa 73:10

Therefore their people return to them, and they drink up waters of abundance-
"A metaphor for the enjoyment of pleasure". This was how they got people to turn after them, to follow them. David felt that by contrast he had few followers because he didn't have any great hope of prosperity to offer anyone.

Psa 73:11

They say, How does God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?-
It's unlikely they actually said those words. But this is an example of where the unspoken implications of positions are stated for what they effectively are. To accept God exists, as these men apparently did, but to say that He has no awareness... is self contradictory. But this is what their attitudes effectively stated.

Psa 73:12

Behold, these are the wicked-
The Psalmist has built up an image of wicked men having a great life and then dying in peace. This isn't actually the case, but it was and is the image which can be imagined as true.

Being always at ease, they increase in riches-
The wicked and indeed nobody is ever "always at ease". This is the idealized image which the doubting psalmist had built up. It is the same false image offered by the media and subliminal advertising today. Job likewise frequently lamented that the wicked were "at ease" (Job 3:26; 12:6; 16:12; 20:20; 21:23); and Jeremiah too (Jer. 12:1). We simply conclude that the appearance of "ease" in the apparently cool life of the unbeliever is very strong. In our age it is pushed by visual images on social media, of relaxation by swimming pools, expensive meals etc. But one only has to think about it for a moment to see this is in fact all a false image. Behind those images is probably

much grief and unhappiness, and this psalm will go on to put over it all the perspective of final death and eternal judgment.

Psa 73:13

Surely in vain I have cleansed my heart, and washed my hands in innocence-
The Psalm begins with the conclusion- that "surely" God is good to His true Israel, those with clean hearts. But he got to that conclusion through having the thought that "surely"... something else. "Surely", he had once thought, the cleansing of hearts was all in vain. This is the dialectic which all men must go through- being convinced one way but coming to be convinced another way.

This language is appropriate to David who considers he washed the blood of Uriah from his hands by repentance, and had his heart cleansed by God's grace for the entire sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 51:4; 26:6). He would be suggesting that because he still suffered the consequence of the sin, all his cleansing from it was pointless grief. And yet this sense that "In vain I have cleansed my heart" could refer to how David in his youth had tried to cleanse his way according to God's word (s.w. Ps. 119:9); and now he momentarily considers he may have wasted his effort. Solomon uses the same word in saying that nobody can say "I have cleansed my heart" (Prov. 20:9); as if disagreeing with his father David on this point. Solomon may be suggesting that all you can do is live an externally clean life, you can never cleanse your heart- and this refusal to allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse him inwardly is what led to his apostasy. For disregarding deep, core level spiritual mindedness and trusting in externalities... is a sure path to spiritual disaster. And Solomon took it.

Psa 73:14

for all day long have I been plagued, and punished every morning-
"Punished" is LXX "reproved". David may again be railing at how the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba continued, reproving him every morning. He struggled to accept Nathan's inspired words about this consequence. "Plagued" is used in the Bathsheba context (Ps. 32:6 s.w.).

Psa 73:15

If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I would have betrayed the generation of Your children-
LXX "I should have broken covenant with the generation of thy children". He would no longer have been part of the promised seed if he chose to go the way of the wicked. He may mean that he would have been out of step with God's children throughout the

generations; which suggests, as in :1, that he considers God's true Israel, His faithful children, as those who have clean hearts and accept His chastising hand. However we can legitimately interpret the Hebrew to the effect "If I had spoken out publically like this, I would have caused to stumble the generation / community of your children amongst whom I live". "Generation" can mean effectively 'community' as in Ps. 24:6 "This is the generation of those who seek Him". Asaph is now sharing with us his inner struggles- but after coming to the stated conclusion that he was so wrong. And he, the choirmaster of Israel, had these deep questions and struggles with him. It is common in our age to hear Christian leaders speaking of their struggles and doubts, and for this to be seen as somehow cool. The path of maturity is to not speak those doubts for fear of causing others to stumble. There is of course a fine line between this and hypocrisy.

Psa 73:16

When I tried to understand this, it was too painful for me- "Painful" is s.w. "trouble" in :5. The wicked appear not to have pain or "troubles", but David struggled with the whole problem of evil and the apparent prosperity of the wicked, and this was a pain or trouble to him of itself. David was generally a very spiritual man, but we have here an insight into how even the most spiritually minded have their dark nights of the soul.

Psa 73:17

until I entered God's sanctuary, and considered their latter end-
This could not have been true for the exiles, who were unable to do this. The Psalm originated with David, but was reapplied to the exiles and all who later would struggle with the problem of the apparent prosperity of the wicked. On entering "the sanctuary", he saw the plates around the altar which were all that was left of Korah's rebellion (Num. 16:38), those who were thrown down into the earth (:18). David perceived the wicked of his age as no better than the wicked within Israel during the wilderness journey.

Up until this point in the Psalm, the psalmist has been complaining that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer; their righteousness is apparently pointless. But he now comes to a Kingdom perspective. At the last day, there will be judgment. And he recalls how rebels against God have at times had their judgment ahead of that last day. This changes everything for him.

Psa 73:18

Surely You set them in slippery places, You threw them down to destruction-
This continues the allusion to the fate of Korah and his supporters (:17). "Thrown down"

or "fall" was to be the fate of the unjust princes of Israel (s.w. Ps. 82:7) just as it had been the fate of Korah and the princes with him (Num. 16:2). Asaph begins the psalm by saying that his feet had nearly slipped (:2). He is saying that he, the relatively righteous man, because of his bitterness and jealousy of the wicked, had almost had the same punishment as them. But he concludes by saying that he has come near to God (:28), another allusion to Korah and the princes who sought to inappropriately drawn near to God.

Psa 73:19

How they were suddenly destroyed! They were completely swept away with terrors-
The lament is that the wicked seem to be so prosperous, and then David remembers that one day God will awake (:20). But it is ridiculous to think that God is now actually asleep. The judgment of the rebellious princes in Num. 16 is seen as a pattern for all later rebels; and perhaps David has in view the rebels against him at the time of Absalom. The wages of sin *is* death (Rom. 6:23)- not 'it will be death at the judgment', it *is* right now the response God makes to sin. Because God is without time, the judgment has effectively happened to them. We are come to "God the judge of all"- even now (Heb. 12:23). And David perceived that. And yet mourned terribly when actually this happened, and Absalom was suddenly destroyed.

Psa 73:20

As a dream when one wakes up, so, Lord, when You awake, You will despise their fantasies-
LXX "O Lord, in thy city thou wilt despise their image". David envisages judgment day being administered in Zion, when these men would be resurrected, judged, and die "the second death". To be despised by God is judgment enough. Their "fantasies", their self image (the Hebrew implies) will be revealed as vain. GNB "They are like a dream that goes away in the morning; when you rouse yourself, O Lord, they disappear". "The morning" is the day when the Lord Jesus shall arise as the dawn (Mal. 4:2). All of human experience will then be revealed as a momentary dream, their "image" (AV) will change. We must realize that our current experience, of unfairness and injustice, is in fact not reality. It is a dream, a fantasy world. The reality is life with God and His eternal Kingdom. Ps. 39:6 has the same idea: "Surely every man walks like a shadow", like an image that is not the reality. "What I mean, my friends, is this: there is not much time left, and from now on married people should live as though they were not married; those who weep, as though they were not sad; those who laugh, as though they were not happy; those who buy, as though they did not own what they bought; those who deal in material goods, as though they were not fully occupied with them. For the fashion of this world passes away" (1 Cor. 7:29-31). The Greek word for "fashion"

'passing away' is the language of the theatre, 'the scenery', whereby scenes and stage props and background are changed to presents a totally different appearance. This world is just a stage at the theatre, with the props and scenery just passing away and not the actual reality that they represent. Paul has the same image in 1 Cor. 4:9 "we are made a spectacle [on a stage] to the world, both to angels and men".

Psa 73:21

For my soul was grieved, I was embittered in my heart-
AV "Thus my heart was grieved"- for the tragedy of that rebellion, for the tragedy of men experiencing Divine condemnation. He didn't gloat over the punishment of the wicked as he thinks about it at this point, although he does elsewhere. He grieved for it; it pricked his conscience, right within the depths of his being (AV "pricked in my reins").

Psa 73:22

I was so senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before You-
The LXX sounds very much like an allusion to Job in his final realization and resolution of 'the problem of evil': "But I was vile and knew not: I became brutish before thee" (cp. Job 40:4). Envying the wicked is indeed being senseless and ignorant, and David uses these terms elsewhere about those who shall be condemned (Ps. 49:10; 92:6). The fact is, even those as spiritual as David or Asaph can at times be totally unspiritual in their perspective, and like him need to take a grip and return to reality. We surely have all known this.

Psa 73:23

Nevertheless, I am continually with You. You have held my right hand-
He is "with God", or "always close to You", because God holds his hand- not because of his righteousness nor closeness to God. For in :22 he has just lamented his unspirituality. We would expect "You are continually with me". But he realizes that the fact God had been with him meant that he had been with God. As noted on :22, David recognizes that he has temporarily lost perspective and spiritual focus during his time of envy at the wicked's prosperity. But he marvels that all through that weak period, be it minutes or months, God had remained with him and held his hand. This rules out for all time the attitude of separation from God's people whilst they pass through the dark nights of the soul which afflict all of us. We are to reflect God's continuance with us through it all.

Psa 73:24

You will guide me with Your word-
"Your word" probably doesn't refer to the "Bible", because David would probably only have known the Pentateuch and Job. And he didn't have the scrolls readily available to him for much of his life. Perhaps the prophetic word he had in view was the promise of restoration and kingship, the final flourishing of his kingdom. This was the same word which in essence the exiles were to be guided by as they too struggled with the problems of justice and evil. And the end point of that guidance was to be "glory"; perhaps a return to the sanctuary where the glory was visible, or the glory of the reestablished Davidic kingdom.

And afterwards receive me in glory-
In this life, David felt his prayers had been "received" (s.w. Ps. 6:9). His experience of answered prayer was therefore a foretaste of his faith that God would finally receive or accept him (Ps. 49:15; 73:24 s.w.). The desire to be received "to glory" may refer to David's belief that he would again be able to enter the sanctuary and see God's glory there, a desire he so often expresses in the exilic Psalms. "Afterwards" is the word used for "end" in :17. The psalmist foresees that the prosperous wicked will meet their "end" at the "end", the last day. At that day, at that "end" or "afterwards", he would be received to glory, taken from the sanctuary beyond the veil; whilst they would be cast down to an eternal grave. "Receive me" is literally 'to bring up' and can refer to resurrection, as it does clearly in Ps. 49:15: "God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, for He will receive me [s.w.]". Ps. 49 is in the same context, of the psalmist reflecting how the wicked will eternally perish at the same time as he is resurrected to eternal life. What is in view is resurrection and judgment at the last day, not going to heaven on death.

Psa 73:25

Whom do I have in heaven? There is no one on earth whom I desire besides You-
David felt forsaken by all at this time, so the origin of the Psalm (however it was later reused by the exiles) was at a time when he was largely forsaken by men; perhaps at the time of Absalom's putsch. For David, Yahweh was not one of a number of deities; he didn't believe in Yahweh as well as idols. And this is a theme he develops in :27. He had no gods in Heaven apart from Yahweh, and "Earth has nothing I desire besides you". That is the place of maturity, but the psalmist arrived at it through a period of envy of others who apparently did have all the desirable things on earth. Again we see the path of prayer; he moves on from being envious to reflecting that he doesn't want all the things he was once envious of: "Earth has nothing I desire besides you". All he wanted was relationship with God. Despite his flesh and heart failing (:26), perhaps referring to moral and intellectual lapses, he now realizes that despite them, he has no desire nor passion for any other god nor for anything material on earth. He reaches the acme of spiritual maturity whilst still recognizing he would "fail" in some ways (:26). The psalmist

comes to this profound position before God through the path of prayer; the early verses are a monologue, speaking with himself, but he comes to talk directly to God through that. His self talk becomes talk to God.

Psa 73:26

My flesh and my heart fails-
Perhaps initially written in David's health crisis after the sin with Bathsheba and whilst on the run from Absalom.

But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever- There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other. David felt he was alienated from his rightful inheritance whilst on the run from both Saul and Absalom; and the exiles felt likewise.

Psa 73:27

For, behold, those who are far from You shall perish. You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You-
This helps the exiles understand that distance from God is not a geographical question of being far from the sanctuary, but such distance and closeness to God is rather a spiritual matter. "Unfaithful" suggests idolatry (s.w. Ps. 106:39), and suggests that the wicked he had envied were in fact idolaters. If the initial context of the Psalm is Absalom's rebellion, then we can see another hint that they too were involved with idolatry.

Psa 73:28

But it is good for me to come close to God. I have made the Lord Yahweh my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works- Here we have the conclusion that we all need to come to. For the first time, Asaph uses the term "Yahweh". He has come back to feeling covenant relationship with Yahweh. The value of Psalm 73 is in the path the psalmist takes to come to this- of frustration with God, a sense that he isn't being fairly treated, and yet also of deep contrition about his own sins and foolishness. There is a clear path in this prayer. Frustration with life's unfairness leads him to a personal conviction of sin, and thence to calm trust in God's final salvation and eternal justice. It's when man gets caught up on any of those earlier stages that life goes wrong and faith is shipwrecked.

I noted on :27 that David is protesting his sole allegiance to Yahweh and not to idols in

addition. In the course of this prayer, David persuades himself that it is he who is close to God, and those he has envied for their wealth are far from Him (:27). You are not alone, I am not alone; “For I am with you”. God is with us for us in His Son. Of course, we must draw near to Him (Ps. 73:28); and yet He is already near, not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27). David often speaks of drawing close to God, and yet he invites God to draw near to him (Ps. 69:18). Yet David also recognizes that God “is” near already (Ps. 75:1). I take all this to mean that like us, David recognized that God “is” near, and yet wished God to make His presence real to him. Truly can we pray David’s prayers. So often, prayer is described as coming near to God (Ps. 119:169 etc.)- and yet God “is” near already. Prayer, therefore, is a way of making us realize the presence of the God who is always present.

LXX concludes: "In the gates of the daughter of Sion". This was so relevant to the exiles, with their desire to return to the Jerusalem temple.

PSALMS CHAPTER 74

Psa 74:1

A contemplation by Asaph-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

God, why have You rejected us forever?-
It was inappropriate to claim that God was going to reject His people forever (also in Ps. 44:23). The prophets had made it abundantly plain that God would not reject forever. Israel had "the hope of Israel" as surely as the planets are in the sky. But these were the thoughts of the exiles, who thought that God had cast them off for ever (Lam. 5:20).

Why does Your anger smoulder against the sheep of Your pasture?-
The answer was 'Because they sinned'. But as David struggled to accept the consequences of his sins, so did the exiles. It's only really necessary to ask these questions out loud, slowly, and in prayer before God… to get the answer. Human sin is the answer. But we all wriggle against it. It's as if they saw the fires of Jerusalem's burning (:7), representative of God's anger, as still smouldering against them. As if God was still angry with them, when second Isaiah is full of His continual pleading with the to accept His love and earnest desire to redeem them out of exile.

Psa 74:2

Remember Your congregation which You purchased of old, which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your inheritance-
Second Isaiah continually reminds them that Yahweh had redeemed them from Babylon, He as the rich relative had paid the price and cleared their debt. They just had to quit Babylon and return to Zion. But as so many today, they lamented that they had no redemption- when the blood of God's Son is the ransom payment already paid.

This appeal to believe they were already "redeemed" is similar to how David asks for redemption (e.g. Ps. 69:18) when in fact he has already been redeemed. God had already forgiven David, ransoming and redeeming him. But he was left to suffer the consequences of those sins, and because of that, in crisis he starts to wonder whether he has indeed been forgiven. And we can do the same so easily. The consequence of sin is death, and we can squirm against this when we or others face it… forgetting the wonder of the fact that we are indeed redeemed and ransomed from the power of the grave, although we must still take the consequences. The exiles likewise had to understand that they had been redeemed (s.w. Ps. 74:2) but were suffering the consequence of sin. God was indeed their redeemer (Is. 41:14; 43:1 s.w.). At the very end of his life, David realized that he had in fact been redeemed (s.w. 1 Kings 1:29). He could give up his spirit to God in death, knowing that He was redeemed from the power of the grave (s.w. Ps. 31:5; 49:15). His sure hope in the resurrection of the body looked ahead to the attitude with which the Lord Jesus died.

The Psalm however clearly applies to the exile, when Judah, the singular tribe, was sent into captivity; the ten tribe kingdom had already gone to Assyria.

Mount Zion, in which You have lived-
Relevant to the exiles, in that Yahweh was no longer living in Zion, the cherubim of glory had departed, as Ezekiel had seen in vision. "Lived" is *shakan*, from which developed the idea of the shekinah glory. But despite the psalmist's prayer, the shekinah never returned. Instead of pestering God for the restoration, Asaph needed surely to pay more attention to all the reasons why the exiles were precluding it happening.

Psa 74:3 Lift up Your feet on the perpetual ruins-
Jer. 25:9 had said that Zion was to be "perpetual desolations / ruins". Asaph needed to address the reason why that was the case. He is asking for God to undo an eternal punishment. But that is by grace alone, just as we ask for punishment of eternal death for sin to be undone in our case. But it is by grace alone, and we don't quite sense an awareness of that in Asaph at this point. Is. 61:4 promises a restoration of the perpetual / eternal desolations which were the judgment for Judah's sin in Jer. 25:9. This was by amazing grace alone. LXX "Lift up thine hands against their pride continually", which connects better with the second half of the verse.

See all the evil that the enemy has done in the sanctuary-
The evil done in the sanctuary had been done by God; this evil was ultimately from God, although the exiles struggled to believe that (Is. 45:5-7). Therefore He was obviously aware of it. It was their refusal to accept that God had been their enemy and had done the "evil" which led them to later feel He was somehow unaware of it. They however were forgetting the words of Ezekiel, who had reminded the exiles of the evil *they* had done in the sanctuary, worshipping the sun god there in the most holy place.

Psa 74:4

Your adversaries have roared in the midst of Your assembly. They have set up their standards as signs-
This speaks of the Babylonian military standards raised in the temple as glory to their idols, repeated by the Romans in AD70. Israel's enemies are likened to wild beasts roaring; and indeed "the beast" is Israel's neighbours, throughout scripture. But the psalmist appears to ignore the repeated prophetic declaration that this would happen because Judah worshipped idols within the sanctuary, as Ezekiel saw in vision. The psalmist sees only one side of the story- the suffering. The reason for it, and the hope of restoration predicated upon repentance, plays no part in his thinking at this point. And we see that attitude all around us, complaints at Divine judgment and the results of human sin, rather than seeing that suffering in wider spiritual and ethical context.

Psa 74:5

They behaved like men wielding axes, cutting through a thicket of trees-
The idea is that there was absolutely no reverence for the sanctity of the temple. And yet Judah had likewise paid no reverence to that, and so they received an appropriate judgment.

Psa 74:6

Now they break all its carved work down with hatchet and hammers-
LXX "stonecutters". There was a willful and intentional destruction of the temple. The "carved work" is that of the cherubim and palm trees (s.w. 1 Kings 6:29), broken down because it was overlaid with gold (1 Kings 6:22,32,35). But it was the men of Judah who had "despised My holy things... defiled My sanctuary" (Ez. 22:8,26; 23:39; 44:7). Because they had done this, God in turn said that "I will profane My sanctuary" (Ez. 24:21).

Psa 74:7

They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground, they have profaned the dwelling place of Your Name-
This burning of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar is recorded in 2 Kings 25:9; 2 Chron. 36:19. The psalmist complains that "they" had done this, whereas the more spiritual perspective was that *God* had done these things (Lam. 2:6; 4:1) as judgment for Judah's sins. All that is said is true, but lacks humility and spiritual perspective.

God's Name was to be in a house of people, for a Name / personality / characteristics cannot dwell in a house of stone and cedar and gold. It was this misunderstanding that led the Jews to lament how the destruction of the temple had actually destroyed the dwelling place of God's Name: "They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground, they have profaned the dwelling place of Your Name" (Ps. 74:7). The truth was that God's Name dwelt in the hearts and personalities of His true people. And it was God who destroyed the physical temple to try to get them to realize this (Lam. 2:6,7). The word for "profaned" is used of how in judgment for Judah's sins, *God* would profane or "stain" the pride of His glory (Is. 23:9). "Therefore have I profaned the princes of the sanctuary" (Is. 43:28; Lam. 2:2). It was Judah who had profaned / defiled God's land and Name (Jer. 16:18; 34:16 s.w.). Even in exile, they had profaned His Name by their idolatry in Babylon (Ez. 36:20-22). And the exiles who returned are accused likewise, with the same Hebrew word, of profaning God's Name (Mal. 1:12; 2:10,11).

Psa 74:8

They said in their heart, We will crush them completely. They have burned up all the places in the land where God was worshiped-
But Yahweh was to be worshipped in Zion. It was the "high places" built ostensibly to worship Him, which had become the places of idolatry for which God's anger came upon His people This is quite overlooked by the writer. But LXX has "They have said in their heart, even all their kindred together, Come, let us abolish the feasts of the Lord from the earth". Again we notice the huge importance the Bible attaches to self talk.

Psa 74:9

We see no miraculous signs. There is no longer any prophet, neither is there among us anyone who knows how long-
Again this was not quite the case. There was a ministry of the true prophets throughout the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and Ezekiel and others continued the witness afterwards. But this is overlooked in the desire of the author to focus upon the negative and pain as dismal a picture as possible. There were "signs"; for Jeremiah and Ezekiel were men of sign to the Jews. LXX "and God will not know us any more" was a complete denial of the prophetic pleas to know God in repentance, and the clear hope of restoration offered.

Psa 74:10

How long, God, shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Your name forever?-
The answer to that question is provided in the prophets. It would be until Judah repented. And yet the psalmist overlooks that dimension completely. Just as we can so easily. It was Judah who were profaning Yahweh's Name in exile (Ez. 36:20-22). And the exiles who returned are accused likewise, with the same Hebrew word, of profaning God's Name (Mal. 1:12; 2:10,11). The psalmist sees only the evil in the world and not in God's people.

Psa 74:11

Why do You draw back Your hand, even Your right hand? Take it out of Your pocket and consume them!-
Again as on :10, the answer was that God's hand would again be seen active for His people once they repented. But typical of the secular view, the psalmist expects immediate action from God right now, regardless of any spiritual dimension to the basis of His operations with men. And second Isaiah is full of appeals to realize that God's "arm" and hand were outstretched to save His people out of Babylon and restore Zion and the Kingdom.

Psa 74:12

Yet God is my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth-
The midst of the land was Zion, and there He had done great miracles at the time of Hezekiah- which the psalmist believes can be repeated. The tone of the Psalm changes now. The Psalmist has not made a good case in the preceding verses, as noted above. He is simply demanding immediate release from the exile. Although he is spiritually

deficient in failing to factor in Israel's sin and the need for repentance, he all the same has a strong personal faith. Whether or not God comes through for His people on a larger scale, "God is *my* king". And here we have an example for us all. Our struggle with the problem of evil must not be allowed to take away God's salvation history; His apparent failure to save whom and when and how we think He should must never take away from our personal faith in Him.

We also learn here that a man like this psalmist who may be deficient in attitude and understanding (as witnessed in the notes above on :2-11) may still have genuine faith before God. Although the visible kingship had been ended, the psalmist still believes that God is Israel's King. Despite all his defective reasoning up until this point in the psalm, he now rallies himself by reflecting upon God's historical salvation of His people, and the way the natural creation is evidence enough of His ongoing work for His people.

Psa 74:13

You divided the sea by Your strength. You broke the heads of the sea monsters in the waters-
A clear allusion to God's division of the Red Sea and destruction of the "monsters" of Egypt. The chariots of Pharaoh are likened to sea monsters.

Psa 74:14

You broke the heads of Leviathan in pieces. You gave him as food to people and desert creatures-
Again the power of Egypt is likened to a mythical creature. People of the time found the sea mysterious, and believed in a vast sea dragon lurking there which was invincible, rather like folks tend to believe in a supernatural devil figure. The simple point was that God has and can destroy such entities at ease, to the point that effectively God's people need not believe in them. LXX "Thou didst give him for meat to the Ethiopian nations" perhaps imagines the local peoples picking up the spoil of the Egyptian chariots after the Red Sea drowned them all.

Psa 74:15

You opened up spring and stream. You dried up mighty rivers-
Alluding to the provision of living water in the wilderness. The same language is used of how God could dry up the rivers around Babylon to destroy her. He did this, through the Medes, but most of Judah preferred to remain in Babylon rather than obey the commands to flee out of her at that point.

Psa 74:16

The day is Yours, the night is also Yours; You have prepared the light and the sun-
This could continue the allusion to God's care for Israel in the wilderness in :15, this time referring to the provision of light by night and protection from the sun in the day time. Or it could be that the Psalmist, struggling with God's apparent injustice and lack of activity, reflects that of course God is active; for the passing of day and night is evidence enough of that. So often in the Psalms and second Isaiah, God's people look to the natural creation as a reminder that despite their struggle to accept God's hand, and despite all the willful misunderstandings of :2-11, God is obviously still active. And His power is unlimited, even if we consider He ought to use it more visibly for us.

Psa 74:17

You have set all the boundaries of the earth. You have made summer and winter-
As discussed on :16, any illusion that God is somehow inactive is ended by considering the passage of the seasons, all designed and activated by Him. Judah in exile were at the very boundaries of the *eretz* / land / earth promised to Abraham, and God had decreed that too.

Psa 74:18

Remember this, that the enemy has mocked You, Yahweh. Foolish people have blasphemed Your name-
Again it is inappropriate to suggest that God has as it were forgotten anything. A more mature perspective would have known that finally "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7). But as noted on :12, a man like this psalmist who may be deficient in attitude and understanding (as witnessed in the notes above on :2-11) may still have genuine faith before God. LXX adds "Remember this thy creation"; time and again, a doubting and depressed psalmist comes back to the theme of creation, that God has created me, Israel, the world... and the creator will redeem. This is continually the argument God deploys to the exiles when reasoning with them throughout second Isaiah. It was Judah who were profaning Yahweh's Name in exile (Ez. 36:20-22). And the exiles who returned are accused likewise, with the same Hebrew word, of profaning God's Name (Mal. 1:12; 2:10,11). The psalmist sees only the evil in the world and not in God's people. He goes on :19 to suggest that Judah are an innocent dove; but they were far from this.

Psa 74:19

Don’t deliver the soul of Your dove to wild beasts, don’t forget the life of Your poor forever- Again, Israel's neighbouring enemies are the "wild beasts" of scripture. This imagery is consistent. The argument could be seen as manipulative; for God had taught in His own law that the poor should be cared for and redeemed, yet He appears not to redeem His own "poor". Judah in exile were major sinners, as Ezekiel makes clear. But the psalmist likes to compare them to innocent dove. See on :18.

Psa 74:20

Honour Your covenant, for haunts of violence fill the dark places of the land- This fails to appreciate the clear teaching of Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the exiles; that they had broken the old covenant, and their only hope was to repent and accept the new covenant which was offered. But this wonderful "hope of Israel" fell on deaf ears, because they were so obsessed with a return to how things had been, under the same covenant which was now broken.

Psa 74:21

Don’t let the oppressed return ashamed; let the poor and needy praise Your name- David had felt "oppressed" whilst in exile from Saul (s.w. Ps. 9:9; 10:18), and his Psalms show him to have been the "poor and needy" who was ever praising Yahweh's Name (s.w. Ps. 40:17; 70:5). David is set up as the programmatic example for the exiles. But they had to follow his path of humility and repentance. Despite the psalmist rallying himself a bit spiritually, he still has wrong attitudes. Second Isaiah is appealing for the exiles to praise God's Name; it was not the case that God wasn't allowing them to worship Him. Possibly the psalmist wrongly imagines that the poor and needy could only praise Yahweh's Name at a restored temple in Zion. But they could do so in any context.

David here actually prays for God's help so that people don't take false guilt: "Don't let the oppressed be put to shame; let those poor and needy people praise you" (Ps. 74:21 GNB). The implication is that false guilt impedes our praise of God; for we feel too unworthy to even praise Him.

Psa 74:22

Arise, God! Plead Your own cause. Remember how the foolish man mocks You all day- The psalmist imagines God as in court, saying nothing and being judged by those who mocked Him. But this again reflects a lack of faith and understanding that God is the ultimate judge, and that finally "God is not mocked" (Gal. 6:7).

Psa 74:23

Don’t forget the voice of Your adversaries; the tumult of those who rise up against You ascends continually-

The language used here (and in Ps. 65:7) is that used of the gathering of the Assyrian and Babylonian armies against Zion (Is. 13:4; 17:12,13; 25:5; Jer. 25:31). But God's word was to calm that, in order to reestablish His Kingdom. The idea is as in LXX "let the pride of them that hate thee continually ascend before thee". Human behaviour, attitudes, body language etc. is judged by God in the court of Heaven. And He will always judge pride.

PSALMS CHAPTER 75

Psa 75:1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of Do Not Destroy. A Psalm by Asaph. A song-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

We give thanks to You, God. We give thanks, for Your Name is near. Men tell about Your wondrous works-
The coming near of God's Name is used in prophecy of the destruction of the Assyrians: "The name of Yahweh comes from far away, burning with His anger" (Is. 30:27). The Asaph psalms look back to incidents like the Red Sea and the destruction of the Assyrians to remind the exiles that God is not incapable of judgment. It's just a question of when He chooses to articulate it.

The Asaph psalms are encouragement to the exiles to realize that God is in fact "near". Literally, 'next to', 'neighbour / relative to'. This is how close God feels to the broken hearted and crushed; and conversely, how far He is from the self satisfied and self congratulatory, 'the strong' in secular terms. It is this feature of Yahweh which makes Him unique; no other God has this characteristic of 'nearness' (s.w. Dt. 4:7).

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

Psa 75:2

When I choose the appointed time, I will judge blamelessly-
I suggest later in this Psalm that the initial application was to the Assyrian encirclement of Jerusalem at the time of Hezekiah. "The appointed time" is a phrase used about the feasts, and there is reason to believe that God delivered Jerusalem at Passover time. This was the "set time to favour Zion" (Ps. 102:13 s.w.). Hence LXX "When I shall take a set time, I will judge righteously". GNB ""I have set a time for judgment," says God, "and I will judge with fairness"". From here to :5 would be the statement of God about the current crisis in His land. The blameless nature of God's judgment must be an abiding comfort to all His people; for we all struggle with the fact that both we and others are judged wrongly in this life. Many people can hardly get up in the morning and live another day because they are so burdened by the pain of being wrongly judged. For the believer, there is the comfort that the ultimate, only real Judge will judge with ultimate fairness. And indeed He judges like that now.

Whatever their original historical background, the Asaph psalms were used at the time of the exile to help resolve the conflict between faith / trust, and expectation of how men felt God should work in the here and now. The temple was destroyed, and the restoration didn't happen as was potentially possible. The faithful therefore looked back to how God had come through for His people historically, for example, at the time of the Assyrian invasion. The focus was on praise for how God had been, and how He is as God, and therefore looking forward to His ultimate salvation and judgment. Even if He was not coming through for His people as they expected in the here and now. Hence the simple power of the words "I *will* judge", and the comfort in :7 that in a sense, He is judging right now. It's just that the visible articulation of that judgment is yet future.

Psa 75:3

The earth and all its inhabitants quake. I firmly uphold its pillars. Selah-
"Inhabitants" of the earth / land quaking or "melting away" is the very phrase used about the inhabitants of Canaan melting away after the miracle at the Red Sea and its associated earthquakes (s.w. Ex. 15:15; Josh. 2:9,24). The implication that God was going to dramatically deliver His people, and then subdue the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham under them. Despite this quaking, the pillars of the land, as it were, would be held firm by God. His people would be preserved. But this great possibility and potential was not used by those who entered Canaan, nor was it used in Hezekiah's time; for instead of exalting Israel's God in the entire *eretz*, Hezekiah instead went the way of the surrounding nations.

Or we can read this as meaning that the "earth" as in the land quaked or LXX "is dissolved, and all that dwell in it", in the sense that the Assyrians had overrun all of Judah apart from Jerusalem. It seemed that the whole land had dissolved or was quaking, and all the people feared. But God is saying that beneath the land are pillars, which He upholds. Just as all may appear to dissolve in our lives, in our worlds, rocked by an earthquake… but beneath us are pillars upheld by God.

Psa 75:4

I said to the arrogant, Don't boast!; I said to the wicked, Don't lift up the horn-
This would refer to the proud, boastful words of Rabshakeh outside the walls of Jerusalem. He "lifted up his eyes" against God (Is. 37:23) The implication would be that God had tried to stop even an unbelieving Gentile from boasting; and He only judged him because he refused to desist. In the context of the Asaph psalms, the wicked had lifted up their horn / power over Israel. Their horn would finally be cut off (:10). But for now, their horn was dominant. But the view of faith is that they are dominant in disobedience to God, and therefore must finally fall. And the way God historically judged the Assyrians is a guarantee of that. It is God who "lifts up" (:7) at His right time; "exaltation" ['lifting up'] comes only from Him (:6). But these powers had lifted themselves up (:4,5). Here we see clearly the folly of absolutely any self exaltation. Be it on social media, by implication or by specific claims about ourselves. Even in the times when it seems others are lifted up above ourselves, we are to see behind the scenes- that God is lifting up and putting down right now, but will reveal this in His own "appointed time" (:7). We chafe at the way we are 'down' and others are 'up'. But that is only for now. At God's right time (:2), we will be put "up" eternally and the wicked put 'down' for ever. Judgment "day", "the time of His judgments", means just that; the time for judgment being articulated is yet to come, but there will be that specific day or time.

Psa 75:5

Don't lift up your horn on high, don't speak with a stiff neck-
This is addressed to the entity which has "horns" which Yahweh would break (:10). The Assyrian enemy of Judah is depicted as a beast with horns, and this symbology continues throughout the Bible. The beast is the latter day Assyrian. The proud speaker would likely refer to Rabshakeh speaking loudly and proudly about the failure of Israel's God to save from the Assyrians. This rebuke of the Assyrian was uttered on God's behalf by the faithful remnant within Jerusalem at that time.

Psa 75:6

For neither from the east, nor from the west, nor yet from the south, comes exaltation-
The implication therefore is that exaltation to safety and deliverance comes from the "north", literally "the hidden place", put here for "God". Another take is that the Psalm may have been written or applied to the time when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Assyrian armies. They had approached from the north. There was no good looking for help to come from the other points of the compass. All the nations to whom Judah had looked for help would not deliver her. "Exaltation" is used by David in Ps. 18:48 to mean deliverance from enemies. The fact is that as Isaiah had pointed out, Judah had sought help from all points of the compass [especially Egypt in the South] against the Assyrian threat. This is very much the spirit of Ps. 121:1,2 " I will lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth". "Exaltation" is 'lifting up', a major theme of the Psalm. See on :4.

Psa 75:7

But God is the judge. He puts down one, and lifts up another-
This thought was with the faithful when surrounded by the Assyrians: "Yahweh is our judge. He will save us" (Is. 33:22). As discussed on :2, the Asaph psalms are in the context of Judah in exile struggling to understand how God appeared silent and not to be judging in the earth. The comfort is that God is in fact judging right now, but the visible articulation of that judgment is yet future. This is the ultimate answer to our struggles over why God is apparently silent and disengaged with our dramas and sufferings of injustice. God right now puts down one and lifts up another– all of which He will also due at the last day (Lk. 14:10 alludes here). The essence of judgment is ongoing now; “we make the answer now”. God’s present judgment is often paralleled with His future judgment. Thus “The Lord *shall* judge the people… God *judges* [now] the righteous, and God *is* angry with the wicked every day… he *will* whet his sword; he *has* [right now]bent his bow, and made it ready.” (Ps. 7:8,11-13). We are come *now* “to God the judge of all” (Heb. 12:23); God is *now* enthroned as judge (Ps. 93:2; Mt. 5:34 “the heaven *is* God’s throne”). We are now inescapably in God’s presence (Ps. 139:2); and ‘God’s presence’ is a phrase used about the final judgment in 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10.

Psa 75:8

For in the hand of Yahweh there is a cup, full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours it out; indeed the wicked of the earth drink and drink it to its very dregs-
This may have originated in David's thoughts about Saul, then reapplied to David's need for salvation from Absalom and Ahithophel, but, it becomes the intended appeal of the exiles for deliverance from Babylon, then Haman, and indeed from all their captors. "The wicked of the earth" is the term used for the Babylonians in Ez. 7:21. The imagery of

Babylon being given a cup of wine to drink as judgment is developed in the later prophets.

Taking the cup of wine is a double symbol: of blessing (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:25), and of condemnation (Ps. 60:3; 75:8; Is. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Rev. 14:10; 16:19). Why this use of a double symbol? Surely the Lord designed this sacrament in order to highlight the two ways which are placed before us by taking that cup: it is either to our blessing, or to our condemnation. Each breaking of bread is a further stage along one of those two roads. At the last day, the Messianic banquet will feature fine wines: "In this mountain Yahweh of Armies will make to all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of choice wines, of fat things full of marrow, of well refined choice wines" (Is. 25:6); but at the same time, the rejected will be made to drink the wine of God's wrath (Rev. 14:10). As we hold the memorial cup of wine in our hands, we make the answer now.

Psa 75:9

But I will declare this forever: I will sing praises to the God of Jacob-
Eternal praise to the God who saved spiritually weak Jacob is how David perceived eternity. "Declaring" or showing forth praise of God's ways is what David did in this life (Ps. 71:17,18; 92:2,15 and often). But he imagines himself doing so "forever" (Ps. 75:9). This is an example of how we can live the eternal life now, acting now as we shall eternally do in the Kingdom. It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus in John's gospel offers eternal life right now; even though we shall die and only enter eternity at the resurrection of the body.

Psa 75:10

I will cut off all the horns of the wicked, but the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up-
The power of Assyria and Israel's enemies generally has been likened to a wild beast, with the particular "horn" of :4,5 referring to Rabshakeh speaking loudly and proudly about the failure of Israel's God to save from the Assyrians. So the beast with many horns of later prophecy is envisaged here- as the Assyrian or Babylonian invader, with the various members of their coalitions as the horns. The idea of the horn of the righteous being exalted is used about what David envisaged happening for God's people in this life (s.w. Ps. 148:14), although the final fulfilment was to be at the last day, when the horn of the wicked is cut off (Ps. 75:10). But there are potential foretastes of the last day in this life. Jeremiah appears to struggle with the Psalms which taught that the horn of the righteous would be lifted up, lamenting that instead the horn of their enemies had been lifted up (s.w. Lam. 2:17). The truth was that the horn of God's people would only

be lifted up if they were identified with the lifting up of the horn which was Messiah (Ps. 89:17,24). And because this didn't happen, their horn was not exalted.

PSALMS CHAPTER 76

Psa 76:1

For the Chief Musician. On stringed instruments. A Psalm by Asaph. A song-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

Note how the restoration Psalm Ps. 76:1-5 speaks in the prophetic perfect of a great battle at Jerusalem which Yahweh would win. Perhaps this speaks of the same battle spoken of in Ez. 38, which could have come true in God's prophetic program, had the people rebuilt the city as they should have done.

In Judah God is known, His name is great in Israel-
This is one of the many passages where God emphasizes the essential unity of Israel and Judah through the device of parallelism. Here Judah and Israel are paralleled, and therefore making His Name great is paralleled with knowing Him. To know God is to have a relationship with Him which issues in glorifying His Name. The idea may be that God's Name is being made great, i.e. praised, because God has made Himself known by a great deliverance of Judah- probably referring to the destruction of the Assyrian invaders in Hezekiah's time. I have noted throughout the Psalms that there is sometimes a pairing of Psalms, and Ps. 75 is clearly in the same context. LXX specifically applies this psalm to the defeat of the Assyrians, titling it "A Song for the Assyrian". God was "known" at that time by His salvation of His people from the Assyrians. The idea is that He had thereby "made Himself known in her palaces as a sure refuge" (Ps. 48:3). And the principle remains- to experience God's salvation, which is Yahoshua, 'Jesus', is to know

God.

Psa 76:2

His tabernacle is also in Salem; His dwelling place in Zion-
"Salem" is used for "Jerusalem" because the idea was that now the temple was in peace, now that the Assyrians had been destroyed. But note LXX "His place has been in peace", referring to how the temple mount didn't fall to the Assyrians. The Hebrew words for "tabernacle" and "dwelling place" are used of lions 'dwelling' in their covert or hidden camp (Job 38:40 "they crouch in their dens, and lie in wait in the thicket"; Am. 3:4; Ps. 104:22 "*lay down* in their dens"). A lion isn't in the lair all the time. Whatever their original historical background, the Asaph psalms were used at the time of the exile to help resolve the conflict between faith and expectation of how God should work in the here and now. The temple was destroyed, and the restoration didn't happen as was potentially possible. God had left His preferred dwelling place or lair in Zion. But the imagery of a lion suggests that in faith, the believers saw Him as still a lion, but out prowling around, and definitely at some time to return to His favourite haunt. At the time of Hezekiah, God was like a lion who came out fearlessly from His den in Jerusalem to destroy His enemies: "As the lion and the young lion growling over his prey who will not be dismayed if a multitude of shepherds is called together against him, nor will he abase himself for their noise, so Yahweh of Armies will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its mount" (Is. 31:4).

Psa 76:3

There He broke the flaming arrows of the bow, the shield and the sword and the weapons of war. Selah-
Not an arrow was shot by the Assyrians in Zion (Is. 37:33); for "there" they were destroyed by just one Angel slaying 185,000 soldiers. "Arrows" here can be translated "lightnings". So the idea may be that God destroyed all the fearsome weaponry which struck fear into the hearts of the Israelites.

Psa 76:4

Glorious are You and excellent, more than mountains of game-
"Mountains" may be an intensive plural for the one great mountain, Zion, where in the temple treasuries the "prey" ("game") of booty from the destroyed Assyrian army was laid up. But far beyond that was the glory which God brought to Himself by the defeat of the Assyrians. And for this, Yahweh was to be "feared" or 'made glorious' by the surrounding Gentiles (s.w. :7). LXX reads this as referring to the miraculous shining forth of Yahweh from the temple in order to destroy the Assyrians: "Thou dost wonderfully

shine forth from the everlasting mountains". GNB suggests this is God's victory procession after the victory: "How glorious you are, O God! How majestic, as you return from the mountains where you defeated your foes". The "mountains" would then be an intensive plural for mount Zion where the Assyrians were defeated. The people of Judah did nothing in the battle against the Assyrians- it was totally all of God. He goes out to war for us without us being aware, and wins victories whilst we sleep. The language of God as a lion [see on :2] at the time of the victory over Assyria is found in Is. 14:25, “I will break the Assyrian in My land, and upon My mountains tread him under foot” .

Psa 76:5

Valiant men lie plundered-
Plundered by the inhabitants of Zion coming out to strip the corpses of the 185,000 soldiers slain by the Angel.

They have slept their last sleep. None of the men of war can lift their hands-
The judgment of these Gentiles is presented as an eternal sleep. Death was therefore understood by the psalmist as unconsciousness, and eternal death was the punishment of these people rather than eternal conscious torment.

Psa 76:6

At Your rebuke, God of Jacob, both chariot and horse are cast into a deep sleep-
This is the language of the victory at the Red Sea ["rebuke... chariot and horse... cast... the deep"], but it is reapplied to the Assyrian defeat. The psalmist perceives a continuity in God's actions. And as noted on :5, the judgment of the invaders was eternal sleep, unconsciousness rather than any idea of conscious torment.

Psa 76:7

You, even You, are to be feared. Who can stand in Your sight when You are angry?-
"Feared" is s.w. "excellent" in :4. Yahweh was to be "feared" or 'made glorious' by the surrounding Gentiles; but instead, Hezekiah fraternized with them and accepted their gods, rather than bringing them to fear Israel's God, knowing that they must make peace with Him rather than face His anger.

Psa 76:8

You pronounced judgment from heaven: the earth feared and was silent-
A reference to the judgment from heaven being operationalized by one Angel going forth from heaven to slay the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers encircling Jerusalem. The intention was that the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham would fear God and be silent before Him

because of this. But Hezekiah tragically failed to make use of that potential. The kingdom prophecies in earlier Isaiah could have come to fulfilment in him, in some form; but he would not.

Psa 76:9

when God arose to judgment, to save all the afflicted ones of the earth. Selah-
The judgment of the Assyrians was a saving of the "afflicted ones". It was a foretaste of the day when God shall finally arise in judgment, and the afflicted / meek shall eternally inherit the earth (Ps. 37:11,29 s.w.). Is. 11:4 spoke of how the Messianic king would judge the abusers of "the meek / afflicted ones of the earth" (s.w.). This "Kingdom" prophecy could have come true in Hezekiah's time, but he sadly was happy to have 15 years to enjoy himself in mortal life, and turned away from the Kingdom potential.

Psa 76:10

Surely the wrath of man praises You. The survivors of Your wrath are restrained-
LXX points this differently: "For the inward thought of man shall give thanks to thee: and the memorial of his inward thought shall keep a feast to thee". We see the constant interest of God in the inward man; the idea would be that God's saving activity would permanently affect the inward thoughts of those who saw it, and would lead them to keep a feast of celebration to Him- just as we keep the breaking of bread feast from the same basic motives and experience.

GNB "Human anger only results in more praise for you; those who survive the wars will keep your festivals". The idea may be that after the outpouring of wrath, those who survive it will praise Yahweh. This is what the prophetic intention was for the aftermath of the destruction of the Assyrians and later, after the fall of Babylon. But Hezekiah and later the exiles let the baton drop and didn't fulfil the potential. The whole scenario was reapplied and rescheduled to the last days. "Restrained" is the usual word for "girded", and it is parallel with "praises You"; so the idea may be an allusion to the metaphor of being 'girded with praise'.

Psa 76:11

Make vows to Yahweh your God, and fulfil them!-
An invitation to the surrounding nations to enter into covenant relationship with Yahweh as their God.

Let all of His neighbours bring presents to Him who is to be feared-
This was fulfilled at Hezekiah's time, but Hezekiah misused this and didn't bring those neighbours to Israel's God as was prophetically intended.

Psa 76:12

He will cut off the spirit of princes, He is feared by the kings of the land-
AV "He is terrible to the kings...". A primary reference to the likes of Sennacherib and Rabshakeh with the princes of Assyria who were with the Assyrian army when it was destroyed. But as discussed on :10, this could again be God's interest in the internal, spiritual, psychological effect of His work of salvation and judgment.

PSALMS CHAPTER 77

Psa 77:1

For the Chief Musician. To Jeduthun. A Psalm by Asaph-

This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

My cry goes to God! Indeed, I cry to God for help, and for Him to listen to me- This Psalm is similar to Hab. 3, which is a lament of God's apparent inaction at the time of the Babylonian devastation of Judah, and the context may be the same here. And there was the same sense that God wasn't hearing prayer. Although we could read "My cry goes to God" as a faithful belief that his words did ascend to the very presence of God in Heaven. What he struggled with was God's apparent lack of response.

Psa 77:2

In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. My hand was stretched out in the night, and didn't retract. My soul refused to be comforted-

The intention of David's Psalms were to share his experience of God's grace and salvation with others. The idea is 'May this be true for you as it was for me'. And this is really the basis of all our witness. It was David who had been answered in his 'days of trouble', and set on high (Ps. 20:1). His desire was fulfilled- for this verse of the Psalm clearly was reapplied to the "day of trouble" of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3) and also to the Babylonian traumas of the exiles (s.w. Jer. 16:19; 30:7; Nah. 1:7; Hab. 3:16). See on Ex. 25:8.

"Troubles" is the word used of Jacob's time of trouble (Gen. 35:3; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). David's experience of trouble was representative of how the exiles and all God's people could ultimately follow the path of Jacob to deliverance out of exile and from his strong enemies. But in Ps. 71:20 David sees his deliverance from the day of trouble as ultimately being in the resurrection of the body, being 'brought up again from the depths of the earth'.

We have here a very close up description of a man in extreme anxiety. He stretches out his hand and can't retract it, groans (:3), feels mentally overwhelmed (:3), can't close his eyelids and can't speak out loud (:4).

Psa 77:3

I remember God, and I groan-
This is the word used of the exiles groaning and apparently getting no relief (Is. 59:11). The Psalm may have begun with David expressing his groaning to God (s.w. Ps. 42:11; 43:5). But the truth was that God likewise groaned for the suffering of His people (s.w. Jer. 31:20).

I complain, and my spirit is overwhelmed. Selah-
As noted above, this may have begun as a Psalm recording how David complained (s.w. Ps. 55:17) and felt overwhelmed (s.w. Ps. 61:2; 142:3; 143:4). It becomes the basis for how Habakkuk likewise 'complained' (see on :1) regarding the Babylonian dominance of Judah.

Psa 77:4

You hold my eyelids open. I am so troubled that I can't speak-
In deep sickness or depression it can simply be that we find formal, verbalized prayer impossible. Ps. 77:4 speaks of this: "I am so troubled that I cannot speak" (formally, to God). It's in those moments that comfort can be taken from the fact that it is our spirit which is mediated as it were to God. Tribulation is read as prayer- hence even the Lord's suffering on the cross, "the affliction of the afflicted", was read by the Father as the Lord Jesus 'crying unto' the Father (Ps. 22:24). This is sure comfort to those so beset by

illness and physical pain that they lack the clarity of mind to formally pray- their very affliction is read by the Father as their prayer.

We must enquire *why* the Psalmist felt so troubled and overwhelmed when thinking about God and meditating upon the present exile of His people. The answer may be in that he perceived that all this had come upon them for their sins, and restoration would only come from repentance; which seemed very far from the exiles. He comes to realize that they should cease bemoaning their lot, and accept what the prophetic explanation for their sufferings- they had grievously sinned. This would explain why upon thinking about these things, he feels unable to talk to God, just as Daniel felt when realizing the same things.

Psa 77:5

I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times-
The psalmist has realized that the exile is due to the sin of his people, and the full enormity of it now dawns upon him (see on :4). But he considers God's saving hand in history, and takes comfort from the fact that God still acts for His people even when they are far from Him and impenitent. His purpose is not ultimately thwarted by human sin.

Psa 77:6

I remember my song in the night. I consider in my own heart; my spirit diligently inquires-
This may preface a quotation from one of his songs of the night, which we have in :7-9. And in that song he asks the questions we too have done at times: Will God's whole salvation project with humanity be declared a failure because of the persistent human propensity to sin and reject Him? Or perhaps this is the psalmist remembering at night how he used to sing songs of Zion in the now destroyed temple. Just like the captive harp player in Ps. 137:3.

Psa 77:7

Will the Lord reject us forever? Will He no more be gracious?-
The questions of :7-9 are perhaps rhetorical questions, intentionally begging the answers "No!". His "song in the night" (see on :6) which we have in :7-9 was not therefore a song of doubt, but rather of praise, confident that God will not reject His people, and that His grace is eternal- as the Psalms elsewhere celebrate.

Psa 77:8

Has His grace vanished forever? Does His promise fail for generations?-
God's grace is eternal (s.w. Ps. 18:50; 52:8). His promises will not fail (Dt. 31:6,8; 1 Kings

8:25; Ps. 89:33). The answer was "of course not". Jeremiah finally came to accept, even in the ruins of Jerusalem, that His purpose would not fail (Lam. 3:22). And this "song in the night" of this psalmist is saying the same. We could render: "Will He fail to remember His *hesed* and cease to speak to generation after generation?"- an allusion to the statement of God's Name in Ex. 34, where He promises to remember His grace for generations of those who fear Him. But of course the psalmist is rather forgetting the conditionality of those promises: "keeping *hesed* for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's' children" (Ex. 34:6,7). The psalmist appears to have made the classic mistake of focusing upon a phrase from the Bible, whilst ignoring the context. And moreover, his reading of Ex. 34:6,7 is his reading of God Himself; for that is the specific explanation by God of what He Himself essentially is and stands for. See on :9.

Psa 77:9

Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He, in anger, withheld His compassion? Selah- As explained on :6, the questions of :7-9 were not doubts, but rather rhetorical questions which were answered with a resounding "No!" each time. The connection with Hab. 3 (see on :1) is in the conclusion that in anger God remembers mercy (Hab. 3:2). The terms gracious, anger and compassion all refer to God's statement of His Name to Moses in Ex. 34. See on :8. But again the Psalmist is misrepresenting those statements about God's character; for there it is revealed that He is "slow to anger". Whereas the psalmist seems to elevate God's anger to the point that he feels it has obscured the grace which is in God's character; he makes anger God's dominant characteristic. Whereas God reveals that His love and grace are His first and dominant characteristic. We think of the contrast between the *year* of God's gracious acceptance, and the *day* of vengeance of our God in Is. 61, and how the Lord when quoting this about Himself, stopped His quotation short and omitted the reference to the day of vengeance. So we have here a fundamental misreading of God at this point by the psalmist. But the allusions to Ex. 34 are clear enough to lead the spiritually minded reader to immediately realize that. And the psalmist does 'get it', because from now on, the tone of the Psalm changes. He confesses his "infirmity", and recalls how God has come through for His sinful people in the past. Whether or not He does so for me in my immediate situation is one issue; but that apparent silence doesn't in any way change who God essentially is. It could be said that he moves on from the question of 'Where is God?' to that of 'Who is God?'. And rightly concludes that by nature, God is not there to just dish out instant relief packages. He has a more profound and long term nature, geared towards our eternal salvation.

Psa 77:10

Then I thought, I will appeal to this: the years of the right hand of the Most High-
AV "This is my infirmity", as if recognizing he in fact is the one in the wrong; or in the spirit of Jeremiah in the same context, "This is my grief and I must bear it" (Jer. 10:19). GNB "Then I said, "What hurts me most is this— that God is no longer powerful". Or the psalmist could be reflecting that God's eternity surely implies He wants to be in relationship throughout that eternity, and not alone. And therefore surely there is hope for Israel's return to relationship with Him. The Hebrew is difficult, but the sense seems to be that the appeal or prayer of the psalmist will result in as the LXX puts it "the change of the right hand of the Most High". God is open to change, He is highly responsive to human prayer and repentance; and that was exactly what was needed to bring about the restoration of Judah.

Psa 77:11

I will remember Yah's deeds; for I will remember Your wonders of old-
Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. As explained earlier on this Psalm, God's wonders of old were in that He had worked with an impenitent and apostate people, towards their salvation. This is the wonder of His history with men, and it is this history which is developed in Ps. 78. I suggest that again we have a pairing of the Psalms, here of Psalms 77 and 78. The salvation history outlined in Ps. 78 is a development of this theme of Ps. 77. Hence Ps. 77:20 ends with Israel being led as a flock, and Ps. 78 continues this theme.

Psa 77:12

I will also meditate on all Your work, and consider Your doings-
As in Ps. 143:5, the Divine work and doings being considered are His historical grace to His people. For all His work for Israel was by grace, seeing that for the most part they didn't strongly believe in Him and were unfaithful to His covenant; and yet He had still worked for them so mightily, towards their salvation.

Psa 77:13

Your way, God, is in the sanctuary-
This is the same phrase as in Is. 35:8 "The way of holiness", the path back to Zion which God would create for those who wanted to travel it. So "in" could as well be "to". He

remembers that the way to God's Kingdom is always open. Or we may have here something similar to Ps. 73:17, where the Psalmist finds understanding by going into the sanctuary, and seeing the brass plates on the altar as the reminder that God will judge sinners. And that makes sense of all present suffering and intellectual struggles.

What god is great like God?-
The uniqueness of Yahweh, in the context, is that He continues to work for His sinful people by grace, doing great things for them; whereas pagan gods were thought to disown their people for any disloyalty.

Psa 77:14

You are the God who does wonders-
The "wonders" may be the miracles associated with the Exodus. Or the point may simply be that whatever God does, in judgment or salvation, is wonderful. The wonders in the context are God's desire to continue working with His people even when they are grossly disloyal to Him. It is the wonder of His grace which is in view, and not just His material miracles.

You have made Your strength known among the peoples-
God's strength was declared at the exodus (s.w. Ex. 15:2,13) and the surrounding nations knew this, as witnessed by Rahab's words to the spies. The redemption from Babylon was intended to have the same effect, resulting in the surrounding nations 'knowing' Yahweh as their God. But this didn't happen, for Judah didn't repent, most of them remained in Babylon and refused their great redemption, and continued worshipping the local gods.

Psa 77:15

You have redeemed Your people with Your arm, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah-

This reference to both Judah and the ten tribes, "Ephraim and Manasseh", reflects the prophetic intention for the regathering of both kingdoms from captivity. Tragically, the ten tribes didn't respond, and most of Judah preferred Babylon to Zion. God's "arm" redeemed them all from Egypt, despite their worshipping of idols and carrying of the tabernacle of their idols through the desert. And that arm was potentially outstretched to redeem them from Babylon. "Redemption" is a major theme of the prophecies of the restoration in later Isaiah. The specific reference is to Ex. 6:16 where God promises Israel in Egypt "I will *redeem* you with an *outstretched arm*" (s.w.). Perhaps the Psalmist is feeling that just as Israel were 430 years in Egypt, so the exiles had been 70 years in Babylon. But just as Yahweh had redeemed them with His arm from Egypt, so therefore He would do from Babylon. And second Isaiah is full of allusions to the Exodus, and to

God's assurance that He has now "redeemed" the exiles. So the apparent silence of God is met by the recollection that such periods had happened before- and God always broke His silence.

Psa 77:16

The waters saw You, God, the waters saw You, and they writhed, the depths also convulsed-
The miraculous redemption of Israel from Egypt could have been the prototype for the restoration of the exiles from Babylon. This point is frequently made in later Isaiah. But the restoration wasn't accompanied by such miracles; because most of Judah didn't want to participate, and remained in Babylon. This is a frequent tragedy in God's dealing with us all; such huge Divine potentials are wasted by human indifference and shortsightedness. The waters of the Red Sea are spoken of as living entities, because those "waters" are intended to be understood as representing the nations who would have fled before God's saving purpose of restoring His people to their land.

It is also possible to understand the apparent "living" nature of the waters because there is an "Angel of the waters" (Rev. 16:5). That a specific Angel controls “the waters” in an area is also implied by the way flood waters are described as praising God (Ps. 42:8; 148:7), water trembling at God’s presence (Ps. 77:17; Hab. 3:10), and the deep waters mourning (Ez. 31:15). These figures of speech may in fact be based upon the real existence of a personal “Angel of the waters”.

Psa 77:17

The clouds poured out water. The skies resounded with thunder, Your arrows also flashed around-
This continues the description of what happened at the Red Sea, although the historical record doesn't much mention the thunder, lightning and theophany which was experienced, according to this and other later descriptions of what happened (e.g. Ps. 77:17,18; 97:4). The clouds pouring out water also recalls the flood; as if the judgment upon Egypt would likewise be seen upon Babylon. But Babylon fell only very slowly, and not in the dramatic, miraculous way envisaged in the prophecies of the fall of Babylon. This was again because the Divine potential wasn't realized because the exiles didn't repent and most actually chose to remain in Babylon.

Psa 77:18

The voice of Your thunder was in the whirlwind, the lightnings lit up the world, the earth trembled and shook-

The driving back of the Red Sea, and its return, is explained in Exodus by a "wind" (Ex. 14:21). But here we find that the wind was in fact a whirlwind, associated with an earthquake and lightnings- all language of a theophany.

Psa 77:19

Your way was through the sea, Your paths through the great waters; Your footsteps were not known-
The Red Sea flowed back after God's people passed over, leaving no visible trace of God's march. Which is reason enough to doubt claims of Egyptian chariot wheels being unearthed near the Red Sea. Faith isn't based upon sight (Heb. 11:1,2). But the fact is, Israel didn't remain in Egypt. Just as there is no visible remnant of the cross. But the effects of the Lord's death are evident. And so the psalmist comforts himself that he isn't going to be able to understand everything about God's work, because His footsteps can't be seen. But the saving effect of His work is.

The allusion is to the way that there are no footsteps seen in water. God's ways are known by their effect, but the process is often not discernible. "Footsteps" is literally "heels"; the reference is to Gen. 3:15. The seed of the serpent was being trodden underfoot in primary fulfilment of that prophecy. It was Israel who walked through the great waters, but the waters returned and there was no trace of their passage. This speaks of the apparent mystery of God's ways; Jn. 3:8 may even allude here.

Psa 77:20

You led Your people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron-
The flock of Israel were led by the hand of an Angel, but that Angel articulated its activity through men. And it is the same today. God's hand is manifest through our hand. As explained earlier on this Psalm, God's wonders of old were in that He had worked with an impenitent and apostate people, towards their salvation. This is the wonder of His history with men, and it is this history which is developed in Ps. 78. I suggest that again we have a pairing of the Psalms, here of Psalms 77 and 78. The salvation history outlined in Ps. 78 is a development of this theme of Ps. 77. Hence Ps. 77:20 ends with Israel being "led" as a flock, and Ps. 78 continues this theme (Ps. 78:14,53 s.w.).

PSALMS CHAPTER 78

Psa 78:1

A contemplation by Asaph-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. Asaph says he will "utter *hidden* things...what our fathers have told us...*we* will not *hide* them from their children" (:2,4 NIV). He speaks as if these things had been known by the fathers but not repeated to Asaph's generation, and now Asaph as a teaching priest was going to teach them to the present generation. This would imply that after initially pining for Zion, the Jewish community in Babylon got on with life and forget their historical roots; for "the things" of which the Psalm speaks are a recounting of the covenant history of God with His people. In this context Asaph reminds them that Yahweh had chosen Zion for His temple (:60,68), and now at the restoration "The Lord awoke from sleep, as a man wakes" (:65). Asaph warns them that He has "rejected the tents of Joseph, he did not chose the tribe of Ephraim" (i.e. the 10 tribe Kingdom had been scattered and were not returning at that time), but he chose the tribe of Judah". The final verses must surely be read as prophetic perfect, i.e. speaking about what was going to happen as if it had: "He beat back his enemies, he put them to everlasting shame...He built his sanctuary...he chose David his servant (the same phrase recurs in Ezekiel's temple prophecies)... and David shepherded them with integrity of heart" (:67-72). It could have been so that the surrounding Arab enemies of Judah were eternally destroyed (this has never yet happened, so it can't be describing a previous historical event), the temple built on Zion, and a David-like Messiah appeared. This was potentially possible; but it wasn't to be. The people preferred to live in ignorance of Asaph's appeal to their previous history.

Hear my teaching, my people; turn your ears to the words of my mouth-
The initial author of this Psalm appears to be David, at the time when the sanctuary was moved from Shiloh in Ephraim (Josh. 18:1) to Zion in the tribe of Judah. The Psalm

emphasizes the rejection of Ephraim, the largest tribe; and the historical account finishes with David. This suggests at best it was written by Solomon, or in his time; but most of the Psalms appear to have originated with David. There is a political pretext to it, however- which is to underline that Judah is the royal tribe and not Ephraim, which was the largest tribe. And the king of the kingdom is to be David and his line, not anyone else. In this opening verse, David appeals to "my people" to accept his appeal to accept him as their king, and his interpretation of the history of Ephraim and Judah.

Psa 78:2

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old-
What follows is a salvation history of Israel. History is a riddle or parable, but it is uttered or revealed by appreciating that it is really a reflection of God's desire to save and show grace to His sinful people. This is the ultimate interpretation of human history.

Psa 78:3

which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us-
The idea may be that David is going to reveal the riddle of the historical stories which Israel had heard and known from their fathers (:2).

Psa 78:4

We will not hide them from their children-
It was and is normal to tell children how wonderful were their fathers and ancestors. The psalm is an appeal for Israel to tell the children how awful their fathers had been, to "not hide" this from them, to speak of how their ancestors had "turned back in the day of battle" (:9), suffering the results of the curses for disobedience to the covenant, rather than gloriously being victorious in God's strength. And to appeal to them to forge a quite different spiritual path. This is why the otherwise fairly pedestrian historical account here is a "parable" (:2). For this psalm, which was to 'teach the children', is all about God's grace in the face of their ancestors' awful behaviour. This grace and countless acts of patient forgiveness were the "wondrous works that He has done", for which He should be praised. LXX "They were not hid from their children to a second generation; the fathers declaring the praises of the Lord".

Telling to the generation to come the praises of Yahweh, His strength, and His wondrous works that He has done- As explained on Ps. 77, the intention of Israel's history is to reveal Yahweh's amazing grace and patience to such a weak and sinful people. His strength was in His grace. The great physical miracles were noteworthy even moreso for their revelation of God's grace unto salvation.

Perhaps the Psalmist is feeling that just as Israel were 430 years in Egypt, so the exiles had been 70 years in Babylon. But just as Yahweh had redeemed them with His arm from Egypt, so therefore He would do from Babylon. And second Isaiah is full of allusions to the Exodus, and to God's assurance that He has now "redeemed" the exiles. So the apparent silence of God is met by the recollection that such periods had happened before- and God always broke His silence. This is why the Psalmist is directing the younger generation of exiles back to God's salvation history of His people. He does not always instantly come through for them. He encourages them to move on from the question of 'Where is God?' to that of 'Who is God?'. And rightly concludes that by nature, God is not there to just dish out instant relief packages. He has a more profound and long term nature, geared towards our eternal salvation. :3,4 stress the need to tell these things to future generations, in language reminiscent of the commands to tell the Passover story from generation to generation. This explains why the Psalm is full of references to the Exodus and wilderness journey. And the appeal is to not be like their fathers. The exiles blamed the exile on their fathers, but Ezekiel seeks to show them that they are acting just like their fathers. And they need to repent of that. Psalm 68 is not a prayer; rather is it an appeal to the exiles in the spirit of Ezekiel to make a clean break from their fathers' attitudes. And to perceive God's grace all through their history, and to trust in it. The exiles "used this proverb concerning the land of Israel saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge?" (Ez. 18:2). They were asked to stop saying that, and accept that their situation was because they were sinning themselves. These same people who were blaming everything on their fathers' sins were asked: "Cast away from you all your transgressions in which you have transgressed; and make yourself a new heart and a new spirit" (Ez. 18:31). This is the new covenant. It was a requirement of the new covenant that they would stop thinking like this: "In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31:29). The appeal of many scriptures such as Ps. 78 is to get the exiles to a point where they would "say no more" that they were suffering unfairly, for the sake of their fathers' sins.

Psa 78:5

For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a teaching in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children-
This was to be the lead characteristic of the family of Abraham; the true seed would make known God's teaching to their children (Gen. 18:18). Even in Old Testament times, the basic idea of spreading God's ways was implicit in God's commands, although each time it seems to have met with resistance. Adam and Eve were to multiply and fill the earth, but it seems they didn't even have intercourse, or at least Eve wasn't pregnant, before they sinned. Noah was given the same command after the flood, but the next we know he is lying there dead drunk. And the incident at Babel shows that effectively, his

children had not taken seriously the command to spread throughout the earth. Israel were to be a missionary nation, but they so evidently failed in this. The law given to Israel was intended to be a “testimony”, a witness, as the Hebrew word implies. By living out that law, Israel were to have been a witness to the world, a light to the Gentiles (Ps. 78:5). The prophets are full of invitations for the whole ends of the earth to turn to Israel’s God, yet the nation produced few real missionaries.

Psa 78:6

that the generation to come might know, even the children who should be born; who should arise and tell their children-
David is saying that "we" (:4), he and his descendants, would continue declaring God's mighty acts to their children. But he is building up to a contrast with the descendants of Ephraim, whom he will insist had forgotten God's mighty acts, implying they had not taught them to their children. David is correct in viewing attitudes to teaching children as a highly significant indicator as to whether we are the seed of Abraham (Gen. 18:18). But his own house / family was not right with God either, so it seems David is madly pressing ahead with a line of reasoning to justify the establishment of his family line and tribe before God, rather than that of Ephraim, the largest tribe.

Psa 78:7

that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments-
David often takes strength from God's previous deliverances to cope with whatever he was now facing (Ps. 61:3). This may sound natural, but in fact it isn't; because we are inclined to forget the great things He has done for us, as Israel did in the desert.

Psa 78:8

and might not be as their fathers-
To condemn and differ from your fathers was a radically counter-cultural position in David's world.

A stubborn and rebellious generation-
The "stubborn and rebellious" were to have been disciplined and rejected from the family (s.w. Dt. 21:18). But lack of obedience to this led to the attitudes of youth becoming the hallmark of an entire generation, as we see today. The grace of it all is seen in how God gave gifts and His Spirit to His people "to the rebellious also" (Ps. 68:18 s.w.), that He might dwell among them. Israel both before (Is. 1:23; Jer. 5:23) and after the exile (Is. 65:2) were rebellious. David's hope for his natural seed wasn't realized.

A generation that didn't make their hearts loyal, whose spirit was not steadfast with God-
The heart and the spirit are clearly paralleled here. The gift of a holy spirit is therefore the gift of a psychology, an attitude of heart, which is what we all so desperately need. Yet here, the essence of their rebellion was in their hearts. "Steadfast" is s.w. "established" in the promise to David about his kingdom being established by God (2 Sam. 7:16). The idea is that they did not allow their heart or spirit to be established / stabilized by God; the same word is translated "nurse" (2 Sam. 4:4). He is willing and eager to confirm the hearts of men; but that generation didn't allow Him to do so. The word is also translated 'to have faith', and in this sense faith is also not of ourselves, but is the gift of God to those who want it (Eph. 2:8).

Psa 78:9

The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle-
This could refer to some "children of Ephraim" who tried to leave Egypt independently, trusting in their own bows. That suggestion fits the chronology here. The idea is that they had the weapons, the potential, but turned back. It is our wasting of Divine potential which is indeed so grievous. But what is the historical reference? There appears to be none, unless Ephraim's general failure to drive out the Canaanites is referenced. But that was true for many of the tribes. There is a reference to some individual Ephraimites being defeated by the Philistines of Gath (1 Chron. 7:20-22). David instead gloriously conquered the Philistine of Gath, Goliath. I suggest that David is slanting history to present Ephraim as far more sinful than Judah, to justify his moving the ark from Shiloh in Ephraim (Josh. 18:1) to Jerusalem in Judah. He is painting Ephraim's failures as of a far worse nature than those of Judah and the rest of Israel- in order to establish his point, that he and his tribe had been chosen. Twisting the incident in 1 Chron. 7 as if it involved all Ephraim is typical of this. Indeed God did choose David and his line. But that didn't need David or Solomon to justify it by presenting themselves as righteous and the rest of Israel as so deeply unworthy and sinful. Likewise our salvation is by the grave of Divine election, but that doesn't mean that we have to pull down others to demonstrate our own worthiness.

The observation has been made that :8 and :10 flow on together and the rhythm of the passage is interrupted by :9; as if this history of God's grace with His people has been used by David or Solomon and had had the rhetoric against Ephraim crudely inserted into it at various points, in order to justify David's line. See on :17.

Psa 78:10

They didn't keep God's covenant, and refused to walk in His law-
This is presented as at variance with the lead characteristic of the seed of Abraham, which was to keep and teach the covenant to others (:5); and which David is insisting he and his line will do.

Psa 78:11

They forgot His doings, His wondrous works that He had shown them-
The contrast is with :4, where the true seed of Abraham are to declare "His wondrous works" and not forget them. Our attitudes to teaching God's ways to our children and others remains the litmus test of being within the covenant (see on :5).

Psa 78:12

He did marvellous things in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan-
LXX "In the plain of Tanes", which was the capital of Egypt, where Pharaoh's palace was, where Moses and Aaron did the miracles. The "fathers" have been defined in :8 as disbelieving. Yet despite this, they experienced miracles and deliverance (:13). Again the idea is that the rebellious were delivered by grace, and the mystery of history is that God has repeatedly saved the undeserving.

Psa 78:13

He split the sea, and caused them to pass through. He made the waters stand as a heap-
LXX "he made the waters to stand as in a bottle". This great deliverance looks forward to Christian baptism (1 Cor. 10:1). This great salvation was to the "fathers" (:12), who have been defined in :8 as disbelieving. So this then refers to a salvation by grace. It was of God's 'causing' that they passed through; for they were fearful and seemed to prefer death or return to Egypt, than passing through the waters. Our salvation likewise is of God's causing (see on :8).

Psa 78:14

In the daytime He also led them with a cloud, and all night with a light of fire-
I suggest that again we have a pairing of the Psalms, here of Psalms 77 and 78. The salvation history outlined in Ps. 78 is a development of this theme of Ps. 77. Hence Ps. 77:20 ends with Israel being "led" as a flock, and Ps. 78 continues this theme (Ps. 78:14,53 s.w.).

The Israelites often remained encamped for long periods. But all through every day and every night, they were still being "led". Just as we are after our Red Sea baptism into Christ; even in those periods of life where we appear static.

There is a lengthy description of the events of the exodus; 42 verses out of 72 talk about it. But there is a pointed lack of mention of Moses. There are other psalms which recount the exodus events, and they all mention Moses- who features so prominently in the record in the book of Exodus (Ps. 77:21; 103:7; 105:26; 106:16,23,32; 99:6). We note how God is described as hitting the rock in :15, when it was Moses who did this. Possibly this is because Ps. 78 wants to emphasize God's personal relationship with His people without any mediator. For this was the promise of the new covenant. No teacher of God's laws would be required, for God Himself would write them in the hearts of His people. And I suggested on :4 that one aim of this psalm is to get the exiles to a spiritual point where they were able to accept the new covenant. Another reason for the exclusion of Moses may be that the psalm concludes with the elevation of David and his line; quite possibly with the implication of "David" as the Messiah in his line, who was to totally eclipse Moses.

Psa 78:15

He split rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as out of the depths- The generosity of God to those disbelieving 'fathers' is emphasized. They were fed to the full, and given abundant water, which tasted like cool water springing up from the depths of the earth. The splitting of the Red Sea (:13 s.w.)continued in essence, with the daily splitting of the rock, as it were, from which their water source flowed. God's redemptive action was not only seen in bringing us from the world (Egypt) to the waters of baptism and onto the Kingdom path; but that same activity is in fact a daily occurrence.

Note the principle of God manifestation. It was God who split the rock but Ex. 17:6 says it was Moses who did: “and you shall strike the rock”. See on :14.

Psa 78:16

He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers- The verbs in this section speak of the incessant activity of God; splitting, causing, bringing forth, leading, feeding, giving to drink. And this same level of hyperactivity is going in our lives as we are led towards the Kingdom after accepting baptism.

Psa 78:17

Yet they still went on sinning against Him, rebelling against the Most High in the desert-
The "they" in the context is Ephraim (:9). But these were the sins of the majority of Israel. So it would appear that David is painting Ephraim as bad as possible, blaming them for Israel's sins in the desert, in an attempt to justify his own kingdom of Judah. And yet as noted on :7, it could be argued that we have here in this Psalm a salvation history of Israel, into which has been inserted rhetoric against Ephraim. That rhetoric inserted in :9 then throws the rest of the Psalm out of kilter; because fairly obviously, we are reading here in this section of the general sins of Israel in the desert, rather than of Ephraim alone.

Psa 78:18

They put God to the test in their heart by asking food according to their lust-
The Psalms, along with the entire Biblical record, emphasize the importance of the heart. Their request for food was a testing of God in their hearts. Spiritual mindedness is of the essence; the theme of the spirit is therefore very major in the New Testament. But it reflects the emphasis of the Old Testament upon the huge significance of the human heart and thinking. This was in radical contrast to the way in which religions of the time focused purely upon the external.

Psa 78:19

Yes, they spoke against God. They said, Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?-
This happened to David when fleeing from Absalom, when a kind supporter gave David a feast in the wilderness, as he celebrates in Ps. 23. Perhaps a later hand [Solomon?] has included this in order to present David as the believer, compared to Ephraim.

Psa 78:20

Behold, He struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Will He provide flesh for His people?-
LXX "or prepare a table for his people". See on :19. The idea seems to be that they tested God (:18) by challenging Him to not merely produce food but a feast for them in the desert. Their argument was that producing gushing water from the rock was but a minor miracle; but could He produce flesh and bread? This was asked without faith (:23), not as a request, but as a reflection of their cynical lack of trust and faith. Despite the generosity of God being shown by the water gushing and overflowing. We think too of the super abundant provision of food by the Lord in the feeding miracles. Generosity is part of God's nature and it should be reflected in us too.

Psa 78:21

Therefore Yahweh heard, and was angry. A fire was kindled against Jacob, anger also went up against Israel-
The reference is to the burning of God's wrath at Taberah. If the "they" in the previous verses is intended to refer to Ephraim (as the flow of the grammar from :9 suggests it does), then David is trying to wrongly blame Israel's misfortunes upon Ephraim. This was an exaggeration and reflects David by all means marshalling all possible excuses for making his Judah the lead tribe rather than Ephraim.

Psa 78:22 because they didn't believe in God, and didn't trust in His salvation-
Although God opened the doors of Heaven to rain manna upon Israel, they "trusted not in his salvation". The manna, as in John 6, became a symbol of their salvation; and yet the repetitious ordinariness of it all meant they missed the point. Every time we read God's word, take again the bread of Heaven each week, the more familiar we are with it, the more likelihood there is that this can happen to us.

Psa 78:23

Yet He commanded the skies above, and opened the doors of heaven-
The "yet" continues the theme of God's grace. Although they didn't believe nor trust (:22), yet God poured His gifts upon them. The "command" was to the Angels, who produced the food (:25).

Psa 78:24

He rained down manna on them to eat, and gave them food from the sky-
LXX "The bread of heaven", a phrase clearly alluded to by the Lord Jesus concerning Himself, and used by Him to represent God's salvation. This was rained upon them; just as the water was abundant and the food fully satisfied them. This amazing outpouring of grace was given although they didn't believe nor trust (:22), and this was the background to God's gift of His Son, "the bread of heaven".

Psa 78:25

Man ate the bread of angels; He sent them food to the full-
See on :29. The bread was created by the Angels, who had been commanded to bring it for Israel (see on :23). But the word translated "angels" here is not *malak*. It rather means 'the mighty ones'. It parallels "food to the full"; they were given a feast, fit for the great and mighty. Such was God's grace to those who didn't believe in Him (:22) and mocked whether He could provide any more than free water (:21).

Psa 78:26

He caused the east wind to blow in the sky, by His power He guided the south wind-
The idea may be that the quails were blown in by a south easterly wind. He had likewise caused the east wind to operate in bringing locusts upon Egypt and in causing the miracle at the Red Sea. The Hebrew idea of "spirit" and "wind" is connected, and God makes His Angels winds (Ps. 104:4). Clearly He was using Angels to bring about these miracles with winds; see on :23.

Psa 78:27

He rained also flesh on them as the dust-
The raining down of quails was again typically generous, just as the water was abundant, the food fully satisfied them "to the full" (:25).

Winged birds as the sand of the seas-
Appropriate, seeing that the seed of Abraham were to be as the sand of the sea and dust of the land. Clearly there was here a reference to the primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham. It was always a case of 'now but not yet'; all God's plans for salvation have some primary fulfilment in this life.

Psa 78:28

He let them fall in the midst of their camp, around their dwelling places-
Yet again God's grace is emphasized, because the quail dropped right next to their tents. They just had to pick them up and cook them, rather than having to wander around the desert picking them up. And this was all for those who refused to trust and believe in Him (:22) and mocked whether He could provide any more than free water (:21).

Psa 78:29

So they ate, and were well filled; He gave them their own desire-
The complete satisfaction and filling of the Israelites was quite a theme (:25 also), looking forward to how the Lord's later feeding miracles left the people completely satisfied. It is a theme of the Bible that in essence, God gives men their own desires, just as the prodigal son was given what he wrongfully demanded. Here, Israel lusted (s.w. Num. 11:4) and God gave them what they lusted after. This is to point up the huge importance of our innermost desires, our heart, our dominant passions- being upon the things of God and His Kingdom. David could say that all his desire was for the things of God (s.w. Ps. 38:9; Is. 26:8). More than anything else we should desire to please Him

and be in His Kingdom. And all who thus love the Lord's appearing will be eternally with Him (2 Tim. 4:8).

Psa 78:30

They didn't turn from their cravings. Their food was yet in their mouths-
Those who lusted for meat were given it; yet "they were not estranged from their lust" (AV). Sin never satisfies. Giving in to temptation will not lead to the craving being permanently resolved. In fact they died before they had even swallowed the food. They didn't even manage to indulge their flesh before they died.

Psa 78:31

when the anger of God went up against them, killed some of their fattest, and struck down the young men of Israel-
Significantly, it was the "fattest" who complained about lack of food. God had not let them really suffer from lack of food. And it is those fat ones who are particularly recorded as being struck down. "Struck down" is often used in the sense of making to bow down in homage (s.w. Ps. 72:9; 95:6). Perhaps there is the hint that the younger ones repented.

Psa 78:32

For all this they still sinned, and didn't believe in His wondrous works-
Those "wondrous works" typically refer to God's saving miracles especially at the Red Sea. Despite being taught that God is for real, they refused to learn the lessons of their wonderful history. The problem was in their hearts, their attitude of mind deep within them. For Israel refused to be obedient, were stiff-necked, because they were "not *mindful* of Your wonders" (Neh. 9:17). There is clear evidence here that miracles alone do not lead to faith- something Pentecostalism needs to take more fully on board: "In spite of all this the people kept sinning; in spite of his miracles they did not trust him" (GNB).

Psa 78:33

Therefore He consumed their days in vanity, and their years in terror-
LXX "anxiety". That vanity and anxiety which fills the lives of those who don't want God is in fact given by Him. Again we see evidence of God's ability to work directly upon human hearts, positively [by the Holy Spirit] and [in this case] negatively.

Psa 78:34

When He slew them, then they inquired after Him; they relented and sought God earnestly-
This could refer to the time of the judges, but in :40 we are still as it were in the wilderness with Israel, so I suggest this refers to their occasional responses to God during the various judgments in the desert. But this earnest seeking of God was just for a moment as they faced judgment. For generally they did not seek Him (Rom. 3:11).

Psa 78:35

They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer-
As noted on :34, this was but a passing awareness; for the wilderness generation, and Israel generally, did not remember God as their redeemer. "The most high God" could suggest that they believed in many gods, but in their desperate moments, recognized Yahweh as the "most high" of them all. And this was why they did not permanently have Yahweh as their only rock. Let us remember that Israel carried the tabernacle of their god Remphan through the desert as well as that of Yahweh.

Psa 78:36

But they flattered Him with their mouth, and lied to Him with their tongue-
The language of flattery and deceit could suggest that God was so in love with them that He as it were restrained His omniscience, just as at times He restrains His omnipotence; in order to enter fully into relationship with His people, in real time (in human terms).

Psa 78:37

For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they faithful in His covenant-
Faithfulness to the covenant is here presented as a matter of the heart, rather than ritualistic obedience and assent to bullet points of theology. This was the stuff of the idol cults; Yahweh sought an intimate relationship with the hearts of His worshippers.

Psa 78:38

But He, being merciful, forgave iniquity, and didn't destroy them-
This verse is the essence of God. It is the middle of the 5896 lines of the Hebrew book of Psalms. It is the centre. The idea is that although they weren't penitent, He overlooked their sin. "Forgave" is the Hebrew *kaphar*, to cover, to make atonement. He surely did this by looking ahead to the atoning sacrifice of His Son. "Forgave iniquity" is the phrase used in the 70 weeks prophecy, when "reconcilliation for iniquity" could be made at the end of the exile (Dan. 9:24). Asaph was reminding the exiles that God had done this

before and was eager to do it again. There is no suggestion that He forgave them because they repented and remained penitent; to show mercy and forgive iniquity is what God is good at, it is part of His fundamental character intrinsic to His Name (Ex. 34:4-6). It was all of grace and love and desperate desire to save them.

Yes, many times He turned His anger away, and didn't stir up all His wrath-
This seems to suggest He Himself controlled His anger, Himself turning that anger away, rather than being like a pagan deity whose anger was appeased by blood sacrifice. God turned from His anger due to Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:12 s.w.), but this is not to say that He cannot in any case turn away His anger. Just as we may control our anger from within ourselves, or at other times we may do this because of the appeal of another to us, or because there is repentance from the one who provoked us. And there were times when this was the case with God (s.w. Num. 25:4; Josh. 7:26; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8). Most of the references to God's turning away His anger are because of some human action. Moses' and Daniel's intercession turned away His anger (Ex. 32:12; Dan. 9:16); the hanging up of the heads of the rebels turned away His anger (Num. 25:4); if Israel didn't take any spoil from an apostate city, God's anger would turn away (Dt. 13:17); the judgment and execution of Achan turned away His anger (Josh. 7:26); when Rehoboam humbled himself, God turned away His anger (2 Chron. 12:12); making a covenant with Yahweh, repenting and not being stiffnecked turned away His anger (2 Chron. 29:10; 30:8; Jer. 4:8; Jonah 3:9); divorcing foreign wives turned away His anger (Ezra 10:14). But in Ps. 78:38 we have the observation that very often, God turns away His anger anyway. Hos. 11:9; 14:4 says that He will do this "because I am God and not man", because He loves His people. We have a special insight into God internally turning away His own anger in Is. 63:11 "Then He remembered the days of old, Moses and His people, saying, Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His holy spirit in their midst?". The same idea of Him "many times" relenting is found in Ps. 106:43-45: "Many times He delivered them, but they were rebellious… Nevertheless He regarded their distress… He remembered for them His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His graces".

Psa 78:39

He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and doesn't come again-
The impression is that God forgave them not because they repented- but because of His compassion, His remembering of His covenant with them ['remember' is often used of God in a covenant context], and simply because He recognized the frailty of their humanity. In other words, He forgave them because of His grace. We dare not allow this wonderful fact to work in us any sense of ease with sin, nor any shrugging off of the

importance of repentance. But all the same, the grace of God is wonderful, and this grace is what we must show to others. And this means, forgiving without demanding specific repentance. Family life is full of the lesson that this is how we have to live if we are to live in peace with both God and men.

The spirit ["wind"] in fact returns to God who gave it. So we enquire what exactly is the "spirit" in view? Rashi suggests it refers to how "the evil inclination is hidden in their heart. That is a spirit that goes away when they die, and that spirit does not return to them in the world to come. When they are resurrected, the evil inclination will have no control over them".

Psa 78:40

How often they rebelled against Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert!- God was and is so sensitive, hence He can be "grieved", broken hearted (s.w. Gen. 6:6), because of the behaviour of otherwise insignificant little people on the face of this planet. This extreme sensitivity is a function of His intense love. In the desert, Israel grieved God in that they grieved His Holy Spirit (s.w. Is. 63:10). This is quoted about us in the New Testament (Eph. 4:30). God wishes us to be saved, and the work of His Spirit is propelling us towards salvation. But we can resist it, and thereby we grieve the very saving heart of God.

Psa 78:41

They turned around and put God to the test, and provoked the Holy One of Israel-

Heb. 'they asked for a sign', referring to how they asked God for a sign in Ex. 17: 7: “Is the Lord in our midst or not?”.

God can do anything, He is omnipotent. But He chooses to limit His omnipotence in order to allow man total freewill. Therefore effectively, how far God will fulfil His purpose depends upon how far we are obedient to Him. Thus Israel limited the Holy One of Israel (Ps. 78:41 AV). Only at the return of the Lord Jesus will God 'take to Himself His great power' (Rev. 11:17)- which language of itself suggests that God has chosen to limit His omnipotence for the moment.

Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. It is this, an Asaph Psalm, that warns Israel about the danger of limiting what God is potentially prepared to do for His people. The refusal of the exiles to participate in the restoration was the parade example of this.

Psa 78:42

They didn't remember His hand, nor the day when He redeemed them from the adversary-
This is in contrast to how the true seed of Abraham were to remember the Red Sea deliverance and teach it to their children (:4,5). Israel kept their Passovers throughout the wilderness years, one would assume- but they never remembered the day that God brought them out of Egypt (Ps. 78:42)- although notice how although Israel didn't remember God, yet He remembered them in His grace (Ps. 106:7, 45). We can read of the cross, of the utter certainty of our salvation, sing and speak of it; and yet totally fail to personally realize the powerful imperatives which abound in this wonderful news.

We can so easily be like Israel, who (presumably, under Moses) kept the Passover throughout their forty years in the wilderness; but never in all that time remembered the day that the Lord brought them forth from Egypt (Ps. 78:42). Yet this was what the Passover was intended for, to remind them of that day of their redemption! They kept the Passover, but never really grasped what it was all about; they never really remembered that day of salvation, they forgot the wonder of their redemption and the future direction which it should have imparted to their lives. And so we can so easily break bread without due attention to the *real* import of the cross.

Psa 78:43

how He set His signs in Egypt, His wonders in the field of Zoan-
LXX "In the plain of Tanes", which was the capital of Egypt, where Pharaoh's palace was, where Moses and Aaron did the miracles. The "wonders" were not simply the miracles of the plagues, but the fact that this was done to deliver "the fathers" (:12) who have been defined in :8 as disbelieving. Yet despite this, they experienced miracles and deliverance (:13). Again the idea is that the rebellious were delivered by grace, and the mystery of history is that God has repeatedly saved the undeserving. The plagues on Egypt were plagues on Egypt's gods; and yet Ez. 20 says that the Israelites carried the gods of Egypt with them through the Red Sea. And they asked Moses to leave them alone and let them remain in Egypt. So the grace of the plagues upon Egypt was that despite all this, God still saved His people from Egypt. When that wasn't what they really wanted.

Psa 78:44

He turned their rivers and streams into blood so that they could not drink-
The plagues upon Egypt are cited here in the context of a history of Israel which emphasizes His grace to His people. This is the lens through which we must view the plagues upon Egypt. They were intended to be part of God's saving plan, both for His

people and also for those Egyptians who were provoked by them to accept His great salvation.

Psa 78:45

He sent among them swarms of beetles, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them-
As noted on Exodus, the plagues were all aimed at different gods of Egypt. Those of the frogs and beetles were typical of this. The intention of the plagues was to deconstruct the entire religion of Egypt, and bring her people to accept Yahweh's great salvation; to quit Egypt along with His people, and travel towards His Kingdom.

Psa 78:46

He gave also their increase to the caterpillar, and their labour to the locust-
The loss of the results of human labour are often used to bring people to accept *God's* saving work, which is by grace and not human works. See on :44. This principle works to this day. The man who spends his life building his house and finds it burnt down overnight… may thereby be provoked to turn to God and *His* works and salvation.

Psa 78:47

He destroyed their vines with hail, their sycamore fig trees with frost-
See on :45,46. The Hebrew for "frost" could also refer to some insect plague. If literally "frost", then we have the picture of extremely low temperatures hitting the Egyptians but not the Israelites, just as there was light for the Israelites but darkness for the Egyptians, and hail in some areas but not in others where the Israelites were. The message was that Yahweh was in complete control of the elements, and can single out individuals to spare from His judgments.

Sycamores being destroyed is an idea we only find in Is. 9:19, describing them being destroyed in the siege of Samaria. But quite likely the Babylonians did the same to Jerusalem, Lachish and other cities in Judah. The psalmist would then be reflecting that Judah and Israel had suffered what Egypt did; but it was all under God's control.

Psa 78:48

He gave over their livestock also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts-
See on :45,46. God "gave over" or 'shut up unto' the Egyptians to judgment (:48,50), but the same word is used of how He did the same to His people Israel (:62). They were judged for acting as the Egyptians in their hearts. Likewise the unspiritual and worldly amongst the new Israel will be "judged / destroyed [along] with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

Psa 78:49

He threw on them the fierceness of His anger, wrath, indignation, trouble, and a band of angels of evil-
LXX "a message of evil angels". All the Angels in the sense of supernatural beings are obedient to God. There is no Biblical division of Angels into sinful ones and good ones. Angels are immortal (Lk. 20:35,36), and seeing as the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), this means that they cannot sin. However, "evil" in the sense of disaster is from God (Is. 45:5-7; Am. 3:6). And it seems this work of bringing disaster or "evil" is specifically in the hands of Angels.

The Angels never affect our freewill, but nevertheless provide the necessary arrangement of circumstances to encourage us to do God's will, and affecting the lives of unbelievers to this end too. In order for unbelievers to present the necessary trials to us in order to bring this about, the Angels harden the hearts of these people. The plagues were due to Pharaoh's heart being hardened by God (Ex. 4:21)- i.e. by the Angels of evil. Ex. 9:14 speaks of the plagues being sent upon Pharaoh's heart, and here we have Angels of evil being sent. Angels affect human hearts- for good and bad, operationalizing the upward or downward spirals into which human beings must inevitably enter.

1 Cor. 10:10 speaks of an Angel called “the destroyer” who brought about Israel’s punishments in the wilderness. And yet Ps. 78:49 speaks of these as being executed by “A band of Angels of evil”. Likewise Rev. 9:14 has one Angel controlling others, perhaps as our guardian Angel has control over many others to effect his plans for us. The one Angel had control over others, Angels specifically used to bring evil upon those whom God rejects. It may be they will be used again in the judgment of the last day. Or it could be that ‘Angels’ in Ps. 78:49 is an intensive plural, and the AV reading is correct: “by sending evil angels...”. The one great Angel of evil is “the destroyer” of 1 Cor. 10:10. This could imply that some of the references to a “Satan” who brings disaster, as in Job, refer to one specific Angel who does these things, or co-ordinates them.

Psa 78:50

He made a path for His anger, He didn’t spare their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence-
God would have spared them had they identified with Israel and followed the Passover ritual, trusting in the blood of the lamb. See on :48. The idea may be that unlike supposed angry deities and the wrath of man, God's wrath was channeled and directed

in a specific way. The death of the firstborn was the specific path or channel for His wrath. And it was intended to be creative, leading towards repentance.

Psa 78:51

and struck all the firstborn in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tents of Ham-
The death of the firstborn was because either the individuals or their parents refused to be obedient to God's offer of salvation. It was therefore a result of human sin; and part of "sin" is that it hurts others. "The chief of their strength" is another way of saying 'the firstborn' (s.w. Gen. 49:3). The idea is that human strength was to be taken away, because Egypt was not trusting in God's strength. But God did the same to His own "strength", His people (:61).

Mizraim or Egypt was the descendant of Ham (Gen. 10:6; Ps. 105:23,27; 106:22). There may be an allusion to Khem, one of the main Egyptian gods. For the purpose of all the plagues was to demonstrate that Yahweh was the only God, and the Egyptian gods had no real existence.

Psa 78:52

But He led forth His own people like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock-
Ps. 78:52 and Is. 63:9,11 describe God as leading Israel out of Egypt as an obedient flock of sheep, suggesting that they were all accounted righteous then, by grace; even though Ezekiel says they left Egypt still carrying the gods of Egypt, and carried the tabernacle of Remphan as well as that of Yahweh. Similarly, Balaam said that at the Exodus God did "not behold iniquity in Jacob" (Num. 23:21,22).

Psa 78:53

He led them safely so that they weren't afraid, but the sea overwhelmed their enemies-
LXX "He guided them with hope", in that through the law of Moses He continually reminded them of how things would be in Canaan. They were afraid at the Red Sea; but they were counted righteous (see on :52), and so are described as being unafraid. We too are counted righteous at baptism. The intended lack of fear was a psychological miracle, the result of the gift of God's Spirit in the human spirit. But they *did* fear (Ex. 14:10-12). Surely we must read in some conditions here- God's care for them was such that they need not have feared, but they failed to discern His care and power and therefore they *did* fear.

Psa 78:54

He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased- "The mountain" usually refers to mount Zion, where the sanctuary was. But the idea is that the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham was to be as equally holy. "This mountain" suggests that this Psalm was to be recited in the sanctuary services on mount Zion. Ex. 15:17 envisaged all the redeemed Israel as dwelling in the mountain of the sanctuary. The "purchase" is elsewhere stated as being of the *people*, not the land or sanctuary itself (s.w. Dt. 32:6; Ps. 74:2; Is 1:3). But David is unduly focusing upon the issue of the sanctuary. It could be argued from 1 Chron. 21:24 that David had "purchased" mount Zion (s.w.), and he likes to think that in fact God has done this. But his obsession with building a temple there was initially rebuked by God.

Psa 78:55

He also drove out the nations before them, allotted them for an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents-
The Hebrew implies He made them take their inheritance. But here we have a case of potential enablement; for the tribes didn't inherit much of the land allotted despite God willing it upon them. Just as many whom God wishes to inherit the Kingdom will not take their inheritance because they refused to believe Him and were distracted by the immediate and secular rather than focusing upon the spiritual.

Psa 78:56

Yet they put to the test and rebelled against the Most High God, and didn't keep His testimonies-
This appears to refer to their departure from Yahweh at the time of the Judges. The same words are used of their testing and rebellion in the desert. This was the overall character of Israel.

Psa 78:57

but turned back, and dealt treacherously like their fathers-
LXX "Broke covenant". The reference seems to be to their unfaithfulness at the time of the Judges.

They were turned aside like a deceitful bow-
In the very context in which we read that Israel "limited the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 78:41), we find Israel described as "a deceitful bow" (Ps. 78:57). In whose hands was that bow? Surely in God's. In the same way as the quality of the bow limits the power of

the archer, and causes hurt to him if it backfires on him, so were Israel to God; and so we are to Him. There is the sense here that God's huge strength was focused upon Israel, but they were a dysfunctional bow, leaving Him hurt and disappointed that His exertions had only backfired.

Psa 78:58

For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their engraved images-
The language of provocation and God noticing and becoming angry (:59) is on one hand inappropriate to the God who sees and knows all things. Yet it seems to me that just as He at times limits His omnipotence, so He limits His omniscience. This is in order to enter into legitimate, real time [from our human viewpoint] relationship with man.

Psa 78:59

When God heard this, He was angry, and greatly abhorred Israel-
See on :58. Israel abhorred God's laws (s.w. Lev. 26:15,43) and therefore His abhorrence of them was appropriate. And yet by grace God did not "*utterly* abhor" Israel when He judged them (s.w. Lev. 26:44) but restored them. So He did not treat them as they treated Him; and in this again we see His abiding grace. But the psalmist chooses to ignore this grace, and claim that as a sign of that abhorrence He removed His "tent" from Shiloh to Jerusalem (:60,67,68). But I am inclined to see this as David's willful interpretation of what happened. For it is too much to say that God's abhorrence of Israel was just because Ephraim had sinned. They all sinned. And in any case, His abhorrence of them was not total and there was grace in the way that He did not abhor them as they did to Him. So it seems to me that the history is being twisted to blame Ephraim alone for all Israel's 'falling out' with God. Grace is overlooked. Judah's sin is likewise overlooked. And the ark went from Shiloh into captivity because all Israel had sinned, not just Ephraim. And its return to Kirjath Jearim and thence its coming to Zion was of David's doing rather than God's. God's abhorrence of "Israel" is defined as His abhorrence or 'rejection' (s.w.) of "Joseph" (:67). The history is being presented as if God's anger with "Israel" was in fact His anger with Joseph / Ephraim.

Psa 78:60

so that He forsook the tent of Shiloh, the tent which He placed among men- Possibly this is rather an over interpretation of the prophecies against Eli and Shiloh in 1 Sam. 4-7. Shiloh was in Ephraim (Josh. 18:1). It was David who moved the sanctuary from there to Jerusalem; but he is arguing that God did this, implying His shekinah glory / presence was withdrawn from Shiloh but reappeared once the sanctuary was established in

Jerusalem. It is hard to know the degree to which David is being an accurate historian, or over interpreting to suit his own narrative and justification of his own tribe, Judah.

David's mistaken interpretation seems to be corrected in Jer. 7:12-14; 26:6. There we learn that there was indeed some kind of physical structure built for the sanctuary at Shiloh, which was destroyed; although the historical records don't record this. But it was destroyed because "Israel" had sinned, and no blame is placed particularly upon Ephraim. And there is the repeated warning that the Jerusalem temple was no better than that in Shiloh and would likewise be destroyed. Yet David's vision here is that the Jerusalem sanctuary was going to last eternally (see on :69). Jeremiah is saying that in fact Judah were no better than Ephraim in the end.

There could be here the implication that the Angel was physically present in the tabernacle, and that God's displeasure was shown by this Angel literally being withdrawn. The shekinah glory associated with the Angel's presence was no longer seen. A number of other references support this idea of an Angel physically being present in the tabernacle / temple, and therefore being the source of the glory which sometimes shone forth; 1 Chron. 15 and Ps. 68 describe the entrance of the ark into Jerusalem in terms of the Angelic march through the wilderness at the Exodus, thus connecting the Ark with the Angels. See on 1 Chron. 13:6; Ex. 25:8; 33:3; Lev. 4:17; Num. 14:42; Ecc. 5:1-7; 2 Chron. 31:2; Is. 8:18; Mic. 1:3; Dan. 8:11; Ez. 8:4; Mt. 23:21.

Psa 78:61

and delivered His strength into captivity, His glory into the adversary's hand-
"His strength... glory" is paralleled with "His people" (:62), although David also has in view His glory manifest over the ark going into captivity with the Philistines. See on :51. Frederick Buechner remarked upon the "folly of preaching": "to choose for His holy work in the world... lamebrains and misfits and nitpickers and holier-than-thous and stuffed shirts and odd ducks and egomaniacs...". Yet weak Israel are described as God's "strength", the channel through which His strength would be shown to the nations; and they failed Him.

Psa 78:62

He also gave His people over to the sword-
God "gave over" or 'shut up unto' the Egyptians to judgment (:48,50), but the same word is used of how He did the same to His people Israel (:62). They were judged for acting as the Egyptians in their hearts. Likewise the unspiritual and worldly amongst the new Israel will be "judged / destroyed [along] with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32).

And was angry with His inheritance-
There is a mutuality between God and man. God and His Kingdom are our inheritance (:55); but we are His inheritance. A man's inheritance was the essence of Himself, all He had in the world. And this is how we are to Him.

Psa 78:63

Fire devoured their young men, their young women had no wedding song-
This Psalm seems to conclude with the time of David, but perhaps this has been edited to make it relevant to the exiles (as :64). For this is the language of Lamentations about what happened at the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem. The allusion is to the young men who were Job's sons being devoured by fire, representing Divine judgment.

Psa 78:64

Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows couldn't weep-
This is again the language of Lamentations about the Babylonian desolation; see on :63. This doubtless happened at the time of the Judges, but there is no particular record of the priests being destroyed. Although the book of Judges records the deep apostacy of the priesthood at that time. The idea may be that the Levitical priesthood ended and Israel were rejected as God's people; but God forged ahead with His plan of salvation through Judah and David. The implication being, that the Messiah-Priest would arise from the tribe of Judah, and enable a new people of God to still exist and be saved. So it is not so much the historical David who is in view at the end of this psalm; for he was long dead by the time the priests were destroyed by the Babylonians. Rather is "David" referred to as the Priest-Messiah who could have arisen had they accepted the new covenant at the restoration: "they shall serve Yahweh their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up to them" (Jer. 31:9). "I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely" (Jer. 23:5).

Psa 78:65

Then the Lord awakened as one out of sleep, like a mighty man who shouts by reason of wine-
We have here language which we may think inappropriate being used to describe and express the sudden, violent awakening of God to judgment. And we wonder whether David is really correct to suggest God was as it were asleep and inactive whilst the ark was not with Israel; for the next verse seems to speak about God's rescue of the ark from the Philistines. David often expresses in the Psalms how he was just as close to God far from the sanctuary as when present in it. He often speaks of how he actually lived in the wilderness in the shadow of the cherubic wings, with God's glory above him

and the blood of atonement as it were beneath him on the mercy seat. But all that is rather forgotten in his obsession with the sanctuary being literally in Jerusalem, in Judah, and the rejection of Ephraim.

Psa 78:66

He struck His adversaries backward, He put them to a perpetual reproach-
The Hebrew is as in the AV- He smote them in the private parts. This refers to how the ark was taken from Shiloh in Ephraim into the land of the Philistines, who were smitten in their private parts with tumours (1 Sam. 5:6); but then the ark was returned, not to Shiloh in Ephraim, but to Kirjath Jearim in Judah, and thence to Jerusalem in Judah. But the question for us is the degree to which God ordered this transferal of the ark from Shiloh to Jerusalem; or whether David manipulated it that way, and God went along with it.

Psa 78:67

Moreover He rejected the tent of Joseph-
God's abhorrence of "Israel" is defined as His abhorrence or 'rejection' (s.w.) of "Joseph" (:59). The history is being presented as if God's anger with "Israel" was in fact His anger with Joseph / Ephraim. See on Ps. 80:1; 81:5.

And didn't choose the tribe of Ephraim- This claims that God did not choose Ephraim- whereas Jacob did (Gen. 48:14). The implication could well be that even at the end of his life, Jacob's choice of Ephraim over Manasseh reflected some sort of weakness, a being out of step with God. This attitude that *he* could bring about the fulfillment of God's promises through his own efforts was the outcome of Jacob's self-righteousness. The blessing of the firstborn came upon Joseph, and Jacob had chosen Ephraim, Joseph's son, as the one who should effectively carry this blessing of the firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1,2; Gen. 48:1). Ephraim marched closest to the ark (Num. 2:18-24). Yet there seems no specific statement that God rejected Ephraim in favour of Judah.

The implication of the argument is that this rejection of Ephraim and choosing of Judah happened when God 'awoke' and destroyed His enemies (:65,66). But it is hard to locate this historically. It would seem that David is again guilty of over interpretation of some unrecorded victory, in order to justify his own tribe. See on :59.

Psa 78:68

but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which He loved-
David clearly loved mount Zion and the sanctuary there, pining for it in so many of his psalms of exile. But he seems to transfer his love for Zion onto God. This is a very

common failure of men, to create God after their own image and likeness rather than accepting Him solely for who He reveals Himself to be. See on :59.

Psa 78:69

He built His sanctuary like the heights, like the earth which He has established forever-
The contrast is with God's "tent" in Shiloh that He abandoned. But the sanctuary was later destroyed, it was not in fact "established forever". See on :60. Again we see David dogmatically imagining that the future building of a sanctuary would be sanctioned by God to the point that God would be the builder. And therefore it would be eternal. He uses the prophetic perfect to describe what was yet future as having already happened. But God's response to David's desire to build a temple was that this was not at all what He wished.

Psa 78:70

He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds-
This was indeed the case; but the Divine choice of David didn't have to mean that He had thereby rejected Ephraim and Shiloh, and considered Judah to be His righteous, premier tribe. It seems that David and Solomon, or whoever authored the Psalm, was slanting history to defend and justify Judah and the Davidic line, and at times over interpreting. The Psalm has been all about Israel's sin and God's amazing grace. Perhaps this is the context in which we now read the conclusion, stating that God rejected the tribe of Joseph as a kingly tribe and instead chose Judah and David. His choice of David, and abiding faithfulness to him, is really a parade example of grace.

Psa 78:71

from following the ewes that have their young, He brought him to be the shepherd of Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance-
See on :72. This is the language used of the Messianic seed who could have arisen at the restoration, and which was ultimately realized in the Lord Jesus (Is. 40:11). The allusion is clearly to Gen. 49:24, which says that Joseph (and therefore his son Ephraim) was to be shepherded by the God of Jacob. Whilst all David says here is true as far as it goes, he is always subtly arguing that he has been chosen to lead Ephraim and "Joseph". See on Ps. 80:1. Solomon's Proverbs tend to do the same thing; inspired truth in themselves, and yet also clearly written by Solomon with a view to justifying himself and the Davidic line against his potential competitors for the throne.

Psa 78:72

So he was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands-
There is an intentional ambiguity as to whether the "shepherd" in view is God or David (:70). The idea seems to be that David was Israel's shepherd on God's behalf. As noted on :71, we sense that this is praising David for his skilful leading of Israel, as if he was to be accepted as the unquestioned ruler, and all competition was to be discounted. David's heart was not consistently of integrity, as we see in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah; it was only by grace that David was counted like this (s.w. 1 Kings 9:4). God did indeed give his son Solomon "understanding" (s.w. "skillfulness", 1 Kings 4:29).

PSALMS CHAPTER 79

Psa 79:1

A Psalm by Asaph-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that most of the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions. However, Ps. 79 is clearly relevant to the Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem and may well have been written especially concerning that. If it was written originally by David, it would have been very heavily rewritten. Parts of it are very similar to Jeremiah's words (see on :7) and there are allusions to his Lamentations, so it could be that Jeremiah either wrote it or appropriated it, although it was performed by the clan of Asaph.

God, the nations have come into Your inheritance, they have defiled Your holy temple, they have laid Jerusalem in heaps-
The "inheritance" may refer specifically to the land of Judah. But the argument of the psalmist seems to disregard the fact that the prophets had clearly stated that God had

sent the nations into the land; and the temple was defiled by them in response to the way that Judah had themselves defiled the temple. Micah had used the very same word in saying that Jerusalem would become heaps (Mic. 3:12 "They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. Her leaders judge for bribes, and her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money: yet they lean on Yahweh and say, Isn't Yahweh in the midst of us? No disaster will come on us. Therefore Zion for your sake will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will become heaps of rubble"; Jer. 26:18). Yet there seems shocked outrage when it actually happened. See on :13.

Psa 79:2

They have given the dead bodies of Your servants to be food for the birds of the sky, the flesh of Your saints to the beasts of the land-
"The beast" in the Bible refers to the neighbouring nations of Judah (:12) who come to judge her. The "saints" refers not so much to the righteous, but to God's people Israel who are His set apart people. The symbology of this verse is used in this sense in Revelation; these things are to be fulfilled on a far worse scale in the latter day desolation of Jerusalem.

Psa 79:3

Their blood they have shed like water around Jerusalem, there was no one to bury them-
Again the lament seems to forget that this was what the prophets had predicted would happen because of all the blood shed in Jerusalem and around it by the apostate people of Judah, especially in their offerings of their own children to their gods.

Psa 79:4

We have become a reproach to our neighbours, a scoffing and derision to those who are around us-
This again was exactly as God so repeatedly warned would happen. But instead of acceptance of this fulfilment of prophecy and repentance, there is simply a sustained appeal for God to remove the promised consequence of their sin. And this is how we can all tend to be; wanting the problems and consequences removed, whilst in denial of the fact that they have come about as a result of sin, and have a far wider context than we care to see.

Psa 79:5

How long, Yahweh? Will You be angry forever?-
Instead of accepting that His anger had a reason and purpose, the psalmist simply

wants the consequence of sin removed; as noted on :4, there is no hint at repentance. The prophetic answer to the question "How long?" was clearly 'When you repent'.

Will Your jealousy burn like fire?-
The Hebrew word translated "zeal" in the context of God's zeal for us (Is. 9:7) really means the jealousy which flares up in a man for a woman (the same word is in Num. 5:14,15; Prov. 6:34; Song 8:6 etc.). That jealousy burning like fire (Ps. 79:5) is His passion for us His people; even if as here, it is reflected in His anger with His cruelly unfaithful people. He is a jealous God in His zeal for us; and therefore any other relationships with the things of this world cannot be contemplated by us. That zeal of God will be poured out upon us at the second coming, resulting in a consummation with Him as the wife of His covenant (Is. 42:13,14; 64:1).

Psa 79:6

Pour out Your wrath on the nations that don't know You, on the kingdoms that don't call on Your name-
The continual desire for "vengeance" (:10,12) is out of step with the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ez. 33:11), but wishes all to come to repentance. But repentance is not given any great stress in these psalms. Vengeance and immediate removal of the consequences of sin are in central place.

Psa 79:7

for they have devoured Jacob, and destroyed his homeland-
The same words as in Jer. 10:25, supporting the suggestion made on :1 that Jeremiah may have written this Psalm. That their homeland would be "destroyed" was the clear agreement they had made in accepting covenant with Yahweh; for the same word is used there of the consequence of breaking the covenant (Lev. 26:22,31,32 etc.). Judah had made their own land desolate / destroyed (s.w. Jer. 12:11). It was Yahweh who had desolated the land (s.w. Lam. 1:13; Ez. 20:26). Rather like David in his psalms of the Absalom period, there is a deep desire for the promised consequence of sin to be removed, without referencing repentance and guilt.

Psa 79:8

Don't hold the iniquities of our forefathers against us; let Your tender mercies speedily meet us, for we are in desperate need-
"Remember not against us former iniquities" implies they just wanted God to forget whatever issues He had with them. This is not an expression of repentance. Ezekiel

repeatedly labours the point that the exiles are not suffering for the sins of their fathers, but for their own sins. And yet the psalmist apparently ignores this, and seems to use this idea as a preface for the general plea for "forgiveness" which follows in :9. But that plea is hardly repentance when "our sins" have just been defined as those of their fathers, which God apparently wrongly counts to them; according to the psalmist.

Psa 79:9

Help us, God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name. Deliver us and forgive our sins-
As noted on :8, this is not much of a plea of repentance, because "our sins" have been defined in :8 as not their sins, but those of their fathers- which the psalmist accuses God of wrongly holding against them. The LXX uses the word translated “propitiation” in the NT with reference to how God forgave / propitiated for Israel’s sins for His Name’s sake (Ex. 32:14; Ps. 79:9). God did not forgive only once the red blood of His Son was offered; He forgave anyway, as part of His Name, His essential personality, which is so deeply forgiving. He is no pagan deity who requires to see red blood of human sacrifice before forgiving. The Lord's death was therefore largely to persuade us of how serious God is in His project for our personal salvation. He commended His love toward us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, His Son died for the ungodly, the just for the unjust.

For Your name’s sake-
The Yahweh Name was linked with the Messiah: King of the Jews. The Name was declared in the Lord’s death, as He had foretold (Jn. 17:26). Forgiveness of sins is through baptism into the Name (Acts 2:38), as even in OT times forgiveness was for the sake of the Name (Ps. 79:9). And yet through the cross and blood of Christ is forgiveness made possible. His blood and death therefore was the supreme declaration of God’s Name; through His cross the grace and forgiveness, love, salvation and judgment implicit in the Name was all enabled and revealed in practice.

Psa 79:10

Why should the nations say, Where is their God? Let it be known among the nations, before our eyes, that vengeance for Your servants’ blood is being poured out-
They are asking God to forgive them and get over His problem with their sin, so that their national pride be preserved. This isn't repentance. The prophetic intention was that the restoration of Jerusalem and judgment of her abusers would lead the nations to know God, i.e. to come into relationship with Him. The Psalmist is arguing that the desolate state of Jerusalem is in fact an invitation to denial of Yahweh's existence, an encouragement to atheism. But whilst there is a mention of repentance in :9, the deep concern of the psalmist is for vengeance upon the Babylonians, even asking for them to be punished seven times more than what they had done to Judah (:12). This fails to factor in the fact that they were God's 'servants', sent by Him to do what they did. The

pouring out of blood was in fact what they had done, in pouring out the blood of their children to Baals. The desire for "vengeance" is out of step with the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but wishes all to come to repentance. But repentance is not given any great stress in these psalms. Vengeance and immediate removal of the consequences of sin are in central place.

Psa 79:11

Let the sighing of the prisoner come before You. According to the greatness of Your power, preserve those who are sentenced to death-
This misrepresents their position in Babylon. They weren't prisoners nor sighing and desperate to be released. When they were under Cyrus, most chose to remain. They were wealthy and prosperous, as we see in the book of Esther. The restoration prophecies of Isaiah offer freedom for the prisoners, the exiles, and the lifting of their death sentence. But the reality was that the majority of the exiles chose to remain within their "prison" in exile. The book of Esther concludes with the Jews wealthy and prosperous there, not at all perceiving that Babylon / Persia was a prison cell, in spiritual terms.

Psa 79:12

Pay back to our neighbours seven times into their lap their reproach with which they have reproached You, Lord-
This perspective rather fails to appreciate the repeated prophetic teaching that Israel were to be judged and Jerusalem destroyed because of their sins; and all that was done to Jerusalem by the invaders had been done to it in spiritual terms by Judah themselves. God had judged His people less than their iniquities deserved (Ezra 9:13); if that had been perceived, then surely it would have militated against this request for the punishers to be punished seven times more than they punished Judah.

Psa 79:13

So we, Your people and sheep of Your pasture, will give You thanks forever. We will praise You forever, to all generations-
Israel's praise should surely have been of God's grace towards them in restoration, rather than for repaying their neighbours seven times more than what they had done to Israel (:12). This is not to say that the record of these Psalms is not inspired; but there is a difference between inspiration and revelation [a "Thus says the Lord"] . All the Bible is inspired, but not all is direct revelation of truth; thus the mocking of Yahweh by Rabshakeh is recorded and that record is inspired, but that is hardly revelation of Divine truth.

It is one thing to take comfort in a concept, in this case, of being God's sheep with Him as shepherd. It is another to live this out in practice. Part of the new covenant offered the exiles was that God would be their shepherd and regather them (Ez. 34:11), seeing their own shepherds had failed them. But instead of eagerly responding to the shepherd's voice through the prophets, they found fault with their wonderful shepherd. And so the regathering offered in Ez. 34 didn't happen at the restoration, because the sheep refused the voice of the Divine shepherd. God's shepherding of the exiles back to Zion from Babylon was effected through Cyrus: "Saying of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure', even saying of Jerusalem, 'She will be built;' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'" (Is. 44:28). But the exiles were unenthusiastic about the decree of Cyrus, they generally remained in Babylon, and those who did return didn't build the foundations of the temple according to the plans given them in Ezekiel. And thus the exiles refused God's shepherding.

The Asaph psalms seem all interconnected. Ps. 79 concludes with Israel as God's sheep; Ps. 80:1 begins with calling God the shepherd of Israel. Although these psalms lament God's apparent inaction, there is the trust that although apparently stuck in Babylon, they were being led as sheep. Just as although Israel remained encamped at various points in the wilderness for long periods (Num. 33), they are described as being constantly led day and night by the pillars of cloud and fire. This speaks powerfully to those feeling trapped in life.

PSALMS CHAPTER 80

Psa 80:1

For the Chief Musician. To the tune of The Lilies of the Covenant. A Psalm by Asaph- This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again

suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. Psalm 80 is a psalm of Asaph, written [or re-edited] in Babylon. He speaks much of the cherubim- of how God dwelt between the cherubs, and still lead His people in that way (Ps. 80:1). Asaph grasped Ezekiel's fundamental point- that God hadn't forgotten His people, but the cherubim was just as actively leading and protecting God's people in Babylon as they had been in the land of Judah. Asaph asks God in this context to "restore us" to the land (Ps. 80:3,14,19 RVmg.), lamenting how the walls of Zion are broken down (Ps. 80:12). He speaks of how the faithful people weep tears "in great measure" (Ps. 80:5), a reference to their weeping by the rivers of Babylon, and the theme of tears and weeping amongst the exiles which we meet so often in Lamentations. But in this context, Asaph speaks of how a "branch" or "son" (Ps. 80:15) would be made strong by God, and this Messiah figure would be the man of God's right hand as well as "the son of man whom you make strong for yourself" (Ps. 80:17). Clearly Asaph prayed for and expected a Messiah figure to arise at the same time as the restoration from Babylon. But none did; those who could've played that role, such as Zerubbabel "the branch", ultimately failed. And the cherubim Angels are hovering above us, too, enabling so, so much.

Psalm 80 appears to be paired with Psalm 79. Ps. 79 has urged God to immediately relieve Judah from their sufferings and take vengeance on the Babylonians, but with little emphasis upon repentance and the fact they were suffering for their sins. Ps. 80 continues to ask for this relief from suffering, but with more spiritual insight and reflection upon their situation.

Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock-
This appears to put right some of the reasoning in Ps. 78, which presents David more than God as the shepherd of Israel (see on Ps. 78:71), and presents "Joseph", especially the tribe of Ephraim his son, as rejected by God in favour of Judah (see on Ps. 78:67).

You who sit above the cherubim, shine forth- This is a significant profession of faith in the context of the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and the exile. The glory of God had shone forth from between the cherubim over the ark; but the ark had disappeared, and the glory of God was not seen in the sanctuary. But Ezekiel had published his vision of the cherubim of glory; they were still in existence, although departed from Jerusalem. So here we find faith that although there were no visible symbols of religion, still God was known to be "there", in all His glory.

David often expresses in the Psalms how he was just as close to God far from the sanctuary as when present in it. He often speaks of how he actually lived in the wilderness in the shadow of the cherubic wings, with God's glory above him and the blood of atonement as it were beneath him on the mercy seat.

All this prepared the way for Israel to understand God's glory in His now invisible Son. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9) would have been easily perceived as an allusion to the way that Yahweh Himself as it were dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat (2 Kings 19:15; Ps. 80:1). And yet the Lord Jesus in His death was the "[place of] propitiation" (Heb. 2:17), the blood-sprinkled mercy seat. "There I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy-seat… of all things which I will command you" (Ex. 25:20-22). In the cross, God met with man and communed with us, commanding us the life we ought to lead through all the unspoken, unarticulated imperatives which there are within the blood of His Son. There in the person of Jesus nailed to the tree do we find the focus of God's glory and self-revelation, and to this place we may come to seek redemption.

The mercy seat was seen as God's throne. Although we will see that this psalm makes many wrong assumptions and even false accusations against God, there is much that the author understood correctly. He perceived that although the royal family had ended and David's throne in Jerusalem was overturned, Yahweh was still Israel's King, enthroned in Heaven, as it were between the true cherubim. And yet the plea was for God to shine forth, for the shekinah glory to again appear in the temple/sanctuary. It never did. Israel were thus prodded towards understanding that glory and presence fo God in its most essential sense- in individual human hearts, through God's Spirit and Son.

Psa 80:2

Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your might! Come to save us!-
As noted on :1, the mistaken assumption that Judah and Benjamin were better than Ephraim and Manasseh is now corrected. For they are mentioned together, in the hope that not only Judah but also the scattered ten tribes will be restored together. The language of stirring up and coming to save is used in later Isaiah of God's eagerness to do just that in the form of a Messianic deliverer for the exiles. But the reality was that all the various options tried, e.g. Zerubbabel and Joshua, all failed; and the exiles preferred to remain in exile for the most part. And so these things were reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus. The psalms of Asaph generally all have reference to the exile and restoration. Part of God's intended program for the restoration was a new covenant under which the northern and southern kingdoms would be reunited, as outlined in Ez. 37:19 "I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his companions; and I will put them with the stick of Judah, and make them one

stick, and they shall be one in My hand". This would explain the references to Joseph and his sons. The fulfilment of that seemed far off and impossible at the time- and so the Psalmist begs God to as it were hurry up and come through with the fulfilment of the promises. The problem was, the exiles didn't want to accept the new covenant, and preferred to try to keep bits and pieces of the old covenant. "Come and save us" was ultimately answered in Yahoshua, Yah's salvation, "Jesus". But the exiles wanted some immediate manifestation of that salvation. It didn't come, and so they were again prodded towards looking for it in God's suffering servant whom Is. 53 had explained to them.

Psa 80:3

Turn us again, God. Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved-
"Turn us again" is the word used for the 'return' of the exiles, both to their land to their God. But the psalmist has the insight to realize that most didn't want to repent, and so he asks God to elicit that repentance, to work by His Spirit to actually give them repentance and a turning again to Him, so that there might be a turning again of Judah's fortunes. Repentance itself is therefore a gift (Acts 11:18). This is indeed the grace shown by the work of the Holy Spirit upon human hearts. Or we could argue that through Isaiah, God had urged the exiles to return and made everything possible so they did. But they didn't want to leave Babylon. And so this psalmist is asking God to do something which the exiles didn't want to do, even if they were to be given the answer. It's like praying "Separate me from this world, Father!", but continuing in it. "Make us repent" seems to be the idea. Perhaps he was praying it thinking his prayer could somehow make others repent. The language and appeals of this Psalm really sound like Jeremiah in Lamentations, e.g. Lam. 5:21 (ESV) "Restore us to yourself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old".

Psa 80:4

Yahweh God of Armies, How long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people?-
The "God of armies" typically refers to the Angels. The psalmist perceived that the Angels had been used to bring about the scattering, and could likewise be used to answer these prayers for restoration. So much of the reasoning in these psalms seems immature- e.g. it is simply not so that because God doesn't answer an immediate request, He is therefore angry with the prayer. "How long...?" is a common question in the psalms related to the exile. But rarely is it accompanied by any confession of sin. The termination of the exile was predicated upon a return to God so that the exiles could return to the land. But these psalms often simply ask for God to act anyway. And when, as testified in second Isaiah, God did even prematurely end the exile and pronounce

redemption from their debt slavery, the people generally preferred to remain in Babylon. It's like the child on the long journey continually asking "Are we there yet? When we will arrive?", and then refusing to get out of the car when the destination is reached. This likewise must surely be our comment on the triple requests in this psalm for 'restoration'. God had already given His path to restoration, through Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel etc., as well as in the terms of the covenant itself. If they returned to God, they would return to the land. But their repeated pleading for 'restoration' is flatly ignoring all that Divine communication. I commented on Ps. 79:13 that the Asaph psalms are inter-connected. Quite possibly, Ps. 81 is God's reply to the lament of Ps. 80: "Hear My people and I will testify to you, Israel, if you would have listened to Me!... My people didn't listen to My voice, Israel desired none of Me. So I let them go after the stubbornness of their hearts... Oh that My people would have listened to me, that Israel would have walked in my ways! I would *quickly* have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries" (Ps. 81:8,12-14). Note: "I would *quickly*". The lament of Ps. 80 was "How long...?", implying God was delaying unnecessarily. He wasn't; the fault was with His people.

The exiles in Ps. 80:4 complained: "How long will You be angry against the prayer of Your people?". God had explained to the exiles quite clearly why their prayers made Him angry. They were a smoke in His nostrils because they offered them whilst burning the incense of prayer to other gods: "These are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burns all the day" (Is. 65:5). He has stated there why He was angered by their prayers. And their response is not to repent, but instead to ask 'How long till You just get over it?'. They ignored all the reasons *why* their prayers were angering God: "When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you; even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. Your hands are full of blood!" (Is. 1:15 NIV); "though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them" (Ez. 8:18); "as He called, and they refused to listen, so they will call, and I will not listen" (Zech. 7:13). All these words were spoken to the exiles. We too can totally overlook God's conviction of us of our sins, and simply complain that He doesn't remove the consequences. That in fact is exactly what most people do. They lament all the outcomes of living in a fallen creation, without taking any serious personal responsibility for their sins.

Psa 80:5

You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in large measure-

The psalm begins with an appeal to God as the shepherd of Israel, continuing right on from the theme of Israel as God's flock in Ps. 79:13. But their accusation in Ps. 80:5 was that He was a bad shepherd; for a shepherd's duty was to provide food and water to the sheep. But God has given them tears for both food and water. They had no sense of their

own failure as His sheep, and the consequences of their own choices. Part of the new covenant offered the exiles was that God would be their shepherd and regather them (Ez. 34:11), seeing their own shepherds had failed them. But instead of eagerly responding to the shepherd's voice through the prophets, they found fault with their wonderful shepherd. And so the regathering offered in Ez. 34 didn't happen at the restoration, because the sheep refused the voice of the Divine shepherd. God's shepherding of the exiles back to Zion from Babylon was effected through Cyrus: "Saying of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, and shall perform all My pleasure', even saying of Jerusalem, 'She will be built;' and of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid'" (Is. 44:28). But the exiles were unenthusiastic about the decree of Cyrus, they generally remained in Babylon, and those who did return didn't build the foundations of the temple according to the plans given them in Ezekiel. And thus the exiles refused God's shepherding.

Despite the apparent complaint, the psalmist recognizes that God was still active with the exiles; He was giving them food and drink, even if it was unpleasant. It was David who had been fed with the bread of tears in consequence of his sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 42:3); if Judah followed his pattern of repentance, then they too would be restored to Zion as he was after having to go into exile from Absalom. "In large measure" is literally "three times over". And yet God had punished the exiles less than their iniquities deserved (Ezra 9:13). These prayers for restoration so often seem to present pictures which are not to true to reality, and which fail to take account of the fact Judah had sinned and were being given the consequences of their sin.

Psa 80:6

You make us a source of derision to our neighbours, our enemies laugh among themselves-
This was indeed the case, but the prophets had so often said that this was what would happen if Judah continued in their rejection of God; and indeed this was the fulfilment of the curses for breaking the covenant. But the psalmists seem to always put the blame on God and try to as it were guilt trip Him for the situation- instead of accepting that the people were the ones who had caused this to happen.

Psa 80:7

Turn us again, God of Armies. Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved-
This repeats :3, and as noted there, this is a request for God to give repentance [and not just forgiveness] to the exiles. But here "God" is defined as "God of Armies". Perhaps the idea is that the Angels would operationalize this request for God to act upon human hearts and make them repentant. The shining forth of God's face perhaps alludes to the

situation on the day of atonement, when forgiveness was pronounced and the shekinah glory supposedly shone forth. The exiles at this point were without the temple and the ark, so we see them coming to realize what David did when in exile from those things- that the presence of God can be found anywhere, including outside of visible religious symbols and structures.

Psa 80:8

You brought a vine out of Egypt, You drove out the nations and planted it-
As God had brought Israel out of Egypt and cleared out the Canaanite nations, so the psalmist is asking that God does this for the exiles, clearing away the Samaritan opposition as He did the Canaanites. But Israel at that point were still worshipping idols, taking the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (so Ezekiel says), and carrying the tabernacle of Remphan along with that of Yahweh. Their bringing out and placing back in their land was then an act of grace, and the psalmist asks God to do the same with the exiles.

Psa 80:9

You cleared the land for it. It took deep root, and filled the land-
The vine and vineyard was a symbol of the people of Israel (Ps. 80:15; Is. 1:8; 5:7; 27:2; Jer. 12:10; Mt. 21:41). The land was "cleared" for them to live there, but again, they didn't make full use of the potential; they didn't drive out all the tribes living there, even though potentially the land had been cleared for them. See on Ps. 81:14. And the same was true at the restoration. The way back to Zion was "prepared" (Mal. 3:1; s.w. "cleared"); but most of the exiles chose to remain in exile. And so the land was not filled by the exiles, the vine of Israel didn't fill the face of the promised land with literal and spiritual fruit (Ez. 34:27; Is. 27:6). These things were therefore reapplied and rescheduled to the acceptance of the gospel of restoration by Gentiles in Christ.

Transplanting a vine involves clearing out any other plants around it, or the transplant won't work. The psalmist says God therefore drove out all the nations from Canaan, lest the vine be contaminated or otherwise damaged. God did this potentially, but the truth was that the Israelites didn't drive them all out. They worshipped their gods and intermarried with them. The psalmist doesn't even mention that, in his desire to present God as now acting unreasonably.

Psa 80:10

the mountains were covered with its shadow. Its boughs were like God's cedars-
Cedars are associated with the Jerusalem temple; the idea was that the nations ["mountains"] within the *eretz* promised to Abraham would come under the shadow of

the restored kingdom of God in Judah, so that the entire land became as the sanctuary in Zion. But this didn't happen, just as the picture is exaggerated here of what actually happened when Israel established their kingdom on entering the land. For they were constantly under pressure from their neighbours within that land and hardly brought the surrounding nations under the shadow of Israel's God. Instead they accepted their gods. And worshipped them upon the mountains, which they were supposed to 'cover' with the shadow of God's cherubic covering.

Psa 80:11

It sent out its branches to the sea, its shoots to the River-
An allusion to the extent of the promised land, from the sea to the River Euphrates. But apart from briefly in Solomon's time, this great potential was not experienced by Israel, and the returning exiles likewise didn't achieve anything like the potential Divinely set up for them. And so these things are rescheduled to the things of God's Kingdom under the Lord Jesus.

The allusion is to how cuttings from vine branches are planted in order to grow more vines. But it was hardly so that the one vine spread as far as the Euphrates. Israel never really colonised all the land promised to Abraham. They lacked the faith. Again the psalmist is presenting an overly positive narrative of Israel. God's perspective on the fruitful vine was different. Hos. 10:1 (ESV) explains: "Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars". All the psalmist sees is the once luxurious vine cut down, and he wonders why God did that and thinks it unreasonable that He did. He fails to factor in the obvious reasons why. He totally ignored the parable of the vineyard in Is. 5. And the nuance of Jer. 2:21 that the vine had degenerated: "I planted you a choice vine, wholly of pure seed. How then have you turned degenerate and become a wild vine?'.

Psa 80:12

Why have You broken down its walls, so that all those who pass by the way pluck it?-
The answer to that question is given clearly in the prophets. The walls were broken down by God's people themselves, and the walls of the vineyard were in turn removed by God because they refused to bring forth spiritual fruit (Is. 5). But the psalmists seem too focused upon the removal of the consequences for sin, rather than facing up to the sin and appealing for repentance. The wall around the vineyard was to stop wild animals damaging the vines and to keep strangers out. But Israel eagerly fraternised with the wild beasts of the nations who later destroyed her, worshipping their gods. So Yahweh's removal of the wall was only confirming what they themselves had done. The parable of the vineyard in Is. 5, and repeated later by the Lord, showed how in fact God had so zealously done all imaginable for the vineyard, by making great walls for it etc. It'd be

rather like blaming the broken down, dysfunctional state of the church upon God rather than the church itself. The lament is arguing that God is a failure as both a vineyard owner and a shepherd; and ultimately as a father. It is based upon a refusal to accept that God's love and work for man is not in fact unconditional. The psalmist's argument is really it's own answer to the problem he raises. His complaint is that God did so much to plant and care for His vineyard- and then suddenly destroyed it. There was obviously a reason why He did that. But the psalmist carefully avoids probing that critical question, and just goes on in :14 to beg God to restore the vineyard.

Psa 80:13

The boar out of the wood ravages it, the wild beasts of the field feed on it-
Again we might reflect that the psalmist ought to have given more weight to the prophetic pictures of the surrounding nations (the Biblical "beast") coming into the land because Israel had failed to keep them out; they had welcomed them in, and placed their gods within the Jerusalem temple. But the focus seems all upon lamenting the consequence of sin, rather than repentance and humility.

Psa 80:14

Turn again, we beg You, God of Armies. Look down from heaven and see, and visit this vine-
God "visited" His people through the opportunity to leave Babylon and return to Judah, as He had visited them to take them out of Egypt (Ex. 4:31). They refused. He again "visited His people" as they themselves recognized, through the sending of His Son (Lk. 1:68; 7:16). Again they refused. And so the saving visiting of people has been extended to us, in 'visiting' the Gentiles to take out a people for His Name (Acts 15:14). What Judah prayed for by the rivers of Babylon was indeed heard. There they had asked that God would “visit” them and “return” them (Ps. 80:14). The same two Hebrew words are to be found in Jer. 27:22, where we read that God would exile His people to Babylon and then “visit” them and make them “return”. We meet the same two words in Zeph. 2:7, where God would ‘visit and return’ the captivity of the remnant of Judah. But when God did “visit” His people, just as when He ‘visited’ His people in the gift of His Son, they didn’t want to ‘return’ or respond. Those who had desired ‘the day of the Lord’ at that time had been praying for it, when it was ‘to no end’ for them. And we have to ask ourselves whether we really mean our prayers for the Lord’s return.

Jer. 27:22 predicted that God would “visit” His people and “bring them up”. Those very two words are found in the declaration of Cyrus as recorded in 2 Chron. 36:23: “God hath charged [s.w. “visited”] me to build him a house in Jerusalem... who is there among you of all his people? The Lord his God be with him, and let him go up [s.w. “bring them up”]”. The most powerful monarch in the Middle East made the humanly bizarre and

inexplicable command to “go up” to the land. ‘Going up’ and ‘visiting’ are language associated with Angels. The people were being encouraged to follow the cherubim-Angel. But most of the people said ‘No that’s fine, we’ll give some money, but we’ll stay here thanks. We won’t be ‘going up’’. And in essence, we are *so* similar as a community.

The design of the temple which Ezekiel communicated to the captives featured the motif of cherubim all over it, especially in the holy place. This wasn't mere decoration. The idea was clearly that *if* the captives returned and built the temple as specified, then the cherubim would again dwell there. It was up to them. But there's no indication that they were very obedient to the pattern given them; hence perhaps it was the more spiritually perceptive who wept when the foundation of the second temple was dedicated, knowing how far it was from Ezekiel's commands (Ezra 3:12). Ezekiel saw the temple as if it were already there, located at Jerusalem; he wasn't transported to Heaven to view it (Ez. 40:2). And it was there, potentially, that whole glorious temple. But the captives had to return and build it. turning the prophetic word into flesh, the *logos* into reality. But they didn't.

Psa 80:15

the stock which Your right hand planted, the branch that You made strong for Yourself-
"The branch" in some manuscripts is "the son". As discussed on :17, the restoration of the people is tied up with the strengthening of one particular branch or "son of man", Messiah. He was to be the path and means for the restoration of the people; because He was and is all "Israel" were intended to be. All looking forward to how salvation is "in Christ".

This paves the way for :17. The palmist perceives that the restoration will come through a specific "branch". The potential fulfilment in Zerubbabel, the 'branch from Babylon', didn't come about; and so the fulfilment was rescheduled to the Lord Jesus Christ as the branch (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5).

Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. Ps. 80:16,17 asks God to strengthen a Son of Man to be Messiah, seeing that the temple is in ruins; the raising up of a Messiah was perceived as potentially possible at the time.

Psa 80:16 It’s burned with fire. It’s cut down. They perish at Your rebuke-
The vine had been burnt down, perhaps referring to the destruction of the monarchy at the time of the Babylonian invasion. But from that burnt tree would come a branch who would be "the son of man" made strong by God- ultimately, after Zerubbabel's failure, the Lord Jesus.

Although in :15 and :17 the psalmist has a specific individual in view, he perceives that this individual will be a personification and embodiment of God's people. The branch was also Israel and Zion, who were at that time cut down and burnt. Salvation in our age is likewise predicated upon being "in Christ". The suffering servant was both Israel and finally the Lord Jesus, who suffered as their representative.

Psa 80:17

Let Your hand be on the man of Your right hand, on the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself-
As Isaiah makes clear, God's people had been destroyed. His "Israel" and "Zion" would continue through a new covenant with a redefined people, due to the work of the Messiah. This "Son of man" mentioned here is the equivalent of the suffering servant of Isaiah. There would be a new Eden with a new, second Adam ["son of man"] in it, who would be obedient and have the wild beasts (:13) in submission to Him. The psalmist perceives that the restoration will come through an individual Messianic figure. There were various possible potential fulfillments of this, such as Zerubabbel and Joshua, but they all let the baton drop. The final fulfilment is therefore in the Lord Jesus, who allowed Himself to be made strong by God's hand (s.w. Ps. 89:21). Whilst His utter moral perfection was in a sense His own achievement, and that must never be taken away from the Lord, the path there involved allowing God to make Him strong for Himself. And this is our pattern too, in allowing the work of the Holy Spirit to do likewise with us, paralleled here with God's hand being upon us, making us strong. The prophecy could have had an earlier fulfilment in Hezekiah, 'made strong by Yah', but he too disallowed it and went off to this present world. The lead characteristic of Jacob was that he and his descendants would be 'made strong' (s.w. Gen. 25:23), even though they were so spiritually weak. So many times Israel are encouraged to be "of good courage", s.w. "made strong" (Dt. 31:6,7 etc.), so that they might inherit the promised kingdom. But they generally didn't make use of this potential strengthening. The exiles likewise were potentially "made strong" but they refused to make use of that, remaining in Babylon for the most part (s.w. Is. 35:3; 41:10).

Psa 80:18

So we will not turn away from You; accept us, and we will call on Your name-
The force of the "so" may be that because of the strengthened "son of man", ultimately the Lord Jesus, God's people would be accepted and spiritually strengthened (:19). This is the whole theme of the Psalm- the restoration of God's people would require the raising up of this "Son of man". Isaiah's prophecies likewise predicate their restoration upon the suffering servant figure, and identity with Him.

The appeal is for God to turn His people to Himself, giving them repentance (see on :3,7,19) and psychological strengthening, so that they would never again turn away from Him. And only then would they call upon His Name. We would frankly expect the order to be the other way around; calling upon God's Name, vowing not to turn away again, and then being accepted. But the psalmist perceives God's grace is such that He is willing to turn men to Himself, accept them- and then in awe at such grace, they call upon His Name.

Psa 80:19

Turn us again, Yahweh God of Armies. Cause Your face to shine, and we will be saved-
This repeats :3,7, and as noted there, this is a request for God to give repentance [and not just forgiveness] to the exiles. This runs as a refrain throughout this Psalm and is clearly the lead request of the psalmist. Whilst God does indeed give repentance as well as forgiveness, we would perhaps wish that the exilic psalmists showed more awareness of the depth of their sins and appealed more for repentance.

PSALMS CHAPTER 81

Psa 81:1

For the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. By Asaph-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

Sing aloud to God, our strength! Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob!-
The Psalm begins in :1-5 with a call to joyfully celebrate a feast, probably Passover or

Tabernacles. We note the Levites are called to make music (:2), and the priests to blow the trumpets (:3). But the Psalm then abruptly changes. God answers this call for joyful celebration with a rebuke of His people for their sinfulness. This Psalm is therefore a commentary and exemplification of the frequent prophetic complaint that God found Israel's keeping of the feasts to be a smoke in His nostrils. It was mere external religion; and from :5 onwards we have His commentary upon their desire to keep the feast.

"Sing aloud" is a call for collective worship. The psalm goes on to have God reciting the history of the exodus from His perspective. This is an Asaph psalm, set in the context of the restoration from Babylon. Isaiah's prophecies of that restoration clearly frame it in terms of what God had done in bringing His people back to their land at the time of the exodus. The exiles generally refused the call for a second exodus, and so the call to "leave" Babylon and journey to Zion has been offered to a new Israel. And we too can take encouragement from how our exodus through the Red Sea [=baptism] and journey to the Kingdom is also according to the pattern of Israel's exodus deliverance and wilderness journey.

The joy is because God is "our strength". God's strength is often mentioned in relation to His salvation, as in Ps. 118:14, which also calls for a "song" because of this: "Yah is my strength and song, He has become my salvation". This was the great theme of Moses' song in Ex. 15:2: "Yah is my strength and song. He has become my salvation". See too Is. 12:2. Thus the Gospel of salvation is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). This is therefore likely a call to celebrate Passover, God's salvation, just as we are called to the breaking of bread service.

Psa 81:2

Raise a song, and bring here the tambourine, the pleasant lyre with the harp-
See on :1. The tambourine may have been to recall the rejoicing of Miriam and the women of Israel after the Passover deliverance of Israel through the Red Sea. This may therefore be a call to keep Passover, although it would be just as appropriate for Tabernacles. The overriding call is to joy. We should be characterized by joy. We are to hold the confidence and rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end. For we have eternal joy ahead, as Isaiah stresses. And we are not to look back, but forward, to how our eternity will be of joy and not of miserable regret over this or that in this brief life.

Psa 81:3

Blow the trumpet at the New Moon, at the full moon, on our feast day-
As noted on :1, this was an invitation for the priests to blow the trumpet to begin the feast. The mention of "New Moon" may simply mean the start of the month, so perhaps :1-4 is a generic text for use at any feast or religious celebration. However the context is

clearly of a call to keep Passover, and there was traditionally thought to be a full moon on the 14th Nisan.

Psa 81:4

For it is a statute for Israel, an ordinance of the God of Jacob- The passover was a law specifically given to Israel at that time. As noted on :1, we have here a call to keep one of the feasts, and there is pride in their obedience to God's commands about this. But His response from :5 onwards dashes this exuberant spirit, in condemning Israel for being apostate and impenitent. We must take the lesson that apparent external obedience and religious joy and praise- are no guarantee of our real standing with God, nor are they necessarily the same as true spirituality.

Psa 81:5

He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony-
The mention of Joseph appears to put right some of the reasoning in Ps. 78, which presents "Joseph", especially the tribe of Ephraim his son, as rejected by God in favour of Judah (see on Ps. 78:67). God's response to Judah's desire to keep a feast to Him is that actually He had chosen Joseph / Ephraim as much as them.

When he went out over the land of Egypt, I heard a language that I didn't know-
This reference to the Passover Angel going forth over Egypt suggests that :1-4 was a liturgy to be used in summoning the people to keep the Passover feast (cp. Is. 37:36). But now begins God's response to their feast keeping. He begins by stressing His identification with His people and His grace towards them, for what will follow after this is a deep criticism of them. God so identified Himself with Israel that in Egypt, He Himself heard a language which He understood not (AV). He *could* have understood it, and in a sense He did; but so identified is Yahweh with His people that He allows Himself to be limited by their perceptions.

Or we could read the "I" as the worshipper. He is to identify himself with Israel on Passover night, which was the whole purpose of the Passover feast which this psalm is calling them to celebrate. Or we could read the "I" as God, commenting on how His people began to speak Egyptian and therefore for the first time in His dealings with the Abraham family, they called to Him in another language. LXX reads "he heard a language which he understood not", referring to how Joseph heard a language strange to him.

LXX "He made it to be a testimony in Joseph, when he came forth out of the land of Egypt" would definitely make this Psalm a call to keep the Passover, which was the specific "statute" given to Israel to obey when they left Egypt.

Psa 81:6

I removed his shoulder from the burden, his hands were freed from the basket-
We too are freed, in one sense, from the drudgery of daily life under the sun. This reflects the degree to which God was intensely aware of His peoples' sufferings; and that is just as true today. He saw their shoulders and hands at work. But the RV speaks of the people as being delivered from the basket, alluding to the personal deliverance of Moses. The people were for the most part spiritually weak, taking the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ezekiel), and carrying through the desert the tabernacle of Remphan as well as that of Yahweh. The idea is that God saved Israel by grace on account of their identification with Moses, just as we are baptized into Christ and counted righteous in Him, as Israel were baptized into Moses (1 Cor. 10:1,2).

Thus there is a parallel drawn in Ps. 103:7: "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel". "After the tenor of these words have I made a covenant with *thee* [Moses] and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27). Is. 63:11 (Heb.) is even more explicit: "He remembered... Moses his people" . Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role on that last glorious day of life when he addressed Israel: " The Lord said unto *me*... I will deliver [Og] into *thy* hand... so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). Moses is described as encamping in the wilderness, when the reference clearly is to all Israel (Ex. 18:5). Moses recalled how “the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have delivered up Sihon and his land before thee [you singular- i.e. Moses]; begin to possess it, that thou [you singular again!] mayest inherit his land”. Yet Moses then comments that therefore God “delivered” Sihon “before *us*” (Dt. 31,33 RV). The land and victory that Moses personally could have had- for it was God’s wish to destroy Israel and make of him a new nation- he shared with Israel. Ex. 7:16 brings out the unity between them by a play on words: “The LORD God of the Hebrews hath *sent me* [lit. ‘let me go’] unto thee, saying, *Let* my people *go*”. “Let go” translates the same Hebrew word as “sent me”. Just as Moses had been let go by Yahweh, so Israel were to be.

Psa 81:7

You called in trouble, and I delivered you. I answered you in the secret place of thunder-

Israel's call to God in trouble was made with them still worshipping Egypt's idols. They took them with them through the Red Sea. Yet still God heard their cry, despite having told them to have no other gods (:9); that's the grace of it all. Likewise He tested them at Meribah but they failed that test. Yet still He saved them, by grace. He "delivered" them even though they finally told Moses that they wanted to stay in Egypt: "Isn’t this the word

that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?’" (Ex. 14:12). Possibly the idea is that prayer is the secret place between God and man, we enter into our room and shut the door and pray to our Father in secret; but God openly answered by the thunder that perhaps went with the storm which liberated Israel from Egypt.

LXX "I heard thee in the secret place of the storm". Despite their sinfulness and worship of the idols of Egypt in the desert, God still answered their calls for help in distress. The reference may be to how Israel at the Red Sea called to God in their trouble, and He answered them out of the pillar of cloud (Ex. 14:10,24); apparently that cloud appeared at times as a storm cloud.

I tested you at the waters of Meribah. Selah-
The weakness of Israel at Meribah is juxtaposed with God's enduring grace to them in the first half of the verse. The Exodus record says that Israel tested God there. But here in Ps. 81:7, God tested them. Our feeling the need to test God is in fact God's testing of us. He is so far above us and our weak thinking.

Psa 81:8

Hear My people and I will testify to you, Israel, if you would have listened to Me!-
The theme of God's appeal is that so much potential had been wasted by them ["if you would have..."], because for all their external obedience in keeping feasts (see on :1), they were not truly listening to Him. And so He repeats His appeals made so often in Deuteronomy, to "hear, O Israel", 'testifying' to them as He also did in Deuteronomy (s.w. Dt. 4:26; 8:19 etc.).

They had called to God, and He had heard (:7). Now God calls to them and asks them to listen. Our prayer life, our calling to God, is intertwined with our responses to His words to us. The context is God having done so much for His people. And now He asks them, in response, to listen to Him. I have suggested on Ps. 80:4 that the following speech from God here in Ps. 81 is His answer to their complaints in Ps. 80. Their question "How long...?" is met by His explanation of how He would have "quickly" responded (:14), had they behaved rightly.

Psa 81:9

There shall be no strange god with you, neither shall you worship any foreign god-
The people were for the most part spiritually weak, taking the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ezekiel), and carrying through the desert the tabernacle of Remphan as well as that of Yahweh. And they were no better at the point of this Psalm. God urges them not to abuse His grace and to quit idolatry.

Psa 81:10

I am Yahweh your God who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it-
God speaks of Israel as if they were His beloved baby child; for these are the words of a man seeking to feed his child. But the child refused to respond (:11). The feeding was with His voice and word (:11). And they turned away from it This passage alone makes me want to plead with Israel to return to their so loving Father. Remember that He carried them as a nursing father through the wilderness. The wider they opened their mouth, the more God promises to fill it. There is a theme in these Psalms of God potentially having so much more to give them if they had the vision for it. This statement is in the context of the call to worship no other god (:9). God is saying that as our parent, He can and absolutely will provide all we need. We don't have to turn to other gods. For Israel were under the worldview that encouraged worship of other gods because they would supposedly provide their various needs.

Psa 81:11

But My people didn't listen to My voice, Israel desired none of Me-
This alludes to the unusual condition of a baby having disassociation with the parent from babyhood, refusing feeding from them etc. See on :10. They were as the young child who is estranged from the loving father even from early childhood. Is. 28:12; 30:9,15 seem to allude here. It was exactly because Israel "would not" (s.w. "desired none of Me") that they were not allowed to continue in the land.

Psa 81:12

So I let them go after the stubbornness of their hearts, that they might walk in their own counsels-
On their journey to Canaan, the Israelites worshipped idols. Because of this, "God turned, and gave them up (over) to worship the host of heaven… I gave them up to the hardness of their hearts" (Acts 7:42; Ps. 81:12 AVmg.). God reached a stage where He actually encouraged Israel to worship idols; He confirmed them in their rejection of Him. And throughout their history, He encouraged them in their idolatry (Ez. 20:39 "As for you, house of Israel, thus says the Lord Yahweh: Go, serve each one his idols… if you will not listen to Me"; Am. 4:4 "Go to Bethel, and sin; to Gilgal, and sin more"). But there was a point where His Spirit was working on their hearts to stop them from idolatry; but they reached a point where they so grieved His Holy Spirit that He gave up doing this, and instead psychologically confirmed them in the mental path of the heart which they wished to go.

AV "So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust" is very similar to the idea of Rom. 1:24: "God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonoured among themselves". If we continue to indulge our mental internal lusts, God will psychologically confirm man in that path, until he considers that his perversion is in fact natural to him.

Psa 81:13

Oh that My people would have listened to me, that Israel would have walked in my ways!-
This is a unique insight into the feelings of God. For these words are a soliloquy, God is addressing Himself. God's pain is because they had not used the potential He had set up for them, described on :14. Grief is so often a function of considering what might have been; thus we grieve harder at the death of a child than for the peaceful passing of a 99 year old. And God passes through this same intense grief because of all the failed possibilities.

Psa 81:14

I would quickly have subdued their enemies, and turned My hand against their adversaries-
God had potentially cleared the land of all the Canaanites, victory could have been very quick. And indeed thus it began at Joshua's time; but they failed to drive out the majority of the Canaanites, they failed to make use of God's hand which was turned against their enemies. See on Ps. 80:4,8,9.

Psa 81:15

The haters of Yahweh would have cringed before Him, and their punishment would have lasted forever-
The victories won by Joshua were not permanent; the same areas he conquered and tribes he defeated rose up to dominate Israel later. Because they failed to make use of the Divine potential. Just as the Lord Jesus has won the battle and assured us of a place in the Kingdom; but we have to capitalize upon that. Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. Ps. 81:15,16 says that if Israel had been obedient, their neighbouring enemies would soon have submitted to them, and they would have experienced the blessings potentially in store for them. Just as God would have fed Israel with honey from the rock rather than just water (:16).

Psa 81:16

But He would have also fed them with the finest of the wheat, I would have satisfied you with honey out of the rock-
If Israel were obedient, they would have been fed with honey as well as Manna- whilst Dt. 32:13 says they did have honey on their journey: "He caused him to suck honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock". Or we could read that as God 'causing' them to have that potential, but they declined it. What they could have had and what they were given in prospect is spoken of as if it was reality due to the nature of how God's potentials work. Or it could be that God in His grace did give them some honey, even though they didn't fulfill the requirement- for God is so gracious. The promised blessings of honey were conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 32:13 cp. Ps. 81:16), although granted in prospect (Dt. 32:13).

It can be argued that Ps. 81 is God's answer to the complaints against Him in the preceding Ps. 80. Just as Is. 65,66 are God's reply to the complaints of Is. 64. This final verse would be response to Ps. 80:5 "You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in large measure". God's response is that He fed them with water from the rock, and planned to give them honey from the rock. It was all a case of their refusing what He planned to give them.

PSALMS CHAPTER 82

Psa 82:1

A Psalm by Asaph-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

God presides in the great assembly. He judges among the gods-

God as the judge of all sat in the assembly of the judges [gods / elohim], and passes comment on how they judge. "Elohim has taken His place in the divine council. In the midst of the elohim He holds judgment". This is a reference to the court of Heaven, into which we have a peek in 1 Kings 22. *Elohim* can refer to both Angels and men, such as the judges of Israel. They were intended to be a reflection of the court of heaven. And their assemblies were in turn judged by Yahweh, who was among them in judgment. The word *elohim* is used about Israel's judges in Ex. 21:6; 22:7-8,27. The idea is that the judges of Israel had judged wrongly and now God is holding a judgment of the judges.

Psa 82:2

How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked? Selah-
God judges the judges of His people. Showing partiality in judgment was condemned under the Mosaic law (Dt. 1:17; 16:19). God's "How long...?" may be an echo of the "How long...?" common in the Asaph psalms at the time of the exile. The answer was "When you repent and start behaving rightly", and here God is making that same point.

Psa 82:3

Defend the weak, the poor, and the fatherless, maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed-
It is observable that "the poor" and related words are used more frequently in the Psalms than anywhere else in the Bible. The psalter is in a way the prayer book for the poor; and the Hebrew words refer not just to material poverty. Just as the Lord taught blessing upon "the poor *in spirit*". Yahweh's uniqueness is several times expressed as being that He has such a special interest in the poor and marginalized. The *elohim* were not interested in "the rights of the poor", and so God effectively states that they cannot be God- they had been called gods, but would die like men (:7). The implication is that had they cared for the poor, this wouldn't have happened.

This psalm may have originated in David's lament at the unjust judgment of Saul or the men around Absalom, who fancied himself as judge of Israel (2 Sam. 15:3-6). David had seen himself as "poor and needy", needing grace after his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:16,22). He wished Solomon to likewise have pity on the "poor and needy" amongst the Gentiles, those who had likewise repented (Ps. 72:13). And David was especially desirous to himself see the "poor and needy" blessed and accepted as he had been (Ps. 82:3,4; 113:7). It is our personal experience of needing grace which leads us to have a heart for those like us, the poor and needy. Any other motivation will ultimately not abide. Solomon appears to glorify his mother Bathsheba for likewise pitying the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9,20).

Psa 82:4

Rescue the weak and needy, deliver them out of the hand of the wicked-
This may have originated in his thoughts about Saul, then reapplied to David's need for salvation from Absalom and Ahithophel, but, it becomes the intended appeal of the exiles for deliverance from Babylon, then Haman, and indeed from all their captors. "The hand of the wicked / unrighteous" is the term used for the Babylonians in Ez. 7:21. Yet these are God's words to His people. They were not being delivered because they themselves were not delivering the weak from the wicked. It seems the Jews had some autonomy in Persia, and perhaps this is a criticism of how they operated their local courts in the exile.

Psa 82:5

They don't know, neither do they understand; they wander back and forth in darkness. All the foundations of the earth are shaken-
The judges of Israel were living out their condemnation even in this life; for wandering in darkness is the language of condemnation at the last day. Their biased judgment of others was really a lack of love. And those who lack love are even now wandering in the darkness: "He that says he is in the light and hates his brother, he remains in the darkness. He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he goes, because the darkness has blinded his eyes" (1 Jn. 2:9-11). Ex. 23:8 taught that "Bribery blinds". Israel's judges had taken bribes, they judged unjustly, and thus were "in darkness". And this led to the very foundations of the land / earth being unstable.

Psa 82:6

I said, You are gods, all of you are sons of the Most High-
As explained on :1, the *elohim* who were the judges of Israel were to reflect the *elohim* of the divine court room above them in heaven. Perhaps this is why Stephen when condemned by an earthly court, was given a vision of *the court of Heaven* (Acts 7:56 "the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God"). But lest this Psalm be seen as merely a judgment of the judges, the point is made that all Israel were intended to be *elohim*. All Israel were intended to be priests, who are also called *elohim;* for they were to be a "nation of priests". Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord… praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often

parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11).

The Lord Jesus quotes these words in Jn. 10:34: "Is it not written in your law: I said, you are gods?". The Lord Jesus is really saying 'In the Old Testament men are called 'gods'; I am saying I am the *Son* of God; so why are you getting so upset and claiming it is blasphemous if I use God's Name of Myself?'. The Lord Jesus is quoting from here in Ps. 82, where the judges of Israel were called 'gods'. And yet the context is critical of those judges; to bear the name of 'God' didn't mean one was acceptable to God. And it is no accident that the Lord chose to quote an example of where Israel's leaders bear God's Name but are apostate. He was turning the tables on the Jewish leadership who were accusing Him of claiming to be God. It was in fact they who bore the name of God- and yet were to be condemned for not responding to the word / *logos* of God which had come to them.

The Lord continued in Jn. 10:35: "If he called those men gods, to whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken)...". The coming of the word of God to these men made them *elohim*, in the sense that the judges of Israel were to judge according to God's word. And yet despite that, they were fallible. Men were *elohim* because God's word came to them. They were not created as *elohim* but were made *elohim* / judges because God's word came to them- which was a qualification for being a judge (Dt. 1:17; 2 Chron. 19:6 etc.). And yet the word / *logos* of God had come to the audience of Jesus in Himself, the word made flesh. They also could be gods / *elohim* and judge rightly if they accepted His word. So they should not, the Lord is saying, be so hasty to condemn a man for being a god.

The apostate leaders of Israel were the ones who bore the Name of God. The word / *logos* of God had come to them in that as pictured in the prologue to John's gospel, the *logos* of God in Jesus of Nazareth had 'come' to Israel and they had rejected it. The word of God came to the Old Testament judges of Israel [the context of Psalm 82] in that they were to judge according to His word. The Lord may also have in mind the LXX of 2 Chron. 19:6 where the judges of Israel are warned to judge rightly, because the *logos* of God is with them, had been given them, to judge rightly. The same idea is found in Dt. 1:17

where again the judges of Israel are warned in the LXX to judge according to the *logos* of God and not reject it in favour of human sympathies. In this sense perhaps Heb. 4:13 speaks of being judged by the *logos* of God. In the person of the Lord Jesus, the *logos* of God had come to the judges of Israel- and they were refusing to judge rightly because of their own agendas and personal investments.

Psa 82:7

Nevertheless you shall die like men, and fall like one of the rulers-
"Thrown down" or "fall" was to be the fate of the unjust princes of Israel (s.w. Ps. 73:18) just as it had been the fate of Korah and the princes / rulers with him (Num. 16:2). The fact these *elohim* were to die means they were not immortal. Because if you're immortal, you can't die. The Psalm speaks of God doing this judgment at the time of the Psalm. It isn't therefore a reference to anything before Biblical history, nor is it speaking of Angels losing immortality- one cannot lose immortality, otherwise one would not be immortal.

Psa 82:8

Arise, God, judge the earth, for You shall inherit all of the nations. A song-

Under the old covenant, Israel had been Yahweh's unique inheritance: "Yahweh's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance"(Dt. 32:9). Asaph, or the author of this psalm, perceives that now God is seeking people from all nations to be His inheritance. An inheritance is what is uniquely ours and part of our self-identity. Thus we may be particularly upset if a family heirloom is smashed. And that is how God sees His people, redefined here as not just Israel but whoever truly wants to be His inheritance. The starting point in our time is baptism into the Lord Jesus as the seed of Abraham, so that we inherit the Kingdom promised to Abraham. And thus we become His inheritance.

This Psalm is of rebuke and is a moral appeal. Yet it was to be sung as a song. In days of mass illiteracy, this would have been appropriate way to get the message out. In the context of God's people judging unjustly, God Himself is invited to arise and judge. And at that time, people from "all nations" would become His people, because of the injustice of Israel.

PSALMS CHAPTER 83

Psa 83:1

A Psalm by Asaph-
This "Asaph" could be the Asaph of Hezekiah's time (Is. 36:3) who used the Psalms in the context of the events of the Assyrian invasion. The Asaph Psalms all have parts in them relevant to that context (Ps. 50, 73-83). Or the "Asaph" may have been the singers who were relatives of Asaph, prominent at the restoration (Neh. 7:44; 11:17,22). It could mean that the psalms were a part of a collection from the Asaphites, and the name "Asaph" was therefore simply used to identify the temple singers. And again, parts of the Asaph psalms also have relevance to the restoration. The fact the Asaph Psalms speak of *elohim* rather than Yahweh would support the idea that they were used in the exilic / restoration period. But Asaph was the "chief" of the Levites to whom David assigned the ministry of praise before the ark (1 Chron. 16:4,5). It seems he did compose his own Psalms, which were used by Hezekiah at his time (2 Chron. 29:30). So I would again suggest that all the Asaph Psalms were composed originally by David "for" [not necessarily "by"] Asaph, but were rewritten and edited for later occasions.

God, don't keep silent. Don't keep silent and don't be still, God-
The statement that God will not "rest" for Zion's sake (Is. 62:1) must be understood in the context of the faithful at that time urging God *not* to "be still" [same Hebrew word translated "rest"] for His people (Ps. 83:1; Is. 64:12). This is an allusion to Boaz not being at rest until he had redeemed Ruth and Naomi. God is *not* at rest, He is *not* distant from us; and yet His people in Babylon felt that He was. It's no wonder that we are tempted to feel the same. Yet we must give Is. 62:1 it's full weight- God is answering the complaint of His people by stating that no, He will never rest for them. In this same context we read that He that keeps Israel will "neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). The fact that *God* will never 'hold His peace' for His people's sake (Is. 62:1) means that *we* should likewise not 'hold our peace' for them (the same Hebrew is used in Is. 62:6). In our prayers for them, we are to give God no rest (Is. 62:7).

Psa 83:2

For, behold, Your enemies are stirred up, those who hate You have lifted up their heads-
I suggest that Psalm 83 originated at the time of David's war with Ammon (2 Sam. 10:1-19). It was at this time that the children of Lot (Ammon) were helped by Assyria (2 Sam. 10:16; 1 Chron. 19:6,16), as required by :8. Although nations like Amalek and Assyria passed away, their political and geographical descendants continued. The Psalm could therefore also apply to the confederacy of Moab, Ammon and Edom in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:1-37). It could also apply to the attempt to destroy the revived

Judah by Sanballat, Geshem and Tobiah. And relevance can also be seen to the confederacy of attackers described in 1 Macc. 5, which was put down by Judas Maccabaeus.

The Psalm has much language appropriate to a latter day fulfilment; the fact it had multiple primary fulfillments leads us to expect this. The revival of Arab nationalism and its organization in the P.L.O. and the successors of the P.L.O. seems especially appropriate. They are to lift up / exalt the *rosh*, the head- they set up an individual leader over them. This could be “Gog... the chief prince” of Ezek. 38, “the king of the north” of Daniel, “the man of sin” of 2 Thess. 2, and all the other references to a latter day Nebuchadnezzar / antiChrist figure. The plural, "heads", could refer to their one great head- a charismatic leader.

"Stirred up" is *hamah*, recalling 'Hamas', the terrorist organization prominent in leading opposition to Israel. The word literally means 'rage', and the Palestinians often talk of 'days of rage' against Israel. AV "make a tumult" exactly captures the spirit of the Palestinian rage against Israel.

Psa 83:3

They conspire with cunning against Your people, they plot against Your cherished ones- There could be an application of this to Isaiah's time. Rezin's invasions were a result of 'taking evil counsel against' Israel (Is. 7:5), just as Assyria and her supporters were to do: "They have taken crafty counsel against thy people" (Ps. 83:3). Rezin's plan was to "set a king in the midst of (Judah), even the son of Tabeal" (Is. 7:6), meaning 'pleasing to God'. This supports the suggestion that the "fierce anger" of the invaders, both then and in the future, will be fuelled by quasi-religious reasoning- in this case 'You Jews are so displeasing to God, we're going to put a truly God-pleasing Muslim ruler in the holy city of Jerusalem.' The double emphasis on "Damascus" as being the nerve centre of Rezin's operations (Is. 7:8), may also be significant in that this very city is now a centre for terrorism against Israel.

Psalm 83 provides a list of ten areas around Israel who will form a covenant against her in the last days. It’s tempting to associate them with the ten toes of the Daniel 2 image and the ten horns of the beasts we meet in Daniel 7 and Revelation. What’s significant about the specific areas listed in Psalm 83 is that the list roughly corresponds to the places where exiled Palestinians have settled. The ‘covenant’ which is mentioned in Psalm 83 would therefore be the Palestinian Covenant, which calls for the destruction of Israel. The way the Islamists will seek to bind together their divided state is made clear in Psalm 83, where we have ten neighbouring nations, mostly in *Al-Sham*, Greater Syria, who unite themselves with a common aim of capturing the holy places in Jerusalem and blotting out the name of Israel:

“They conspire with cunning against Your people, they plot against Your cherished ones. Come, they say, and let’s destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. For they have conspired together with one mind, they form an alliance against You. The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagrites; Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre; Assyria also is joined with them” (Ps. 83:3-8). Note that ‘Philistine’ and ‘Palestinian’ are the same word...

This ‘conspiring together with one mind’ and ‘forming an alliance’ is exactly what we see coming out of the uniting of the disparate Islamist factions in Syria and elsewhere. “Form an alliance” translates a Hebrew phrase more commonly translated ‘to cut a covenant’ (Ps. 83:5). The Palestinian Covenant unites these groups, and that covenant emphasizes the aim of overrunning Israel. Psalm 83 mentions ten nations- perhaps corresponding with the ten toes of Daniel’s image, and the ten horns on the beast which will dominate God’s people in the last days (Daniel 7, Revelation 13). Joel 3:9 is another prophecy of the invasion which happens just before Christ’s return, and it speaks of how the invaders will make a ‘proclamation’ to “sanctify war”- a *jihad*, a holy war. And that is exactly the rhetoric of the groups now calling for Islamist unity based around a *jihad* against Israel in order to establish *Al-Sham*. Syria, then known as Aram, frequently invaded Israel in Bible times. The invasions under the Syrian king Rezin were a result of 'taking evil counsel against' Israel (Is. 7:5), just as Assyria and her supporters are to do in Ps. 83:3: "They have taken crafty counsel against Your people”. The double emphasis on "Damascus" as being the nerve centre of Rezin's operations (Is. 7:8), may also be significant in that this very city is now a centre for terrorism against Israel.

The intentions of the P.L.O. are “crafty” in that there is the impression given that they seek co-existence with Israel; they are plotting the destruction of Israel and the Jews under the guise of humanism and peaceful intentions. But the Confederacy seeks to destroy Israel, as is evident:

“The Palestinian Covenant declares as its central themes a total repudiation of the existence of Israel... the claim that Israel should not exist is implied in almost half of its 33 articles... the demand for the demise of Israel becomes a matter of inevitable necessity... Israelis are barely human creatures who may be tolerated in the Palestinian state as individuals, with their numbers reduced... The question of how to reduce the number of Jews in a Palestinian state... is highlighted by the use of murderous terms against the Israelis” (Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And It’s Meaning* (Totowa, N.J: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1979) pp.11,13,48). Article 8 of the Palestinian Covenant: “The conflicts among the Palestinian national forces are secondary, and should be ended for the sake of the basic conflict that exists between Zionism... and the Arab people”. Article 9: “Armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine. It is the overall strategy”. Yet a willfully naïve world overlooks these statements because they prefer to believe the

“crafty counsel” of the Arabs- that they seek for peaceful co-existence with the Jews in Israel.

Psa 83:4

Come, they say, and let’s destroy them as a nation, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more-
The Muslims argue that Israel / the Jews are not a people: “Israeli Jews… can only be nationals of (other) states, where nationality is not Jewish. The demand for the liquidation of Israel thus also stems directly as a necessary conclusion from the definition that the Jews are (already) not a nation… since the state of Israel is not based on true nationalism, it is often described in Arabic as an ‘artificial entity’…the theory that the Jews do not constitute a nation is also recited for the claim of exclusive Arab nationality of the Palestinian state” (Naji Alush, *The Road To Palestine* p.141).

“Victory for the Arabs is possible only in the liquidation of Israel; anything else is capitulation… The Jews are not a nation and thus on principle do not deserve to have a state of their own…there is no atrocity that cannot be justified in order to bring about the liquidation of Israel” (Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And It’s Meaning* (Totowa, N.J: Valentine, Mitchell & Co., 1979) p.12). The desire to “cut them off from being a nation” runs counter to God’s clear statement in Gen. 25:23: “Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people…”. Note that they were not to be of a different ethnicity, as both Jews and Arabs often claim [for they were from the same parents], but different types of people.

Psa 83:5

For they have conspired together with one mind, they form an alliance against You-
The nations are listed here according to their geographical position, starting in the East and then passing around clockwise to the south and up to the north east. The idea is that all the nations surrounding Israel are involved in this confederacy- which is exactly the situation Israel is currently in.

The surrounding Muslims will unite themselves against Israel. The ‘Palestinian National Covenant’ uses the Arab word *Qawmi* for ‘National’ – i.e. pan-Arab. Note the RV of Ps. 83:5: “Against thee do they make a covenant”. “The Palestinian National Authority will strive to achieve a union of the confrontation countries [i.e. “all nations around about” Israel]… or a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity” – Political Programs of the P.L.O., Article 8. “The Palestinian National Council calls upon the Arab nation [singular!] to shoulder its pan-Arab responsibilities and to pool all its energies to confront… Zionism” – Political Resolution of the 13th Palestinian National Council, Article 4. The Palestinian Liberation Army is under an “inter-Arab High Command” (Y. Harkabi, *The Palestinian Covenant And It’s Meaning* (Totowa, N.J: Valentine, Mitchell &

Co., 1979) p.1) p. 62. “The Palestinians will have three mottoes: national unity, pan-Arab mobilization, and liberation” (Are these the three unclean spirits of Rev. 16 that gather the nations around Israel to battle?) – Political Resolution of the 13th Palestinian National Council, Article 11.

“Nasser used to argue that Arab unity is a pre-requisite for ...enabling the initiation of an all-out war against Israel”... “The Arab ‘nation’ is made up of ‘peoples’ and the (one) Arab homeland comprises the national homeland of these peoples...the relationship of the people and the individual to the overall Arab homeland and nation is called in modern Arabic *Qamwiyya* (nationalism)...like the trunk of a tree that branches off into offshoots of local patriotism...the splitting up of the Arab region into separate states carved out by the colonial powers. However, once Arab unity is achieved and the frontiers wiped out...” (Harkabi, pp. 70,31). “As for the Egyptians, the Iraqis... they are nothing but the peoples and branches of one nation, the Arab nation” (Sati Al-Husri, *Arabism First*, (Beirut Lebanon: P.L.O. Research Centre) p. 13). “Colonialism shattered the unity of our Arab nation and the unity of our Arab homeland...but this has not prevented the masses... from feeling they are one people” -Resolution of Palestinian National Council, 1971 (As recorded in Anne Zahlan, *International Documents on Palestine* (Beirut, Lebanon: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974) p. 398).

The intention is to create a single nation which is home for all the Arab peoples. This may include not only Palestine but all of the land promised to Abraham. “Palestine is inseparable from the Arab homeland”... “King Hussein’s plan for the establishment of a so-called United Arab Kingdom”... “This crisis has captivated the whole Arab nation throughout the greater Arab homeland” (Harkabi, pp. 99,135,136) – i.e. the earth/land promised to Abraham.

It could well be that the entire area promised to Abraham is briefly confederated into one Arab super state once Israel is over-run. In this sense all the prophecies about the *eretz (*the land / earth) being dominated by Israel’s enemies would then come true. Not only will the Arabs unite amongst themselves but they will unite many other world forces in their anti-Judaism. This must be, for if there is to be a time of trouble for Jacob such as never was, the millions of Jews living in North America are going to have to be persecuted even worse than they were by Nazi Germany. Things are going to have to change- dramatically, and in a very short time. The god of this world is humanism, and it seems that all the world will be united by the Arabs against Israel under this guise. “The enemy of humanity’ is a phrase found in Arab writing to designate Israel… Such a description is designed to mobilize support from all peoples, because Zionism is portrayed as an imperialist base that threatens them too” (Harkabi, p. 90). Article 16 of the P.L.O. National Covenant: “The liberation of Palestine, from a spiritual point of view, will provide the Holy Land with an atmosphere of safety and tranquility, which in turn

will safeguard the country's religious sanctuaries.... accordingly, the people of Palestine look to all spiritual forces in the world for support."

Psa 83:6

The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab, and the Hagrites-
The way the Islamists will seek to bind together their divided state is made clear in Psalm 83, where we have ten local nations (cp. the ten invading nations of Ez. 38, the ten horns of the beast and ten toes of the Dan. 2 image), mostly in *Al-Sham*, Greater Syria, who unite themselves with a common aim of capturing the holy places in Jerusalem and blotting out the name of Israel.

Psa 83:7

Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre-
Note that 'Philistine' and 'Palestinian' are the same word... Tyre and Gebal speak of present day Lebanon. All the strong differences and rivalries will for a moment be forgotten in the common hatred of Israel.

Psa 83:8

Assyria also is joined with them. They have helped the children of Lot. Selah-
See on :1 for the primary fulfilment of this in Assyria helping Ammon at the time of David. The prophecies of Assyria clearly have a latter day fulfilment. It seems "Assyria" refers to an umbrella state or coalition which gives power and identity to these various disparate factions. We could translate to the effect that they will be joined together as "Assyria". In this case we view with interest the attempts to revive Al-Sham, greater Syria, by Islamic extremist groups. I suggest they will succeed, and will unite together in their common hatred of Israel. And thus this invasion will happen in the last days.

Psa 83:9

Do to them as You did to Midian, as to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the river Kishon-
In these incidents, the surrounding invaders destroyed themselves. As Sisera was the leader of the confederacy at this time, so there will be a *rosh* or head over the latter day confederacy (see on :2). There is plenty of evidence that the Islamist solidarity against Israel is very shallow; they are deeply fractured, and a victory against the Jews could well bring out those differences immediately, in a very bitter and self-destructive way. This final destruction is likely that spoken of in Revelation, where after a brief period of unity against God's people, "The horns hate the whore"- the final form of the coalition against Israel. The final phase of domination of the land of Israel foretold in Daniel 2 was

by a confederacy of “iron and clay”, nations that don’t mix together well; although in the context of dominating Israel, they are united. Particularly the Palestinians and other Arabs are mutually suspicious of each other; and there is ample tension between Iraq [latter day Babylon] and its Arab neighbours. “Expressions of suspicion toward the Arab states abound in Palestinian writings. They contain sharp criticism of discrimination against the Palestinians in the form of restrictive decrees in employment and travel. Expressions of hatred can even be found against the Arab states”... “The P.L.O. will retaliate against the Arab states... if they take a line of policy which the P.L.O. regards as inimical to it’s cause”... “Arab governments (are) suspicious of the plan to organize the Palestinians into the Palestinian entity” (Harkabi, pp. 72,96,10).

Psa 83:10 who perished at Endor, who became as dung for the earth-
Even "dung for the earth" is a condemnation still pregnant with hope. For the intention is that through the judgment of this confederacy, the "earth" / land promised to Abraham will again become fertile. For dung is spread upon the earth to make it fertile.

Psa 83:11

Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb; yes, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna-
They were defeated as a result of God making their troops turn on each other (Jud. 7:22-25). As noted on :10, self-condemnation and self judgment is God's preferred way of dealing with His enemies. "Zeeb" is the word for "wolf"; let's not forget that the final picture of the Kingdom is of the wolf living at peace with the lamb on mount Zion, referring to the wild animals of the surrounding nations being reconciled to God and His people (Is. 11:6; 65:25). See on :16.

Psa 83:12

who said, Let us take possession of God’s pasturelands-
Ps. 83:11,12 records how the leaders of the Midianite invasion said, " Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession" (AV). The raw lust of the surrounding peoples for Israel's riches is currently camouflaged in the same way. And we see a similar focus upon the holy places of Jerusalem, which is attaining an ever higher status in Islamist theology, beginning to replace Mecca in their thinking as the most holy city of Islam. Before the final onslaught in Gideon's time, those nations had "encamped against" Israel. The Hebrew literally meaning 'to incline a pole' has an uncanny relevance to the pointing of missiles towards them. There can be little doubt that the vast arsenals of missiles will come into use soon.

"The Chaldeans... shall... possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs" (Hab. 1:6) sounds like Ps. 83:12, concerning the latter-day confederacy saying, "Let us take to

ourselves the houses of God in possession" (AV). The implication is that Babylon, too, wished to possess the holy places of Jerusalem for religious reasons.

Clearly enough, the specific focus of the P.L.O. has been on taking control of Jerusalem's holy places. This was evident in all of Arafat's speeches. The P.L.O. refuses to cease hostilities against God's people until they are in possession of Jerusalem. It seems that the ideal of the P.L.O. is to establish a fake Kingdom of God in the land promised to Abraham, with Jerusalem as the capital, a new 'temple' built there, and some antiChrist figure ruling there. Their dream is of a land of plenty and true tolerance and equality, glorifying all the principles of humanism- and yet excluding God's people. All Arabs and Muslims world-wide would be encouraged to return and live in this Arab super state, mimicking how the *true* seed of Abraham will be gathered home in the last days. The P.L.O. plan to send the Jews out of the land into captivity- Saddam Hussein once said just the same.

The Babylonian captivity will be re-enacted, and then in a 'second exodus' the Jews will return and perhaps build the temple which they were instructed to build in Ez. 40-48. This expulsion of the Jews from the land is foretold in Dt. 28- where disobedient Israel are to be taken into Egypt again by ships, something which has never yet occurred; and also in Zech. 14, where in the last days Jerusalem is to be captured by her enemies and half the city go off into captivity. And then, the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives from which He left. "Only Jews who undertake to be loyal to the Palestinian state shall be recognized... the recurring motif in Palestinian literature which insists that the Jews who would be allowed (to remain) should relinquish Zionism" (Harkabi, p. 46). "Peace in the land of Palestine and the neighboring countries is our heart's desire. Above all, a precondition for this is the liberation of Palestine" (Fayez Sayegh, *A Handful of Mist* (Beirut, Lebanon: P.L.O. Research Centre) p.19). "The right to return includes the right to get back all former Arab property, the return of which will cause the mass eviction of Israelis from Jaffa, Nazareth, etc. ... The establishment of the Palestinian state is bound up with a mass evacuation of Jews from their homes, and they will be thus forced to emigrate" (Harkabi, pp. 157,56).

Shuqairy, founder of the P.L.O., often made the proposal to send the Jews back to their countries of origin. Naji Alush repeats the proposal and asks, "Why not ask the U.N. to finance this plan?" (p. 219). If accepted, this would unite "all nations" against Israel and her Messiah. Article 11 of the Constitution of Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party read: "Whoever emigrated to the Arab homeland (Palestine) with a colonialist aim shall be expelled". Naji Alush defines "the stand of the Arab national movement on Palestine concerning the Jews" as being that the same number of Jews that were in Palestine before 1914 (i.e. 20,000) should be allowed to remain, and own the 1% of the land they then owned – and the rest be extradited (Naji Alush, *The Palestinian National Movement* (Beirut, Lebanon, 1969) p. 170). "Permission to stay in Palestine should be granted to

the Jews who shall declare that they are giving up the idea of the Jewish state" (Niqula Al-Dor (one time member of the P.L.O. Executive), *Thus Lost and Thus to be Returned* (Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Hawadith Press)).

It is significant that the Arabs demand that the minority of Jews who they would let remain become 'Arabs'. "Such a state... should be explicitly & emphatically an Arab state with a minority of Jews, who from a national viewpoint, would become Arabs" (Harkabi, p.52). It could be that this meant they accepted Islam. In this case we would have an analogous situation to that in countless historical types of the last days: Israel accept the idols of the surrounding Arab world and are judged because of it.

Psa 83:13

My God, make them like tumbleweed; like chaff before the wind-
The idea of a whirlwind sweeping away Israel's enemies is the picture of Daniel 2, where the image is broken and swept away at the return of Christ. The image therefore seems to speak of a latter day domination of Israel by her surrounding enemies who for a brief time dominate *eretz* Israel.

Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). All his Psalms draw on the past dealings of God with His people and encourage them on this basis to make the wilderness journey back to the land, just as they had done at the Exodus. In this context, Psalms 83 concerns the neighbouring nations who were wanting to cut off the people of Judah who had returned at the restoration. Verse 13 asks for the prophecy of Dan. 2:44 to be fulfilled against them in the form of Messiah's coming. But this prophecy has been deferred to our last days, when a returned Israel seek the same deliverance.

Psa 83:14

As the fire that burns the forest, as the flame that sets the mountains on fire-
It would only be supernaturally intense heat which could melt and destroy a mountain. This is the language of the last days, used in Rev. 8:8 about the burning mountain of the latter day invader of Israel being cast into the sea in permanent destruction. This intense heat, approaching like a forest fire, is intended to elicit repentance from Israel's latter day abusers; see on :16,17.

Psa 83:15

so pursue them with Your tempest, and terrify them with Your storm-
The purpose of this pursuit and terror is intended to elicit repentance from Israel's latter day abusers; see on :16,17. Those who do not want this will be swept away like chaff by the wind of God's judgments; which is exactly the scene of the destruction of the image in Dan. 2. See on :13.

Psa 83:16

Fill their faces with confusion, that they may seek Your name, Yahweh-
The intention of these judgments is always so that God's enemies may repent. See on :11. Confusion or "dishonour" (AV) is required, being shamed for sin, before people guilty of this level of abuse will really repent.

Psa 83:17

Let them be disappointed and dismayed forever. Yes, let them be confounded and perish-
The emphasis upon "let them..." may suggest they are to be faced with condemnation right before their face, but in order that they seek Yahweh (:16). Their being confounded is the "confusion" of :16 which is intended to elicit their repentance. As ever, there is positive intention in God's judgments, and not at all the explosion in wrath of an offended deity. Only those who face condemnation in the face and say "yes" to it will be condemned. See on :18.

Psa 83:18 that they may know that You alone, whose name is Yahweh, are the Most High over all the earth-
There is no conscious survival of death taught in the Bible. The judgments of :17 are therefore intended not to be carried out; for after 'perishing' (:18) they can hardly know or recognize Yahweh. The description of judgment in :17 is therefore so that they might repent and accept Yahweh as king, and willingly submit to His Kingdom throughout the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham.

For the Chief Musician. On an instrument of Gath. A Psalm by the sons of Korah-
"By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

PSALMS CHAPTER 84

Psa 84:1

How lovely are Your dwellings, Yahweh of Armies!-
This appears to be a psalm of David whilst in exile either from Saul or Absalom, longing to be back in the sanctuary. But it has likely been reused and reapplied under inspiration to the exiles.

Psa 84:2

My soul longs and even faints for the courts of Yahweh. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God-
David's desire for the sanctuary has been rewritten with reference to the "courts" of the temple, which didn't exist in his time. "The living God" can be 'the God of the living ones', perhaps a reference to the glory of the cherubim seen over the ark. Yet in the wilderness Psalms, David often says that he lives under the shadow of those cherubic wings, as if even without seeing the ark and whilst far from the sanctuary, he felt as if he lived beneath God's glory, under the shadow of the cherubic wings, over the blood of atonement on the cover of the ark. But despite that awareness, he still longs for the physical, external symbols of faith, and so longs to be at the sanctuary again. It was this failure to learn his lesson that led to his obsession with building a physical temple, which God responded to negatively, initially. And it became a stumbling block for later generations because of the emphasis upon the physical symbols of religion, rather than the essence. Yet in this cry and yearning for God, we see the spirit of every believer- wanting a greater spiritual experience than we currently have. And this yearning both physically and spiritually is so necessary, for only those who have it will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. Remember that God yearns for your spirit ["He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us" James 4:5 ESV], and you are yearning for His. There will be a glorious meeting in the Kingdom. In the bigger picture, this is one window onto our physical and spiritual weaknesses and inadequacies this side of eternity.

Psa 84:3

Yes, the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself where she may have her young, near Your altars, Yahweh of Armies, my King, and my God-
The plural altars may refer to the two altars; of burnt offering, and the golden altar of incense. David recalls how wild birds flew into the sanctuary and even nested there. And he in his exile is jealous of them. He often likens himself to a bird, which is being hunted. Often David likens his enemies' plans to catch him as snares, gins etc. set for birds (e.g. Ps. 84:3; 102:6; 124;7; 140:5)- all the language of hunting birds. He had

probably done plenty of this as a youngster caring for the sheep, and the influence of those formative years remained. But extending the likeness of himself to a bird, he now wishes he could just fly into the sanctuary and nest there.

The idea is that 'Birds have their nests, and so have I found (or rather, would I like to find) a home in Your tabernacle by Your altars'. The Lord seems to allude here in saying that unlike a bird, He had nowhere to lay His head, nowhere to abide. But His desire was to abide in a spiritual Tabernacle of people, and that has now been realised through the Holy Spirit.

Psa 84:4

Blessed are those who dwell in Your house; they are always praising You. Selah-
David seems to assume that those who lived in the temple precincts were blessed because they were always praising God. But he is overlooking the principle so often expressed in his wilderness Psalms- that he could continually praise God wherever he was. It seems that like us, he learned the lesson at the time and in theory, but failed to apply it in later life, such was his human hankering after the external symbols of religion.

Psa 84:5

Blessed are those whose strength is in You; who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage-
"In whose hearts are the highways (to Zion)". The LXX has "goings up", an idea always associated with 'going up' to Zion and 'coming down' from it after attending a feast. This idea would have been appropriate for the exiles; all whose heart was set on the way back to Zion would be blessed. But most preferred to remain in Babylon. The reference is to the idea so common in Isaiah of a highway prepared from Babylon to Zion, so we could render with Rashi: "Who thinks in his heart the paving of his ways, to straighten his way". Or, "In whose hearts are the highways (to Zion)". The pilgrimage or journey to Zion from Babylon was and is above all in our hearts, in our thinking.

The LXX puts verses 5 and 6 together: "in his heart he has purposed to go up the valley of weeping, to the place which he has appointed". This is the image of a man knowing that the valley of tears is ahead, but setting his heart to pass through it, in God's strength.

Psa 84:6

Passing through the valley of Weeping, they make it a place of springs. Yes, the autumn rain covers it with blessings-
This valley of Baca (AV) was some "waterless and barren valley through which pilgrims passed on their way to Jerusalem". But it was transformed by the autumn rains, bursting forth into life. The same language is used for what could have happened to the exiles if

they followed David's path of restoration. For Is. 35:6; 41:18 use the same ideas concerning the restoration, whereby dry valleys would come alive with water and new growth. LXX "For there the lawgiver shall give blessings". In Ps. 23 David likens his exile to passing through the valley of the shadow of death, and yet confidently hopes for restoration.

The word for "Baca" really means as in 2 Sam 5:23 a kind of balsam tree, alluding to the ‘tears’ of gum which it exudes. The vale of Baca or balsam trees is surely where the phrase "Vale of tears" comes from this. Our pilgrimage to Zion is a Vale of tears but also of joy, just as Paul in Philippians expresses both joy and sorrow at the same time. The valley of Baca becomes the valley of Berachah (or blessing) in 2 Chron. 20:26. There is only a very slight difference in Hebrew between these words for 'weeping' and 'blessing'. The transformation is so easy for God. And yet through the weeping comes the blessing. But the rain of the Spirit dies give oases on the journey. There is sudden beauty and glory at times, just as the desert springs to life for a while after rain.

Psa 84:7

They go from strength to strength-
This again is language appropriate to the returning exiles, who would "renew their strength" (Is. 40:31). Those who set their heart on the journey through the valley of tears (:5) will find themselves in an upward spiral of spiritual strength, getting stronger and stronger as they advance. This is clearly a pilgrimage psalm, used as the pilgrims drew closer to appearing before God in Zion. And specifically it was intended to be used by the exiles on the way from Babylon to Zion. But seeing the exiles spurned that possibility of a glorious second exodus, it all applies to us in our journey to Zion. Our strength and firmness of purpose increases. We tread the path with a sense of triumph as we see the glorious end in sight. As the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed day by day, from the strength to strength. So often we encounter this incremental, "from strength to strength" transformation: "We, with an unveiled face and reflecting the glory of the Lord, are all transformed into his likeness from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18), "grace upon grace" (Jn. 1:16).

Each one of them appears before God in Zion-
Appearing before God is the language of attending a feast, and it was also David's desire in Ps. 42:2. And yet the wilderness Psalms claim that he felt just as close to God as ever before, even though he could not keep the feasts whilst on the run. But he seems to be jealous of those who could. The power of religion and the desire to perform religious ritual is seen very strongly in David, and as with us, the pole of religiosity struggles against that of personal spirituality.

Literally, “He shall appear to God in Zion". Appearing before God may refer to every male needing to appear before God at the feasts in Zion. It was probably part of a pilgrimage

song. Our equivalent is in the breaking of bread. But ultimately this in turn points forward to judgment day when every man shall appear before God and stand revealed and naked before Him.

LXX and some translations of the Hebrew: "the God of gods shall be seen in Sion". This is the idea repeated at the end of Rev. 21,22- that God Himself shall be seen in Jerusalem. No wonder the path to that meeting must be through the valley of tears (see on :5). And yet the text can also be read as "each one of them appears before God in Zion". The ambiguity is because we appear before God and He appears before us. The ambiguity expresses the mutual, face to face meeting between God and every of His children. Hence in :9 we have the invitation to look upon our face. This is the final end of the valley of tears.

Psa 84:8

Yahweh, God of Armies, hear my prayer; listen, God of Jacob. Selah-
The reference to "Armies" may suggest an understanding that God's Angels would guide David back to the sanctuary; "God of Jacob" is likewise an Angelic phrase (Gen. 48:16).

Psa 84:9

Behold, God our shield, look at the face of Your anointed-
It was David who was the anointed of God, and so this Psalm likely originated whilst he was anointed but not crowned, on the run from Saul, in exile therefore from the sanctuary. The reference to God as shield is another reminder to himself that he was of the true seed of Abraham (Gen. 15:1). But we can also see in this a reference to the high priest, who is called the anointed priest (Lev. 4:3,5,16; 6:22). God is asked to look at the face of this anointed ["Christ"], High Priestly figure- and on that basis accept us.

Psa 84:10

For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the tent of my God-
This reflects the feelings of the righteous remnant in Babylon- e.g. the thought that just one day in God's temple is better than a thousand days in Babylon's "tents of wickedness" (Ps. 84:10). Doorkeepers in the house of their God was exactly what the sons of Korah were (1 Chron. 9:19; 26:1,12-19); perhaps this Psalm was appropriated by them whilst in Babylon. Dwelling in the tents of wickedness would be therefore a disassociation from their ancestor Korah (Num. 16:26).

2 Pet. 3:8 surely alludes here in saying that with God, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand as a day. The 1:1000 ratio is again used, the idea being with God a day with

Him is like, or as Ps. 84:10 explains, is better than, 1000 days of life in the pleasures of the world.

'Being a doorkeeper' could also be understood as "to sit habitually on the threshold and by the doorpost". Just possibly the idea is that just being able to look into the Kingdom of God would be better than living in the world. "I had rather stand / lie at the threshold" has similarities with Uriah doing this at David's threshold. If David wrote this during his exile from Absalom, he would have had the visual image of Uriah that night. And felt that this was him. Such a line of thought certainly has psychological credibility.

Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness-
Perhaps the reference is the same as in Ps. 120:5, where David laments that he must dwell among the tents of Kedar, when he would far rather be in the sanctuary. Kedar was the second son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13), one of the wild roaming tribes whose hand was against every man (Gen. 16:13). Perhaps there was a time when fleeing from Saul when David had to live amongst them, and he longs to be back in Zion. Or perhaps he simply means that he has to live among hostile and barbarous people, who are characterized as the wild Kedar and Meshech.

Whatever the primary reference of this Psalm, it is a reworking of David's feelings when persecuted by Saul and likewise on the run from him. For circumstances repeat in our lives, and it would be natural for David to reconsider Psalms written at the time of one exile and apply them to another, just as these Psalms were also used for others in their times of exile. "Wickedness" is the word used about Saul's persecution in 1 Sam. 24:13. Perhaps he felt that whilst working as a musician in Saul's palace he was living in tents of wickedness.

Psa 84:11

For Yahweh God is a sun and a shield-
Sun worship was prevalent at the time, so the psalmist is insisting that for us, the sun is only Yahweh. He is the equivalent for us of all the world's most popular idols. It is another reminder to himself that he was of the true seed of Abraham (Gen. 15:1).

Yahweh will give grace and glory. He withholds no good thing from those who walk blamelessly-
We wonder at David's possible arrogance in assuming that he or any man can walk blamelessly. Only the Lord Jesus fits this. And yet this is the phrase used in God's command to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:1). It was only possible for Abraham to do so by his faith in imputed righteousness, by grace through faith. But it's questionable as to whether David at this point realized that; he had to learn it through reflection upon the wonder of how God had counted him righteous after the sin with Bathsheba. Grace leads to glory; it precedes it. This is Paul's point too (Rom. 8:29,30).

Psa 84:12

Yahweh of Armies, blessed is the man who trusts in You-
Ps. 2:12 has David saying the same. Despite all the longing for being physically present in the temple, David concludes that the greatest blessing is not that, but rather having a heart which trusts in Yahweh and His armies of Angels for restoration in the end. And this was the lesson for the exiles, and for us too.

PSALMS CHAPTER 85

Psa 85:1

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by the sons of Korah-
"By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

Yahweh, You have been favourable to Your land. You have restored the fortunes of Jacob-
This may be an example of the 'prophetic perfect', speaking of that yet future, that being asked for, as if it had already happened. Or we could call this language 'fantasy', of the kind we may enjoy when looking forward to the kingdom age. The rest of the Psalm makes it clear that they were not at that time restored, and were still under God's wrath.

But the phrase for 'favourable to Your land' is that used of how during the exile, the land would "enjoy" her Sabbaths (Lev. 26:34,41)- until the people repented. But there is no emphasis upon repentance, just a passionate belief that God ought to remove the consequences of their sin. Likewise 'restoring the fortunes' is the phrase for 'return the captivity', which would happen only when Israel returned to Yahweh (Dt. 30:2,3). But there is no mention of the need for this returning to Yahweh.

Psa 85:2

You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin. Selah-
Asaph lived at the time of the restoration (Ezra 2:41). Ps. 85 reflects how that faithful remnant believed that God had forgiven them (Ps. 85:2), and therefore they asked for His anger to cease and for Him to lead their feet in the way which would lead back to Zion (Ps. 85:4,13 RV). But we note that there is a plea for forgiveness and faith this would be granted; but little emphasis upon repentance. The prophets required that Judah 'return' to their God in repentance [s.w.] so that they might return to the land.

We also note that forgiveness is seen as 'covering' of sin. This was absolutely possible in Old Testament times, even without the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. That sacrifice was to as it were flag human attention and elicit faith in the fact that God really does forgive sin and save people. For God is not a pagan deity requiring the blood of a human before He can forgive. David spoke of the blessedness of the man like him whose sin was covered, because he had not himself covered or hid it (Ps. 32:1,5). But the exiles needed to follow the pattern of David in repentance and restoration.

Psa 85:3

You have taken away all Your wrath, You have turned from the fierceness of Your anger-
This and Ps. 78:38 seems to suggest God Himself controlled His anger, Himself turning that anger away, rather than being like a pagan deity whose anger was appeased by blood sacrifice. God turned from His anger due to Moses' intercession (Ex. 32:12 s.w.), but this is not to say that He cannot in any case turn away His anger, simply by His grace. Just as we may control our anger from within ourselves, or at other times we may do this because of the appeal of another to us, or because there is repentance from the one who provoked us. And there were times when this was the case with God (s.w. Num. 25:4; Josh. 7:26; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8).

Psa 85:4

Turn us, God of our salvation, and cause Your indignation toward us to cease-
The psalmist believed that God could turn the hearts of men to repentance; for repentance is itself a gift of God (Acts 11:18). God is able to work directly upon human hearts to bring about repentance. But we wonder whether the psalmist would not have been better in confessing their sin as Daniel does in Dan. 9, and Ezra likewise; rather than as it were asking God to do the work of repentance for them.

Psa 85:5

Will You be angry with us forever? Will You draw out Your anger to all generations?-
The same words are used in Jer. 17:4 about how God's anger would indeed burn for ever

because of what Judah had done. Again we enquire why there is not an acceptance of this and a confession of sin, rather than repeatedly asking simply for the consequence of sin to be taken away. It was because of this lack of repentance that the envisaged restoration didn't take place as was potentially possible.

Verses 1-4 have laboured how at the restoration, God had totally forgiven all Judah's sins and removed His wrath. But now the psalmist says that God's anger continues, and they need a revival (:6). But that had already been done for them. Here we have the spiritual schizophrenia Paul complains of in Rom. 7. We see sin forgiven and dealt with, but then act and feel as if we are still beneath that burden.

Psa 85:6

Won't You revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?-
The implication seems to be that they would not rejoice in their God unless He revived them, by removing the consequence of their sins irrespective of their repentance. Israel would live or be revived if they repented (Ez. 33:19 s.w.). And yet by grace, God did speak of how His Spirit would revive the dead bones of Israel (s.w. Ez. 37:5,6,9). Seeing they had not repented, this was amazing grace to even offer that. The work of the Spirit does the same today; for repentance is itself a gift of God (Acts 11:18). But like the exiles, we can refuse even that, and remain in exile from God because the old and familiar seems somehow better than revival with Him. See on :7.

Psa 85:7

Show us Your grace, Yahweh. Grant us Your salvation-
This was the grace spoken of in :6; to revive them through the Spirit even whilst impenitent (Ez. 37:5), even though such revival was predicated upon repentance (Ez. 33:19). Such grace is the giving of salvation, but even that we have to accept and actually want it.

Psa 85:8

I will hear what God, Yahweh, will speak, for He will speak peace to His people, His saints; but let them not turn again to folly-
The psalmist may here be finally hinting that at least he personally will hear or be obedient to God's word. But only in faith that God would grant the peace of forgiveness to His people. Such grace ought to mean that they never against turned to "folly", probably a reference to idolatry. LXX "and to those that turn their heart toward Him". We have read several times of the appeal for God to turn His people to Himself and to turn to them; but there has to be some turning to Him, no matter how weakly.

Psa 85:9

Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, so that glory may dwell in our land-
The glory of God had been seen by Ezekiel leaving Jerusalem and going into captivity; but the prophetic hope was that it would return. But Israel had to "fear Him" to receive that great salvation, and Ezekiel records how the exiles continued in idolatry. The language of salvation coming near is used of the real possibility of some form of God's Kingdom coming for the exiles had they returned from Babylon and established that Kingdom. Hence Is. 51:5; 56:5 "My righteousness is near, My salvation is gone forth… My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed".

Psa 85:10

Mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other-
The idea may be that God's mercy would be given to those who were faithful ["truth"] to the covenant. "Mercy and truth" often refer to the promises to Abraham, which were the basis of the new covenant offered to the exiles in Jeremiah and Ezekiel, seeing they had broken the old covenant. Peace with God would come if the people devoted themselves to righteousness. This was the prophetic vision of the psalmist, but the reality was that the exiles didn't abide in the covenant, they tried to keep the broken old covenant and rejected the new covenant. And they were hardly characterized by a love of righteousness, as the history in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Malachi and Esther reveals.

Doing truth and righteousness is a way of saying, to keep the new covenant. If the exiles would have done so, God would have responded passionately. Israel's living in "truth" would have been responded to by God's kindness. Their acceptance of "the Lord our righteousness" would have elicited peace with God. If we ask where and when mercy and truth, the answer ultimately is in the cross of the Lord Jesus. For He was "full of grace and truth", supremely displayed there (Jn. 1:16). Through Him, God could both be ultimately just, and also the justifier of all who believe in His Son (Rom. 3:26).

Psa 85:11

Truth springs out of the earth, righteousness has looked down from heaven-
The idea is that Israel would abide in truth, in faithfulness to the new covenant; and God's righteousness would come from heaven in faithful response to that. See on :10.

Psa 85:12

Yes, Yahweh will give that which is good. Our land will yield its increase-
The revived spiritual state of the people would be reflected in the prophesied kingdom

conditions coming in the land. But there were famines when the exiles returned; this great prophetic potential was reapplied and rescheduled to Judah's final repentance in the last days.

Psa 85:13

Righteousness goes before Him, and prepares the way for His steps-
This is the language of later Isaiah about the way back to Zion being prepared. But those wonderful prophecies of restoration were precluded by the impenitence of the exiles, and their preference (for the most part) to remain in exile. The idea may be as in CEV "making a path for you to follow". We are to follow in God's footsteps. He has already walked the path to our salvation ahead of us, being outside time. And He has left footprints, which we are to place our feet in.

PSALMS CHAPTER 86

Psa 86:1

A Prayer by David.
Hear, Yahweh, and answer me, for I am poor and needy-
It is quite right and acceptable to plead our smallness rather than any merit. A child turns to a parent for help because they are a child. And there is this element in our relationship with God. But David will go on to plead various merits, on which basis he asks for God to hear him. So it's as if he is trying absolutely every argument, until eventually in the closing verses he just throws himself upon God's grace.

David had seen himself as "poor and needy", needing grace after his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:16,22). He wished Solomon to likewise have pity on the "poor and needy" amongst the Gentiles, those who had likewise repented (Ps. 72:13). And David was especially desirous to himself see the "poor and needy" blessed and accepted as he had been (Ps. 82:3,4; 113:7). It is our personal experience of needing grace which leads us to have a heart for those like us, the poor and needy. Any other motivation will ultimately not abide. Solomon appears to glorify his mother Bathsheba for likewise pitying the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9,20).

Psa 86:2

Preserve my soul, for I am Godly. You, my God, save Your servant who trusts in You-
Psalm 86 is a Psalm where David constantly speaks of his need for God's forgiveness (Ps. 86:3,5,15,16). And yet David in the same Psalm can say: "Preserve my soul; for I am holy" (Ps. 86:2). He again has this sense of his own integrity and imputed righteousness,

in the midst of realizing his need for God's grace and forgiveness. David's repentance is a pattern for ours, day by day. See on Ps. 41:12.

The word translated "Godly" is related to *hesed*. David says that he has shown *hesed*, grace or mercy, and therefore God must show this to him. But he hadn't always shown grace. His attempts to present his merits as deserving Divine response are frankly pathetic every time.

Psa 86:3

Be merciful to me Lord, for I call to You all day long-
Prayer is part of the *atmosphere* of spiritual life, not something hived off and separate- it is an expression of our spirit. Thus there are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (Ps. 86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

David argues that he prays regularly and not just when in crisis. That is indeed how we should be, but again David is pleading his merits. David says because he prays much, he should be heard. Which is true and not true; for the Lord rebukes those who think they shall be heard because of their much speaking to Him: "for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Mt. 6:7). All his reasons as to why he should be answered by God are all arguing that he has merit and should be heard. Perhaps therefore we are to read the final verse :17 as simply giving up with all that, and throwing himself upon God's grace. This is indeed how many lives end.

Psa 86:4

Bring joy to the soul of Your servant, for to You, Lord, do I lift up my soul-
There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. David lifts himself up to God (Ps. 25:1; 28:2; 86:4), and asks God to lift up Himself in response (Ps. 7:6; 10:12; 94:2).

Psa 86:5

For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive; abundant in grace to all those who call on You-
As noted on :1, David feels he can say he is "holy" ["Godly"], and yet feels in need of forgiveness and grace. His sense of holiness was therefore because he believed

righteousness could be imputed. Or we could conclude that one can still feel basically "Godly" even when having sinned and needing forgiveness.

Psa 86:6

Hear, Yahweh, my prayer; listen to the voice of my petitions-
David's prayer for help in time of trouble (:7) was therefore associated with a feeling the need for forgiveness (:5). Presumably this Psalm dates from a time when he faced distress and danger as a consequence of his sin with Bathsheba. He believed his sin had been forgiven, and at the time rejoiced in the grace shown him. And yet he still feels the need to ask for forgiveness. This is not necessarily a collapse of faith (although it could be). Rather is it a quite normal abiding realization that he has sinned and needs forgiveness. Just as we may sin against a person and be forgiven, and yet still feel the need later to again ask their forgiveness for that sin. This is not necessarily a lack of faith in the forgiveness granted, but a quite natural abiding awareness of our status before that person.

Psa 86:7

In the day of my trouble I will call on You, for You will answer me-
See on :6. He asks God to save him in the language of Israel's Red Sea deliverance, speaking of it as "the day of *my* trouble" (Ps. 86:7,8 = Ex. 15:11). He saw how their circumstances and his were in principle the same; he personalized the Scripture he had read. Likewise David invites us to come and see the works God did at the Red Sea, commenting: "there did *we* rejoice in him" (Ps. 66:5,6).

The intention of David's Psalms was to share his experience of God's grace and salvation with others. This Psalm is very clear- David is saying 'May this be true for you as it was for me'. And this is really the basis of all our witness. It was David who had been answered in his 'days of trouble', and set on high (Ps. 20:1). His desire was fulfilled- for this verse of the Psalm clearly was reapplied to the "day of trouble" of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3) and also to the Babylonian traumas of the exiles (s.w. Jer. 16:19; 30:7; Nah. 1:7; Hab. 3:16). See on Ex. 25:8.

"Troubles" is the word used of Jacob's time of trouble (Gen. 35:3; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). David's experience of trouble was representative of how the exiles and all God's people could ultimately follow the path of Jacob to deliverance out of exile and from his strong enemies. But in Ps. 71:20 David sees his deliverance from the day of trouble as ultimately being in the resurrection of the body, being 'brought up again from the depths of the earth'.

David appears to be arguing that whenever he has troubles, he has always called upon God- and so God should answer him now. Again it appears to be a pleading of merit, on which basis he thinks he can persuade or cajole God into answering him at this point.

Psa 86:8

There is no one like You among the gods, Lord, nor any deeds like Your deeds-
This is a tacit recognition that there was a tendency to idolatry at David's time; and through this song he teaches against this. His argument is that Yahweh is so great that if there are any other gods around, they are insignificant. Likewise the Lord Jesus didn't state in so many words that demons don't exist; but the scale of His miracles indicated that even if they did they were effectively powerless. See on :10.

Psa 86:9

All nations You have made will come and worship before You, Lord. They shall glorify Your name-
David was perhaps the greatest example of all the Old Testament figures of wanting to see the conversion of the Gentiles, implicit as it was within the promises to Abraham. And he used his music ministry to try to spread this message. He makes this request in the context of asking for forgiveness (see on :6), and so many of the Bathsheba Psalms feature this desire to use his sin and forgiveness as an opportunity to reach out to the entire world with the message of God's grace for them.

Psa 86:10

For You are great, and do wondrous things-
As discussed on Ps. 71:19, the "great / wondrous things" performed by God were His forgiveness and salvation of a condemned sinner like David (see on :6,9). This is described in Ps. 71:19 as God doing "great things", the phrase used of the great things worked in visible miracles in Egypt (Ps. 106:21) and at creation (Ps. 136:7). But the forgiveness of people like David is no less a great miracle. Such great things are done because of His mercy / grace (Ps. 136:4).

You alone are God-
As noted on :8, this is a tacit recognition that there was a tendency to idolatry at David's time; and through this song he teaches against this.

Psa 86:11

Teach me Your way, Yahweh; I will walk in Your truth-
A passing sense of wonder at the night sky as a man glances at it for a few moments

longer than usual one evening from his balcony... needs to lead to the questions in response to God's questions: Who or what is He? What is His Name, His hope for me, His ability... how should I respond? And the answers to those questions aren't in nature itself, but in God's word. "You are great and do wonders... teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in your way" (Ps. 86:10,11). The moments of wonder which God affords His creatures aren't intended to lead them into wild speculation; but rather to incite them to seek His revealed truth in His word.

Make my heart undivided to fear Your name-
See on :12. Again we see a clear faith in God's ability to work directly upon the human heart, giving us a new psychology. This is what we most urgently need, and is what the gift of the Holy Spirit is all about. "Undivided" is literally "one". Perhaps James is alluding here when he warns against having a double heart or mind (James 1:8). This desire for God to unite our heart is so important in an age when the mind is distracted by constantly being bombarded with information. Peter may have had this verse in mind when he urges us to gird up the loins of our mind. In the future Kingdom, we will praise God with all our heart (:12), and David wanted that single minded focus right now too. Israel were asked to love Yahweh with all their heart, and the new covenant promises the help of the Spirit in this in Jer. 32:39, “I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me for ever".

Psa 86:12

I will praise You, Lord my God, with my whole heart; I will glorify Your name forever-
David has just asked for an undivided heart (:11), and so this promise to praise God with his "whole heart" is not because he considers he has a "whole heart". But he asks for it, and believes he will receive; and vows to give this heart to God.

Psa 86:13

For Your grace is great toward me, You have delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol-
The undivided heart David has asked for in :11 is because God's grace has been so great to him, in saving him from death. He wanted his heart to be totally full of awareness of God's grace, for ever (:12), far beyond just a passing gasp of gratitude for salvation from death. David believed death was unconsciousness, as we have often noted in the Psalms. Yet he appears to use a common term, "the lowest sheol", meaning the worst kind of death. As with the language of demons, or our usage of English words like "Monday" [moon day], language of the day can be used without actually believing in it. "The lowest sheol" may refer to condemnation, as it seems to in Dt. 32:22. David is perhaps reflecting on his deliverance from the condemnation due him for his sins with

Bathsheba. If God had saved him spiritually, surely He could save him physically from whatever was his immediate issue.

Psa 86:14

God, the proud have risen up against me; a company of violent men have sought after my soul, and they don't hold regard for You before them-
The reference may be to Saul and his men, or to the Absalom conspiracy. See on :6. The implication is that these men were not true believers in God; I noted on :8,10 David's concern that there was idolatry within Israel, and maybe this included Absalom.

AV "And have not set thee before them". Awareness of the presence of God naturally affects thought and behaviour. This is one transforming outcome of the presence of the Comforter, the presence of the Lord Jesus in our hearts. This naturally results in a sanctified life. These men lived without this sense of God's presence, they did not set God before them.

Psa 86:15

But You, Lord, are a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in grace and truth-
"Mercy and truth" often refer to the promises made to Abraham. David appeals to basics in his desperate straits; the promises to Abraham, and the character of God as revealed to Moses in Ex. 34:4-6.

Psa 86:16

Show me a sign of Your goodness, that those who hate me may see it and be shamed, because You, Yahweh, have helped me and comforted me-
Again David is using the prophetic perfect, speaking of future things as if they are already received; for he asks in :17 for urgent attention and mercy from God. His request for some visible sign was in order that his enemies might be "shamed", and perhaps from that shame led to repentance.

"Mark with me with a good sign" may be an allusion to the marking of a slave, to show whose property he was. Here and in :17 we perhaps see a total surrender to God, moving away from asking God to hear him because of his various merits and other reasons.

Psa 86:17

Turn to me, and have mercy on me! Give Your strength to Your servant, save the son of Your handmaid-

These words are true for David, and yet they have a strange appropriacy to the Lord Jesus in His time of desperate need. The Lord's mind was upon His mother in His time of dying. The spirit of Christ speaks of "thy [male] servant… the son of thine handmaid" [female servant]- He saw the solidarity between Himself and His mother when on the cross, He felt they were both the servants of God. Ps. 86:8-17 has many references back to Mary's song. He had that song on His mind on the cross. Her example and her song which she had taught him as a little boy sustained His faith in the final crisis. This surely shows the value and power of the upbringing of children when young. In the Lord's case, His mother's influence sustained Him through the cruelest cross and deepest crisis any human being has ever had to go through. It was as if He was humming the song in His mind, which His dear mum had sung around the house as she cared for Him, cooked, sewed…

All his reasons as to why he should be answered by God are all arguing that he has merit and should be heard. Perhaps therefore we are to read the final verse :17 as simply giving up with all that, and throwing himself upon God's grace or "mercy". This is indeed how many lives end.

And yet this appeal to "save the son of Your female servant / handmaid" implies David considered his mother to have been a righteous woman, and he asks for God to answer him because of that. We naturally enquire whether such a request was legitimate. If you had no mother or she was an atheist, does that somehow count against the efficacy of your prayers? It seems to me that David is desperately playing any card he thinks he has. For the grounds on which he asks for help in this Psalm often seem to lack total legitimacy. Claiming that his mother was also God's servant is an allusion to being servants 'born in the house' (Gen. 14:14), who were considered the most trusted and dependable. In this case David is again rather desperate in his reasoning, arguing that he was a household servant and therefore automatically very loyal to God. Which in reality he had not always been.

PSALMS CHAPTER 87

Psa 87:1

A Psalm by the sons of Korah; a Song-
"By" can as well be "for", so the Psalm may still be Davidic, but is dedicated to the memory of the sons of Korah. Korah had died in rebellion against God, but his children had been preserved (Num. 26:9-11); they therefore became representative of all who had overcome bad background to worship Yahweh independently, regardless of the sins of their fathers. They were therefore inspirational to the righteous remnant amongst the

exiles in Babylon. Or these "sons of Korah" may refer to a group of musicians who were to perform the Psalm, the Levitical singers mentioned in 1 Chron. 26:1,2; 2 Chron. 20:19. Or if we insist on reading "by", it could have been a Davidic Psalm edited and as it were released by a group called "the sons of Korah" during the captivity in Babylon.

The title of Ps. 88 may well apply to this Psalm, according to the theory of J.W. Thirtle that some Psalm titles got attached to the Psalm ahead of them. The Hebrew words for dancing with all the might when David brought the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:14) are similar to the title of Ps. 88, *mahaloth leannoth,* which seems to actually apply to Ps. 87, which would then reflect David's feelings at this time.

The first three verses of the Psalm appear to be the psalmist or "the sons of Korah" speaking. Then we have God's voice in :4, then that of the people in :5,6, and then in :7 again the psalmist or "the sons of Korah". The initial descriptions of Jerusalem as God's favourite dwelling place, "the city of God" etc. are similar to Ps. 46:5; 48:1,2,3,9 and elsewhere. But then God's voice turns all that national pride upside down. The true Jerusalem which God counts is a woman who is the mother of Gentile believers; not simply the geographical, literal capital of Israel. This is exactly in line with the descriptions of Zion triumphant in Isaiah- the joyful mother of many Gentile children (Is. 50:1; 54:1-3). Instead of any image of Gentile pilgrims flowing to Zion, this Psalm speaks of them being born within her and counted as her people. They are the true "daughter of Zion". The language and conceptions would have been very hard for any nationalistic Jew to entertain. Philistia, Tyre and Ethiopia were all their historical enemies- but God would count such nationals as having been born in Zion. God's ultimate record book lists such Gentiles as born in Zion (:6); they are written in the book of life, the specific definition of His true people.

His foundation is in the holy mountains-
Perhaps an intensive plural for the one great mountain, Zion, which he now speaks of in :2. He believes that God has founded Zion, and ultimately she will not be moved. Given the tragic history of the Jerusalem temple and the city itself, this takes some faith to believe. The idea may be that the holy mountains, the great mountain of Zion, is the foundation of Yahweh. This would mean the image is of Yahweh ultimately being literally enthroned over Zion, His throne coming from Heaven to earth as envisaged in Rev. 21,22.

Psa 87:2

Yahweh loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob-
As discussed on Ps. 78, we wonder whether Yahweh had indeed loved Zion as much as David did. He appears to transfer his own excessive fondness for Zion onto God. For God made it clear to David that He doesn't live in specific geographical locations and

sacred spaces, but in the hearts of men. And in Ps. 78 David argued, perhaps too far, that God had rejected Ephraim and Shiloh, and chosen Judah, David and Zion. See on Ps. 78:51,68,69,72.

Psa 87:3

Glorious things are spoken about you, city of God. Selah-
What exactly had God spoken specifically about Zion, given His statements that He doesn't live in specific geographical locations and sacred spaces, but in the hearts of men? See on :2. It could be that this verse is simply a preface for the revelations about Zion which David now makes. But we wonder whether this is actual revelation from God, or just the inspired record of what David wished to be true of Zion. The word for "glorious things", things of "honour", is used of how God honours persons and behaviour rather than geographical locations and spaces.

Psa 87:4

I will record Rahab and Babylon among those who acknowledge me. Behold, Philistia, Tyre and also Ethiopia: This one was born there-
The vision is of the Gentiles from all points of the compass [that appears to be the reason behind the choice of the nations here listed] accepting Zion and being born within her. The Gentiles were to come and dwell in Zion, and this would be a cause of joy to the spiritually minded Israelite (see on :7). This "birth" in Zion may be another way of saying that they were equally Israelite as the ethnic Jews who were born there. God's Israel would be predicated upon spiritual and not ethnic lines.

GNB gives the impression that this psalm is prophesying that the saved Gentiles would all be born in Zion. Consider: "the people of Philistia, Tyre, and Ethiopia I will number among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Of Zion it will be said that all nations belong there and that the Almighty will make her strong. The LORD will write a list of the peoples and include them all as citizens of Jerusalem. They dance and sing, "In Zion is the source of all our blessings"". In this case, Paul surely has all this in mind when teaching that the heavenly Jerusalem is "the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26). This idea is repeated in Heb. 12:22,23: "You have come to association with mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborns, who are enrolled in heaven". As in Ps. 87, Paul is comparing and contrasting the literal Jerusalem "that now is" with the true Jerusalem which God sees; the "heavenly Jerusalem" we read of in Revelation.

Psa 87:5

Yes, of Zion it will be said, This one and that one was born in her; the Most High Himself will establish her-
LXX "But as for Zion, she shall be called Mother, for each and every man was born in her". This is clearly the basis of Zion being called "the mother of us all" (Gal. 4). As explained on :4, the birth of Gentiles in Zion is to be understood as their conversion to the God of Israel there in Zion, presumably through visiting the temple which David envisaged being built there and being taught there. The promise to David was that his kingdom and his throne, reigned upon by his great Messianic seed, would be "established" by God eternally (1 Chron. 17:11,12,14 s.w.). But he appears to have become over literal and religious in interpreting this as meaning that Zion itself would be eternally established. The account of bringing the ark to Zion is prefaced by the record of David's sons who were born in Jerusalem. But we read nothing further about them. This could all be read as part of David's attempt to establish his own dynasty in Zion, which God responded to in 2 Sam. 7 by saying that He would establish David's Kingdom in His own way, through David's seed, the Lord Jesus. Likewise in Ps. 132:17 David puts words in God's mouth: "There [in Zion / Jerusalem] will I make the horn of David to bud". But the budding of David's horn was fulfilled by God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the great "son of David", rather than in David having many sons in Jerusalem.

Psa 87:6

Yahweh will count, when He writes up the peoples, This one was born there. Selah-
The idea may be that at the final count at judgment day, God would accept as His true people those Gentiles who had been "born" in Zion, who had there made a commitment to His covenant (see on :4,5). But David may be hinting that his dynasty was going to reign eternally from Zion and his long line of kings which he envisaged would all be born there. God interjected His promises of 2 Sam. 7 onto David's plans. David's line was indeed long but it was broken, the temple was destroyed, and Zion was ploughed over. The eternal dynasty only came true through the Lord Jesus and God's grace, not through David's efforts to self establish.

But this had specific potential reference to the restoration. Ezra 2:62 records Judah being 'reckoned by genealogies', using the same Hebrew word which is the hallmark of 1 Chron. (4:33; 5:1,7,17; 7:5,7,9,40; 9:1,22). And in this context, Is. 40:26 compares God's 'bringing out' of Judah from Babylon with His 'bringing out' the stars by their individual names, all wonderfully known to Him. Ps. 87:6 had prophesied something similar about the restoration of Zion's fortunes: "The LORD shall count, when he writes up the people, that this man was born there". The Kingdom of God was to be the restoration of Israel's Kingdom- but they had to actually get on and restore it rather than wait for it to come. This is another reason for understanding Ezekiel's temple as being broadly of the same dimensions as that of Solomon. The "writing of the people" is the same word used in

Ezra 2:62 and Neh. 7:64 of the list of the members of the Jews, from which Jews could be excluded by marrying unbelievers / Gentiles. But here we read that Gentiles will be in that "writing" and counted as born in Zion. It was considered hugely significant to have been born in Jerusalem. Women went to Jerusalem to give birth. But God is the one who inscribes the record, and being physically born in literal Jerusalem is here shown to be irrelevant. The essence is that there in Jerusalem, at the Lord's final judgment, the books will be opened and there we will be immortalized, fully "born of the Spirit" into eternity. And the names in that book of life will include Gentiles and even individuals from Egypt, Babylon and other Gentile lands whom Jewish nationalists had once despised.

Psa 87:7

Those who sing as well as those who dance say, All my springs are in You-
LXX "The dwelling of all within thee is as the dwelling of those that rejoice". Those dwelling within Zion are the Gentiles who have accepted Zion and the God of Israel who is manifest there (:4); and far from being nationalistic and elitist, the Jews were to rejoice in this conversion of the Gentiles. Rejoicing in the springs that are in Zion is the scene of Is. 12:3, drawing water out of the wells of salvation. The joy related to Jerusalem is because it is there that we will be immortalized; for that is where the judgment seat will be. That is where, geographically, we will enter eternity. And we will rejoice eternally from then onwards throughout eternity.

PSALMS CHAPTER 88

Psa 88:1

A Song. A Psalm by the sons of Korah. For the Chief Musician. To the tune of The Suffering of Affliction. A contemplation by Heman, the Ezrahite-
The Psalm is clearly by David, probably referring to his illness when suffering for his sin with Bathsheba; there are various parallels with Ps. 22 which is from this background. It is "by" or "for" Heman and the sons of Korah to perform, or perhaps musically arranged by Heman, who appears to have lived in Solomon's time (1 Kings 4:31).

Mahalath Leannoth can be translated "the suffering of affliction", or it could be "Dancing with all the might". According to the theory of J.W. Thirtle, some Psalm titles got attached to the Psalm ahead of them. The Hebrew words for dancing with all the might would then allude to how David brought the ark to Zion (2 Sam. 6:14). And Ps. 87 is clearly about this.

Psalm 88 is another psalm of the sons of Korah, whose father and relatives perished in sheol. But they recognize that this was their rightful end to, and they can only be saved from it by grace: "'My soul has come to Sheol... I am reckoned with those [Korah and his rebellious family] that descend to the Pit...like the pierced-

through [the rebels in the family of Korah] who lie in the grave... You have laid me in the Pit below, in darkness, in the depths... separated from my companions [family members]". They felt their death was in essence that of their rebellious relatives. They were no better, but saved by grace. We see here their humility in recognizing that as the Lord put it in Lk. 14, the dramatic death of some doesn't mean that we ourselves are not also sinners who shall also die. Only grace can save us, and they came to that conclusion.

Yahweh, the God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before You-
Prayer is part of the *atmosphere* of spiritual life, not something hived off and separate- it is an expression of our spirit. Thus there are verses which speak of many daily prayers as being just one prayer (Ps. 86:3,6; 88:1,2); prayer is a way / spirit of life, not something specific which occurs for a matter of minutes each day. The commands to "pray without ceasing" simply can't be literally obeyed (1 Thess. 5:17). "Watch and pray *always*" in the last days likewise connects prayer with *watchfulness*, which is an attitude of mind rather than something done on specific occasions. This is not to say that prayer *in no sense* refers to formal, specific prayer. Evidently it does, but it is only a verbal crystallization of our general spirit of life.

David's first waking moments were naturally of prayer to God. And this is our pattern. He often mentions his habit of regular prayer morning and evening (Ps. 5:3; 55:17; 59:16; 88:3; 119:147). This should not have to be enforced upon us, but rather the natural outcome of a life lived in constant connection with God. David perceived that the Mosaic ritual of morning and evening sacrifice taught the sacrifice of prayer should be made in daily life, even though at the time of many of the Psalms, David was exiled from the sanctuary. This exile from organized religion led him to make this connection, as it can for us too.

Psa 88:2

Let my prayer enter into Your presence, turn Your ear to my cry-
David imagined the words of prayer as entering into the very presence of God in heaven. This is an awesome conception; that the words of a man at a bus stop in south London can enter to the very presence of God's throne room. It is the same idea as in Ps. 18:6,7, where David's words enter God's presence and trigger massive response on earth: "In my distress I called on Yahweh, and cried to my God. He heard my voice out of His temple; my cry before Him came into His ears. Then the earth shook and trembled". This prayer is an expression of desperation and is lacking in faith on many points. But the psalmist asks God to all the same allow it into His very presence because he believes God responds to circumstance rather than simply to words of faith nicely expressed.

Psa 88:3

for my soul is full of troubles, my life draws near to Sheol-
See on :4. The Lord's soul was likewise sorrowful unto death in Gethsemane, as if the stress alone nearly killed Him (Mk. 14:34). "My soul is full of troubles, and my life (therefore) draweth nigh unto the grave" (Ps. 88:3). Is. 53:10-12 speaks of the fact that the Lord's *soul* suffered as being the basis of our redemption; the mind contained within that spat upon head, as it hung on that tortured body; this was where our salvation was won. Death is the ultimately intense experience, and living a life dedicated to death would have had an intensifying effect upon the Lord's character and personality.

Psa 88:4

I am counted among those who go down into the pit. I am like a man who has no help-

David sees *sheol* (:3) as "the pit", the grave, not as a place of conscious existence. Like Job, he feels he is facing imminent death with no helper or comforter. Or we could point the Hebrew "And I am stripped among the dead, like the mortally wounded", as if he had been slain on the battlefield. Perhaps in this case he had Saul and Jonathan in mind, and felt he was no better than Saul. See on :5. This is the classic rambling fantasy of deep depression.

Psa 88:5

set apart among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more- they are cut off from Your hand-

Clearly, David sees death as unconsciousness, with no torment nor reward from God at that point. "Set apart" or "cast out" suggests David imagined his corpse amongst others, waiting to be thrown into a hastily dug pit (:5). "Cut off" is the word in the mouth of a depressed Israel in Ez. 37:11, when they consider themselves "cut off"- a status defined in Ps. 88:5 as meaning God would never remember them again, they had died the death of Divine condemnation. This sets up the wonder of God's resurrection of these cut off, condemned, dead bones. Just as David in Ps. 88:5 felt during his life that he was at this point, so did they; but from that they were lifted up in the power and grace of resurrection. This is how low we have to get- a stage beyond merely mouthing the words "I know I'm a sinner". We have to feel condemnation, as Peter did as he wept bitterly in the darkness [both of which are the fate of the condemned]. But from there, we can be revived by the Spirit.

"Cut off from Your hand" could refer to the cutting off or out of a soldier from the list of an army roll, once the soldier is killed. We noted a similar battle allusion on :4.

Psa 88:6

You have laid me in the lowest pit, in the darkest depths-

David believed death was unconsciousness, as we have often noted in the Psalms. Yet here and in Ps. 86:13 he appears to use a common term, "the lowest sheol", meaning the worst kind of death. As with the language of demons, or our usage of English words like "Monday" [moon day], language of the day can be used without actually believing in it. These "depths" are those of Ps. 69:2, another Bathsheba psalm. "The lowest... darkest" parts of sheol may mean he considered himself condemned.

Psa 88:7

Your wrath lies heavily upon me; You have afflicted me with all Your waves. Selah-

This again is the language of the Bathsheba Psalm 69:2. He feels he is going to die because of God's wrath. And yet he had earlier rejoiced at the certainty of God's forgiveness and grace. But his faith in forgiveness seems to have wavered, as our does so easily. This was partly because he was so reluctant to accept the consequences of his sin; to endure consequence is not to say that God's wrath is upon us. But David had repeatedly badgered God to remove all consequences, but He was not willing to do so.

Psa 88:8

You have taken my friends from me, You have made me an abomination to them; I am shut in and I can't escape-
Heb. 'far from me', as in :18. The plea for God not to "be far from me" is common (Ps. 22:11,19; 35:22; 38:21; 71:12). The emphasis perhaps is to be placed upon David not wanting *God* to be far from him, seeing that he felt others were 'far' from him (s.w. Ps. 88:8,18). He accepted his social and psychological isolation from others, but he didn't want God to be likewise far off from him. In the context of the exiles, God was willing to not be 'far off' from the exiles if they repented (Is. 46:13).

The "friends" may be a reference to his great friend, maybe Bathsheba, or Ahithophel. Perhaps it is a reference to a falling out with Bathsheba soon after their sin, and the way that on account of what he had done, David's own relatives ["friends"] turned against him, as did Ahithophel, who was Bathsheba's grandfather. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters ("friend"; Ps. 27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18). And yet despite these breakdowns of relationship being totally David's fault, he appears to blame God for it, and doesn't conclude the Psalm with any ascription of praise or contrition.

Psa 88:9
My eyes are dim from grief; I have called on You daily, Yahweh. I have spread out my hands to You-
The dimness of eyesight may refer to a result of a stroke or illness he suffered after the sin with Bathsheba. But it appears to have been brought on by his desperation at not having his prayers answered. Yet those prayers were for the removal of the consequences of his sin, and much of his distress was because he simply could not accept Nathan's prophetic word about the consequences of his sin. And therefore he was not praying according to God's will and word.

Psa 88:10
Do You show wonders to the dead? Do the dead rise up and praise You? Selah-
"The dead" is *rephaim*, Gentile giants who would have no resurrection. Did David's faith in the resurrection collapse in Ps. 88:10? Job's did likewise at some points. David asks to be preserved from death so that he can continue praising God. He saw this as the purpose of life and existence. He clearly did not imagine death as meaning going to heaven and singing praises. God does indeed show wonders to the dead believers in resurrection, yet it seems David's faith and understanding in this collapsed temporarily.

Psa 88:11
Is Your grace declared in the grave? Or Your faithfulness in Destruction?-
The praise David wanted to live in order to offer (:10) was praise of God's grace, righteousness and faithfulness to him (:12). God's forgiveness of his sins of adultery and murder was by grace, seeing he was condemned for these things under the law; but yet God's righteousness was not impugned by that. Paul labours this point throughout Rom. 1-8.

Psa 88:12
Are Your wonders made known in the dark? Or Your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?-
See on :11. Death was the place of forgetfulness in that God has no conscious

intercourse with the dead, He does not in that sense remember them (:5). But as noted on :10, it appears that David is overlooking completely the resurrection of the body, in a form which reflects that God has not at all forgotten our essential spirit and personality.

Psa 88:13

But to You, Yahweh, I have cried. In the morning, my prayer comes before You-
As noted on :1, David still prays to God even in depression and collapse of faith in resurrection (:10,12). He still has a strong faith that his words actually enter the very presence of God in heaven. His first awareness as he awoke every morning was of God, and coming into His presence in prayer (as in Ps. 5:3; 55:17).

Psa 88:14

Yahweh, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?-

The prototype of Christ feeling forsaken was in David feeling forsaken by God when he fled from Absalom (Ps. 42:9; 43:2; 88:14); but clearly he was not actually forsaken. In David's case, as discussed on :7, the apparent silence of God was because David was praying for the wrong things- David had repeatedly badgered God to remove all consequences of his sin, but He was not willing to do so. Nathan had spoken to him from God about this, and David just would not accept it.

Psa 88:15

I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer Your terrors, I am distracted-
David seems to consider that his life had been one of continual risk of death; from wild animals as a shepherd, from Goliath and the Philistines, from Saul, from Gentile armies, and now from Absalom. He appears to consider God is unfair to him. His complaint about God terrifying him is taken from Job (Job 6:4; 9:34; 13:21). But although clearly knowing the book of Job well (for David so often alludes to it), he fails to factor in that Job finally realizes that he has not spoken rightly about God. David failed to see the end of the Lord with Job, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy (James 5:11).

Psa 88:16

Your fierce wrath has gone over me. Your terrors have cut me off-
As explained on :16, David was wrong to consider that God was using terrors against him. The words of Job came to mind and he hastily quotes them (see on :16), but without reflection upon the context and final conclusion of Job.

Psa 88:17

They came around me like water all day long, they completely engulfed me-
This is another connection with Ps. 22, this time to Ps. 22:16 where the same word for "*e*ngulfed" is used (see on :1). But the idea of being engulfed by God's terrors is again alluding to the book of Job (s.w. Job 19:6). But again he fails to factor in that Job finally realizes that he has not spoken rightly about God. David failed to see the end of the Lord with Job, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy (James 5:11).

Psa 88:18

You have put lover and friend far from me, and my friends into darkness-

Perhaps a reference to a falling out with Bathsheba soon after their sin, and the way that on account of what he had done, David's own relatives ["friends"] turned against him, as did Ahithophel, who was Bathsheba's grandfather. David loved his parents, especially caring for their safe keeping in his wilderness years; only to be forsaken by them (the Hebrew means just that), and to be rejected by his brothers and sisters ("friend"; Ps. 27:10; 38:11; 69:8; 88:18). And yet despite these breakdowns of relationship being totally David's fault, he appears to blame God for it, and doesn't conclude the Psalm with any ascription of praise or contrition.

The idea may be that darkness was his friend, everything was dark. This is the language of absolute depression, and the Psalm doesn't finish with some final rally of faith. He just presents his depressed situation to God and leaves it there.

PSALMS CHAPTER 89

Psa 89:1

A contemplation by Ethan, the Ezrahite-
"By" can as well be "for"; the author seems clearly to be David, so it may be that Ethan was the one responsible for publishing it or setting it to music. This Psalm praises and expounds God's covenant with David, but then from :38 onwards accuses God of breaking that covenant. It seems we have here the kind of thing we are used to in electronic communication; the reply to the accusation includes the original accusation beneath the text of the reply. The complaint about breaking the covenant was rooted in a misunderstanding- that the covenant implied an unbroken line of kings from David onwards, literally reigning on Zion. But now that line has been broken, and Zion destroyed and ploughed as a field. The covenant with David promised that David's throne and kingdom would continue eternally because the resurrected ["set up"] Messiah, Son of God and Son of David, would reign eternally from Zion, and David would be resurrected to see this "before [him]", in David's presence. The first part of the Psalm explains this. And so all the complaint about Divine fickleness and injustice was in fact based on a misreading of what He had promised, and interpreting God's words of promise according to the narrative of what David and others wished or fantasized to be true.

The thoughts of the complainer from :38 ff. are very similar to Lamentations; we wonder whether these are Jeremiah's reflections, answered by "Ethan". The final verse of the complaint concludes with an expression of trust in Yahweh despite all the doubts, which is typical of Jeremiah. However if Ethan is the Ethan of 1 Kings 5:11; 1 Chron. 2:6, then he was contemporary with David and Solomon. It could be that his inspired commentary on the promises to David is appended with a complaint from Jeremiah, because actually the complaints had already been answered centuries earlier in Ethan's commentary on the Davidic covenant.

I will sing of the grace of Yahweh forever. With my mouth I will make known Your

faithfulness to all generations-
The point of "forever" and stressing God's eternal faithfulness is in answer to the complaints which begin in :38. Despite all seeming injustice and lack of God coming through, the Psalmist still believes God's grace is eternal. God's grace and faithfulness to the covenant are paralleled. The fulfilment of the promises is by His grace; and therefore to question whether His word is true is to question His grace. "In mercy shall the throne be established" (Is. 16:5). The building up of David's throne, with Messiah ruling on it, will be eternal. Because as Paul says, God will then lavish His grace upon us throughout the eternal ages.

This Psalm is originally David's reflection upon the promises to him in 2 Sam. 7, and his struggles with believing and understanding parts of them. But it has been reworked by later inspired hands in the context of the exiles, struggling to believe that the Davidic covenant still has meaning. Yet the Psalm is introduced as being about grace. For that is what those promises reveal; and it begins and ends with praise, despite David's struggle with how God was apparently fulfilling them. We can therefore note that David's greatest insight into the promises was at the time he doubted them the most. Those who have these crises know the love of God in the way that the prodigal son knew it far more than the son who stayed at home, living in obedience each day. And for all his doubts and struggles, David wishes to declare God's faithfulness to all and for all time. And he chose this song to do so.

Psa 89:2

I indeed declare, Love stands firm forever because You established the skies; Your faithfulness is in them-
The solid existence of all creation is seen as evidence enough that the love of God, as expressed through the Davidic covenant, would remain firm likewise. We need only look at the natural creation for evidence that God is going to keep the promises found in the Bible. The same idea is found in :37. In answer to the complaints which begin in :38, the answer is that God is love and keeps His promises, and the natural creation proves this. The idea is that in Heaven, God's faithfulness to His covenant with David is total and immutable. It is only to the observers on earth, whose complaints are from :38, that there appears anything wrong.

The promise to David declared that even if the Son of David sinned, God would never withdraw His love from Him. The complainers expected a Davidic dynasty of kings to last eternally, but God never promised that. He promised that His Son would reign eternally on the throne of David, at a future point. And that parental, paternal never to be withdrawn love would indeed never be withdrawn. But those focused on seeing blessing in the here and now didn't see the wonder of that. They demanded a fulfilment before their eyes, and refused to see that "hidden love of God". Just as God maintains

constantly His covenant with the natural creation, so He maintains His covenant with David. He is not a liar nor covenant breaker. He is working ceaselessly towards fulfilling the covenant with David in the return of His resurrected son, and the eternal establishment of Him upon David's throne (:4).

Psa 89:3

I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant-
It's hard to know whether this is a direct revelation from God, or whether these words are as it were put in God's mouth by the poetry of the psalmist. David was clearly the "chosen one... My servant" (Ps. 89:3), but these very terms are applied to Israel as a whole (Ps. 105:6,43; 106:5) and to the "servant" of later Isaiah, who refers to both Israel and their Messiah as their embodiment (Is. 42:1; 45:4). David's path of sin, repentance and restoration was intended to be that of all God's people, as he himself recognizes in Ps. 32. But the exiles refused to repent and therefore their restoration was precluded. They were not therefore treated as His "chosen one".

Psa 89:4 '

I will establish Your seed forever, and build up Your throne to all generations'. Selah-
This was true, but only if his seed had the characteristics of David. As noted on :3, David's path of sin, repentance and restoration was intended to be that of all God's people, as he himself recognizes in Ps. 32. But the exiles refused to repent and therefore their restoration was precluded. And so the eternal establishment of his throne didn't come true as it could have done at the time of the exiles. It will become true in the Lord Jesus, whose throne will be eternally built up in that His rulership will eternally expand. That opens up a vista of us eternally extending His rule- in our own hearts, over other beings and dimensions. "Build up" is also translated "to obtain children". It's as if the seed continues to grow eternally, the throne is built up in that more people submit to the king, so His "kingdom", those beneath His dominion, increase eternally. This suggests we will spend eternity bringing other beings beneath that dominion, and we can begin living that spirit now in our witness and bringing others into that dominion. The contrast was with David wanting to "build [up]" a house for God. His response was that He didn't want David spending a few years building up a house for Him; but rather He would spend eternity building up David's house in the sense of his family, who would also be God's family and kingdom (2 Sam. 7:5,7 etc.). Solomon totally missed the point of all this in reasoning that David could not build the house because of his bloodshed, but therefore he [Solomon] was intended to physically build a house for Yahweh (1 Kings 5:3,5). Perhaps this is why we read several times that Solomon built [up] the house and finished it (1 Kings 6:9,14), he was building the house seven years and then finished it (1

Kings 6:38), which appears to be stating the obvious until we see the intended contrast- Yahweh's building up of David's house, which was also to be His house, would be eternal and never finish. And 1 Kings 8:13 is almost comical in the contrast; Solomon proudly says that "I have surely built [up] for You a house to dwell in, a settled place for You to abide in for ever". But no, Yahweh is about eternally building up a house for David where He will live, in the hearts of an ever and eternally expanding group of people who would be David's true seed. Solomon built a physical house for God's Name... but how can a Name, Yahweh's characteristics, abide in a cold stone building? They can only be found in the hearts of humans made in His image. This is why Ps. 89:2,4 parallel the "building up" of the throne and "Mercy shall be built up for ever". The ever expanding dominion of God in hearts and minds is all of His grace and mercy, and that will continue to grow and be magnified for ever. Although David set Solomon up for failure with his insistence on building up a physical house rather than let Yahweh build up his spiritual house, David does also 'get it' that it is Yahweh who is the builder and not him. He does often admit this in his Psalms: "Do good unto Zion, build Thou the walls of Jerusalem... Yahweh built up His sanctuary... Jerusalem is builded up as a city compacted together... Except Yahweh builds up the house they labour in vain who build... Yahweh builds up Jerusalem... " (Ps. 51:18; 78:69; 122:3; 127:1; 147:2). And this time of building up would not be until the Lord Jesus returned: "When Yahweh shall build up Zion, he shall appear in His glory" (Ps. 102:16). This is the time of the new covenant: "I will build you [up] and you shall be built, O virgin of Israel... I will watch over them to build them up... I will build them [up] as at the first... I Yahweh build up the ruined places / people... in that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David and will build it [up]" (Jer. 31:4,28; 33:7; Ez. 36:36; Am. 9:11).

Psa 89:5

The skies will praise Your wonders, Yahweh; Your faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones-
This is a reference to the court of Heaven. Although the exiles on earth couldn't see the progression of God's purpose according to His covenant with David, the Angels in heaven perceived it and rejoiced. And our perspective is to be theirs. The implication is that those on earth who considered God to have broken His promises were out of step with the Angels in the court of Heaven above, who praise Him for fulfilling the promises.

Psa 89:6

For who in the skies can be compared to Yahweh? Who among the sons of the heavenly beings is like Yahweh-
Here again we seem to have a criticism of idolatry. The idols are often not baldly stated to be non-existent, but rather Yahweh is so highly exalted and powerful that effectively

they have no real existence. Likewise the Lord Jesus didn't specifically state that demons don't exist; rather the supreme power of His miracles showed that effectively they don't, as they have no real power even if they do exist. Idolatry was an abiding problem in Israel at David's time, and also at the start of the exile, as Ezekiel makes clear.

Psa 89:7

a very awesome God in the council of the holy ones, to be feared above all those who are around Him?-
The awesome nature of the court of heaven is stressed, into which we have a glimpse in 1 Kings 22. God has a "council", discussing His plans with the Angels. This is because although the exiles on earth couldn't see the progression of God's purpose according to His covenant with David, the Angels in heaven perceived it and rejoiced. And our perspective is to be theirs.

Psa 89:8

Yahweh, God of Armies, who is a mighty one like You? Yah, Your faithfulness is around You-
Any suspicion that God hasn't come through for us is effectively a disbelief in His Almightiness. Any lack of 'coming through' is not because He lacks the power.

The Angels around the throne in :7 are here equated with God's faithfulness. They would surely bring about the fulfilment of the Davidic covenant, in their time and way. The apparent lack of fulfilment of the covenant was not therefore because of any inability on God's part; which leaves the implication that it was due to failure on Israel's part on earth.

Psa 89:9

You rule the pride of the sea; when its waves rise up, You calm them-
As so often in the Psalms, in times of doubt and depression concerning why God doesn't come through as we think or hope He should, thoughts turn to how God has acted mightily in the past, and the Red Sea deliverance is the favourite of the psalmists; and of how His constant activity is seen in the natural creation. If He rules the sea, thought by the ancients to be the home of mysterious powers and Satan-like monsters, then how much more can He control the movements of the nations, represented by the seas. The complainers from :38 ff. seem to have attributed the disaster of Zion's overthrow and the ending of the Davidic line of kings as being due to God being somehow powerless against the cosmic forces of evil. But the answer is that Yahweh rules over all any such supposed powers and has shown this abundantly in His past

behaviour. The God who had historically calmed the seas at creation and at the Red Sea would just as easily calm the seas before the Son of David (:25). But the complainers thought that what God had historically done He was bound to do at any time, on demand, as if God is a cash machine. They assumed God should act now as He had historically: “Where are your deeds
of steadfast love of old, O Lord?” (:50). But He is not bound by man. His power is unlimited and He can do this again- through His Son, but when He wishes and not simply on demand.

Psa 89:10

You have broken Rahab in pieces, like one of the slain. You have scattered Your enemies with Your mighty arm-
As noted on :9, the appeal is to the fact that God had destroyed the might of Egypt ("Rahab") and scattered the tribes of Canaan. Faith continues that He can do the same again with Babylon. In answer to the complaints which begin in :38, the Psalmist recalls God's historical actions and fulfilment of His promises. Even though the deliverance from Egypt appeared much delayed and long drawn out. Verses 10 and 11 clearly allude to the victory song over Egypt of Ex. 15. The complainers were perhaps arguing that Yahweh had indeed rescued Israel from Egypt, so why could He not do so from Babylon? He would, ultimately, although it was a redemption largely refused by Judah. And He would do so spiritually in the establishment of the eternal Kingdom of His Son. But the complainers didn't care to accept that the temporary triumph of Babylon was because of their sins, and they failed to focus upon the future establishment of Yahweh's eternal Kingdom on earth.

Psa 89:11

The heavens are Yours, the earth also is Yours; the world and its fullness; You have founded them-
The fact that "the earth is the Lord's" is used to highlight the wonder of the fact that therefore how much moreso do His people belong to Him, and are cared for by Him with such sensitivity (Ex. 19:5; Dt. 10:14; Ps. 50:12; 89:11). Just as the *eretz* / earth / land promised to Abraham is Yahweh's, so is in fact the entire planet (Ps. 24:1), and His purpose was perceived by David as incorporating the entire planet and not just Israel. The 'founding' of the physical planet is compared to how God has 'founded' Zion Is. 14:32). Zion had apparently been removed; but that meant that it must be founded again eternally. But the response of the exiles was to think that if Zion had been removed, then God's purpose was over. They failed to appreciate that just as Abraham was promised eternal inheritance of the land but didn't receive that in his lifetime, so

likewise the fulfilment of God's promises requires a future time of restoration and resurrection.

Psa 89:12

The north and the south, You have created them; Tabor and Hermon rejoice in Your name-
LXX "North and the west", which would better fit Tabor and Hermon as the great mountains of the west and north. AV "shall rejoice..." reflects faith that finally the land and kingdom would be restored, and rejoice instead of mourning. Reflection on God's extreme power shows that the fears expressed from :38 that God has failed to 'come through' are not due to any lack of power His side.

It has been noted that "north and south" can be translated "Zaphon and Yemin". These are "the traditional Ugaritic mountains of the gods, namely Zaphon and Amanus"; the idea is that Yahweh is supreme over the gods and the supposed powers of evil. Any blaming of the end of the Davidic line on cosmic forces of evil was therefore impossible; for Yahweh was clearly king over them, to the point they effectively didn't even exist.

Psa 89:13

You have a mighty arm, Your hand is strong and Your right hand is exalted-
God's apparent inaction was never to be interpreted as meaning that He was too weak to fulfil His purpose. God's power remains permanent and ultimate, even in the face of our defeats and before death itself. Again, the logic of this demands that the apparent lack of progress with God's purpose isn't due to any deficiency on His part; and therefore it means that we are the reason for that lack of progress.

Psa 89:14

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; grace and truth go before Your face-
Never should Israel think that because the throne of David was apparently cast down, so therefore was God's throne. His throne is eternal, and before His face, always in His awareness, is "grace and truth", a phrase often used of His promises to Abraham and David. If God's promises are grace and truth, then it's unthinkable that they should be broken- otherwise they wouldn't be "truth". Those from :38 who claimed God's "truth" had been broken were therefore saying God is untruthful. But He is fundamentally truthful, and so their positions were arrived at due to misinterpretation of His word and interjecting their own narratives onto His word. The eternal establishment of the Messianic Son of David, Son of God, would be by grace and truth. To argue that seeing

there was no human Davidic king was to posit that God's grace and truth were no longer. But they are. It's just they are not immediately visible before our eyes.

Psa 89:15

Blessed are the people who learn to acclaim You; they shall walk in the light of Your face, Yahweh-
David often asks for forgiveness and restored fellowship with God in terms of walking again in the light of God's face. As noted above, his path of repentance and restoration was to be that of the exiles; if they acclaimed God in repentance, which the exiles generally didn't. The people who praise God are those who are praising Him for faithfully fulfilling His word- whereas those who don't perceive this, those speaking from :38 onwards, are miserable and not at all blessed / happy. Those who do perceive God's faithfulness "learn to acclaim You". Perceiving His faithfulness is something that must be learnt and is beyond any surface level observation of life.

"Learn to acclaim You" is the language of the acclamation at a coronation. Although there was no visible Davidic king at that point, blessed were those who still perceived that Yahweh was still their king, and His throne was to be given to David when His promised Son reigned upon it. We too acclaim Yahweh as King and ourselves as His Kingdom, although the literal visible evidence of that isn't there in our current situation. But that is a 'learnt' position and the Psalmist wishes it for us all. The complainers hadn't learnt that.

Psa 89:16

In Your name they rejoice all day. In Your righteousness, they are exalted-
This again alludes to how David was forgiven for his sins through the imputation of God's righteousness. The exiles were to follow his path to restoration; and like David, rejoice in this imputation of righteousness. But they refused. Experiencing God's grace (:17) leads to the possibility of living in constant rejoicing at our high status before God- regardless of whether we consider He hasn't come through for us right now as much as we would like (as the complainers from :38 onwards felt).

Psa 89:17

For You are the glory of their strength. In Your favour, our horn will be exalted-
The idea of the horn of the righteous being exalted is used about what David envisaged happening for God's people in this life (s.w. Ps. 148:14), although the final fulfilment was to be at the last day, when the horn of the wicked is cut off (Ps. 75:10). But there are potential foretastes of the last day in this life. Jeremiah appears to struggle with the Psalms which taught that the horn of the righteous would be lifted up, lamenting that

instead the horn of their enemies had been lifted up (s.w. Lam. 2:17). This confirms the suggestion made on :1 that the complainer from :38 ff. is Jeremiah. The truth was that the horn of God's people would only be lifted up if they were identified with the lifting up of the horn which was Messiah (Ps. 89:17,24). And because this didn't happen, their horn was not exalted.

Psa 89:18

For our shield belongs to Yahweh; our king to the Holy One of Israel-
This may be commentary upon the fact that the Davidic line had been temporarily overthrown. God was the ultimate king of Israel, and so there was no need to think that Israel were left without a king. "Shield" is a metaphor for "king" (as in Ps. 47:9). Even in exile, Israel were not without a king who would protect them. AV "The Holy One of Israel is our king" is the answer to the complainers of :38 ff. lamenting that there was now no Davidic king on the throne. They were making the mistake Israel had historically made- to forget Yahweh was their king, and thus resign themselves from being His Kingdom. For a kingdom is a group of persons who have a king. He was still their king and shield, even with Zion ploughed and no Davidic king on the throne. All they could see was what was immediately in front of their eyes- they had no human king and so they thought they were now not a kingdom. The answer is that Yahweh was still their king, and His throne was paralleled with the throne of David in the Davidic covenant. And that throne and kingdom would be eternal- in the future, when the Son of David was resurrected and David too was resurrected to see that eternal throne and kingdom established "before [him]".

Psa 89:19

Then You spoke in vision to Your saints and said, I have bestowed strength on the warrior. I have exalted a young man from the people-
Dahood renders: “I made a lad king in preference to a warrior, I exalted a youth above a hero”, with reference to Saul.

2 Sam. 7 says that the vision appeared to Nathan by night and he shared it with David. But here we read that the vision is to all "Your saints". Is. 55:3-5 call individuals to choose to personally enter the Davidic covenant: "Incline your ear, and come to me; Listen so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, My steadfast, sure love for David". The complainers just assumed that their interpretation of the Davidic covenant must come true for them automatically. See on :51.

The bestowal of strength refers to David (Ps. 20:2; 21:5). The "chosen man" (AV) is clearly David (Ps. 78:70; 89:3; 1 Kings 8:16). The "saints" or "holy one[s]" who were told of the choosing of David were the Angels in the court of heaven (see on :5-7), and was

reflected upon earth by Samuel the prophet being told to choose and anoint David whilst still a young man. We appear to have here the record of a vision given to Samuel, on the basis of which he went seeking for David to anoint him. The Angels in the court of heaven were going to bring about God's purpose with David and the complainers should not have considered them impotent to perform it.

Samuel appeared to have assumed that Eliab must be Yahweh's anointed, seeing he was tall and handsome (1 Sam. 16:7). But he had not learnt the lesson he should've learnt from his experience with Saul, who was exceptionally tall, and yet was no true leader of God's people. God tries to remind Samuel of this by saying of Eliab: "I have rejected him"; God had used the very term about Saul very recently (1 Sam. 16:1,7 RV). Ps. 89:19,20 imply that God had specifically told Samuel to anoint *David*- so his desire to anoint tall, handsome Eliab appears to have been a failure on Samuel's part, rooted in simply not joining the dots. And even when David was brought in, Samuel seems to have somewhat failed in his judgment- for he was impressed by David's fair appearance (1 Sam. 16:12), when God had just laboured the point to Samuel that the choice of a ruler was *not* to be based upon his appearance (1 Sam. 16:7).

However, the account of this "vision" about David then goes on later to repeat and expand parts of the promises to David given to him by Nathan the prophet in 2 Sam. 7. So it could be that here we are being given an account of a vision given to Nathan which included parts of what Samuel had been told. Or it could be that we are reading here the inspired commentary of the psalmist upon those visions, which are largely unrecorded in the historical records.

Psa 89:20

I have found David My servant, I have anointed him with My holy oil-
The Bible reveals that God is in search of man. "Like grapes in the wilderness, I *found* Israel" (Hos. 9:10); "He *found* him in a desert land…he encircled him, he cared for him" (Dt. 32:10); "I have *found* David my servant" (Ps. 89:20). Jeremiah's search for believers was a reflection of God's: "Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth" (Jer. 5:1). God hunts for us like a lion, Job came to realize; and in this "You show yourself wonderful to me" (Job 10:16). And we are searching for God. God is not indifferent to our searching for Him. Those awestruck moments of wonder, of radical amazement, are where God finds us at the time we are searching for Him. Both sides are seeking each other; and in those moments, they meet. As a Jewish poet put it: "And going out to meet thee / I found thee coming toward me". In those moments, heaven and earth kiss each other. There is a click, a flash, between Almighty God and us- as we stand at a bus stop, turn left into Acacia Avenue, lay there on our bed meditating.

Psa 89:21

with whom My hand shall be established; My arm will also strengthen him-
This hand of God made a specific branch "strong". This branch was the Lord Jesus (Is. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; Zech. 3:8;6:12). The psalmist perceives that the restoration will come through an individual Messianic figure, who would as it were be a spiritual reincarnation of the historical David. There were various possible potential fulfillments of this, such as Zerubabbel and Joshua, but they all let the baton drop. The final fulfilment is therefore in the Lord Jesus, who allowed Himself to be made strong by God's hand (s.w. Ps. 80:17). Whilst His utter moral perfection was in a sense His own achievement, and that must never be taken away from the Lord, the path there involved allowing God to make Him strong for Himself. And this is our pattern too, in allowing the work of the Holy Spirit to do likewise with us, paralleled here with God's hand being upon us, making us strong. The prophecy could have had an earlier fulfilment in Hezekiah, 'made strong by Yah', but he too disallowed it and went off to this present world. The lead characteristic of Jacob was that he and his descendants would be 'made strong' (s.w. Gen. 25:23), even though they were so spiritually weak. So many times Israel are encouraged to be "of good courage", s.w. "made strong" (Dt. 31:6,7 etc.), so that they might inherit the promised kingdom. But they generally didn't make use of this potential strengthening. The exiles likewise were potentially "made strong" but they refused to make use of that, remaining in Babylon for the most part (s.w. Is. 35:3; 41:10).

Psa 89:22

No enemy will tax him, no wicked man will oppress him-
The initial reference was to the terrible taxation of Saul, which David avoided through killing Goliath (1 Sam. 17:25). The reminder is that despite this interpretation or implication of the promises to David, the "wicked man" Saul did indeed "oppress" him; for these phrases are used throughout the wilderness Psalms about Saul. But the point was, the Davidic covenant did come finally true for David, despite periods when apparently it failed for him. And the exiles were bidden likewise look to the end of things, rather than demand immediate and constant experience of God's promises coming true in this life. This is a lesson for all those tempted to believe the "prosperity Gospel".

The complainers from :38 onwards felt that the enemies were oppressing them. But what God had promised was a time when no enemy would ever oppress God's people, under the rulership of the Son of David. So the complainers were wanting the Kingdom situation right now, and felt it unreasonable that they didn't have their jam both today and tomorrow.

Psa 89:23

I will beat down his adversaries before him, and strike those who hate him-
This again only came true for David in the longer term and not immediately. Absalom and Saul both died from being 'struck down' but this was only after they had appeared to be in the ascendancy over David. And so it was to be true for all in covenant relationship with God.

Psa 89:24

But My faithfulness and My grace will be with him; in My name, his horn will be exalted-
It was in this exaltation of the Messianic horn that the horn of the people would be exalted (s.w. :17). There existed even in these earlier days the idea of being "in Christ", the Messiah, and those in Him being blessed with the experience of His exaltation and glory. But the various possibilities of a Messiah figure in the period of the restoration all came to nothing. Knowing this openness of God, women like Hannah clearly hoped and prayed that their sons would be Messiah (1 Sam. 2:10 = Ps. 89:24); for they perceived that God's purpose was open to such a thing. But finally the fulfilment was to come in the person of the Lord Jesus, after all the other potential fulfillments had let the baton drop.

Psa 89:25

I will set his hand also on the sea and his right hand on the rivers-
"The rivers" can be understood as an intensive plural, referring to the great river, Euphrates. From the sea to the Euphrates was the territory promised to Abraham. The fulfilment of the Davidic covenant was to be understood as involving the complete fulfilment of the promises made to Abraham. This didn't happen in David's time, but this was the promise. We appear to have here an extension of the promises to David, perhaps given to the psalmist by direct revelation from God, although the promises recorded in 2 Sam. 7 are alluded to and expanded.

Seeing the Son of David had not yet reigned from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, the complainers of :38 ff. were wrong to think that a Kingdom of God situation had ever come about.

This is a response to :42 "You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries". But the eye of faith looked to the day when the Son of David would have His hand on the full extent of the land promised to Abraham.

Psa 89:26

He will call to me, 'You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation!'-
The Lord Jesus appears to allude to this in calling God his Father and his God (Jn. 20:17);

hard proof against the "Jesus = God" theology of Trinitarians. We note too the need for salvation of David's Messianic seed; hardly appropriate if that seed were to be God Himself.

Psa 89:27

I will also appoint him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth-
The fulfilment of the Davidic covenant was to be primarily in a person, who would rule over all kings and would be God's firstborn; the first child He ever had. 2 Sam. 7:12-14 implies this would have to be through a woman in David's line becoming pregnant not from man but from God Himself, through His Spirit. And this was to have ultimate fulfilment in the virgin birth (Lk. 1:31-35). But the exiles focused instead upon a visible restoration of the Davidic throne and kingdom before their eyes at that time. We too must be Jesus centered more than Kingdom centered. Otherwise we too will start to complain that God appears not to be coming through for us personally in this life. The complainers of :38 ff. observed that God's people were now beneath all the nations, and not above them. But this was because they didn't have the firstborn, only begotten Son of God reigning over them in God's Kingdom. They wanted and indeed expected the full Kingdom blessings to be experienced in this life. Just like many today who complain of God not coming through. This language is applied to the Lord Jesus "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). But it was to come true in His resurrection and later in the full establishment of His Kingdom on earth. But the complainers wanted the Kingdom life here and now, and didn't factor in the "Jesus" issue.

Possibly the allusion is to Ex. 4:22 "Israel is My son even My firstborn‟. God's intentions for Israel had now been replaced by focusing them in His Son. Or it could be that His Son is presented as the ideal Israel. Likewise in Ps. 89 the son of David is the highest of all kings on the earth, but this is the language of Dt. 26:19; 28:1 about Israel “high above all nations that He has made". The Son of David is to reign "as the days of heaven", for ever (:29). But Israel's days were to be "as the days of heaven" (Dt. 11:21). Again, the Messiah becomes the epitome and representative of God's true Israel. Salvation and eternal days are to be found in Him, and not through some eternal line of Davidic kings.

2 Sam. 5:12 and 1 Chron. 14:2 observe that "David perceived that Yahweh had established him king over Israel; for his kingdom was exalted on high, for His people Israel’s sake". The establishment of the Davidic kingdom was for Israel's sake (as noted also in 1 Kings 10:9; 2 Chron. 2:11). Ez. 21:25-27 comments that the last king in the Davidic line was a "profane, wicked prince" and therefore the continuation of the

Davidic line of kings was not good for the sake of Israel. It had to be removed and replaced with the Davidic son of David. But the complainers of :38 ff. could not see any other narrative than their desire to see a Davidic king reigning on Judah's throne, no matter how profane and wicked he was.

Psa 89:28

I will keep My grace for him forever. My covenant will stand firm through him-
The exiles were complaining that the Davidic covenant wasn't being fulfilled in their experience. But they failed to perceive that it required the appearance of a Messianic seed for this covenant to be realized in practice. And those who might have partially fulfilled it in their time (especially Zerubbabel) had all failed. The fulfilment was to be "through him" and not simply through the exile being ended.

Psa 89:29

I will also make his seed endure forever and his throne as the days of heaven-
Again the point is made as on :28, that the Davidic covenant didn't promise immediate blessing for the kingdom of David. It was primarily focused upon an individual seed of David who would have an eternal throne; and personal blessing and salvation was only to be found through association with this seed, becoming "in Him". See on :24.

Psa 89:30

If his children forsake My law and don't walk in My ordinances-
I have noted on :24,28,29 that the blessings of the covenant were to come particularly and specifically upon the singular seed of David; blessings for the rest of Israel would depend upon their association with this seed. This is why the promises about the seed in the singular (the Lord Jesus) are now applied to God's people in the plural (2 Sam. 7:14 cp. Ps. 89:30-35). This is now realized through baptism into the Lord Jesus. Baptism is not an initiation into a church. It isn't something which just *seems* the right thing to do. And even if because of our environment and conscience, it was easier to get baptized than not- *now* this mustn't be the case. We really are *in* Christ, we are born again; now we exist, spiritually! And moreover, we have risen with Him, His resurrection life, His life and living that will eternally be, is now manifest in us, and will be articulated physically at the resurrection.

But this plan of salvation through identification with the seed was conditional. Both he personally and those "in him" had the possibility of sinning and thereby nullifying the covenant. And the exiles had done just this. We note that the Lord Jesus had the

possibility of sinning [otherwise His temptations were fake]. This again disproves any idea that He was God Himself in person.

Psa 89:31

if they break My statutes and don't keep My commandments-
The covenant was broken (:34 s.w.) because they had broken the laws which were part of that covenant. The law repeatedly stated that if Israel didn't keep God's commandments, they would be exiled from their land (Lev. 20:22 s.w.). After centuries of patience with them, this finally happened. Any complaint at the consequence for sin was therefore unreasonable. It would be as unreasonable as Adam complaining that he had been exiled east of Eden.

This is the development of the clause about David's individual seed in 2 Sam. 7: "*If he* [Jesus] commit iniquity...". Here in Ps. 89, the individual seed is spoken of as the community. There are many connections with Is. 53, in this case to the way that "the Lord hath laid on *him* the iniquity of *us* all". The Lord Jesus was so identified with the sinful seed of Abraham and David that He bore the curse for their sins, despite being personally innocent.

Psa 89:32

then I will punish their sin with the rod-
This is the equivalent of "I will chasten *him* with the rod of men" in 2 Sam. 7. Ultimately this connection between the singular seed and the community of God's people led to the Lord's death on the cross: "For the transgression of *my people* was *he* stricken" (Is. 53).

And their iniquity with stripes-
This is the equivalent of "And with the stripes of the children of men" in 2 Sam. 7, resulting in the final truth of what was achieved on the cross: "With *his* stripes *we* are healed" (Is. 53).

The point of all this is to show how our sins were somehow born by Jesus, to the extent that He suffered for them. But *how* was this actually achieved? It is one thing to say it, but we must put meaning into the words. I suggest it was in that the Lord so identified with us, His heart so bled for us, that He *felt* a sinner even though He of course never sinned. The final cry "My God, why have You forsaken me?" clearly refers back to all the many passages which speak of God forsaking the wicked, but never forsaking the righteous. The Lord, it seems to me, *felt* a sinner, although He was not one, and thus entered into this sense of crisis and fear He had sinned. He *so* identified with us. In the bearing of His cross, we likewise must identify with others, with their needs and with the

desperation of their human condition... and this is what will convert them, as the Lord's identification with *us* saved *us*.

Psa 89:33

But I will not completely take My grace away from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail-
I have noted on :31,32 that the promises of 2 Sam. 7 about the singular seed of David are interpreted as applying to the entire community of God's people, and therefore the singular in 2 Sam. 7 is changed to the plural here in Ps. 89. But now there is a reversion to talking about "him", the singular seed. He personally would always receive God's faithful covenant grace; and the implication is that God's sinful people must therefore identify with Him. We now do this by baptism into the Lord Jesus, but until He came, it was impossible for God's people to make this connection with the seed.

Remember that the reasoning here is in answer to the complaints from :38 ff. that God was not preserving His people from their enemies, and therefore was breaking His promise to David. But the answer is here in :30-33- if David's children sinned they would be punished. And that was happening. But God's grace would never depart from the Messianic son of David once His Kingdom was established. A lack of acceptance of personal sin and its consequence is often at the root of complaints about God's supposed injustice. Several of the Psalms which lament God's inaction and judgment totally fail to make any reference to human sin (Ps. 44 especially), or tend to gloss over this factor. Thus Ps. 44:18 complains "our hearts have not gone astray" when Jer. 17:9; 18:16,17 specifically blames the tragedy of the exile on the state of Judah's heart.

Psa 89:34

I will not break My covenant, nor alter what My lips have uttered-
LXX "profane my covenant". The covenant was broken (:31 s.w.) because they had broken or profaned the laws which were part of that covenant. But there had been no change on God's side, as they perhaps imagined. God on His side had not broken covenant. Their complaint that He had broken covenant (:39 s.w.) was completely overlooking that it was they and not Him who had broken the covenant. The exiles are specifically described as breaking the covenant in Mal. 2:10,11 s.w. We note the intimacy of God in saying that the covenant was uttered by His "lips". The words of the covenant were from His very mouth and lips.

Psa 89:35

Once have I sworn by My holiness that I will not lie to David-
To claim that God has broken His side of the covenant is tantamount to calling God a

liar. This is what we are doing if we doubt our ultimate salvation. Paul seems to have this in mind in his reasoning in Rom. 3:3-7. The fact some like the exiles didn't want to believe Him doesn't make Him a liar, because His promises to them weren't experienced by them. That was their choice, and they as it were put God in the dock and accused Him of being a liar. And in the revelation of God's final judgment, all who have done so will be revealed as liars.

"I will not lie", in the context of David's throne / kingship (:36), is an allusion to 1 Sam. 15:29 "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor change His mind". The context is Saul and possibly Samuel too, wanting to change God's mind about rejecting Saul and choosing David as king. Saul's "kingdom", either his personal kingship or his dynasty, had already been removed in 1 Sam. 13:13,14- but God had been open to amending that. Saul's behaviour in 1 Sam. 14 and then with the Amalekites in 1 Sam. 15 meant that the window of opportunity was now closed. And meantime, it seems God had "found" David as a replacement; we are given the impression that God began searching in 1 Sam. 13:13,14, and then in 1 Sam. 15:28 He says that He has given the kingdom to Saul's neighbour. The statement that God will not lie i.e. retract is perhaps referencing the choice of David as a replacement: "Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David" (Ps. 89:35). And yet despite these apparently final words of rejection of Saul and replacement with David, Samuel mourns for Saul with the implication that he is begging God to even so, rethink and find a way for Saul (1 Sam. 15:31); hence God's rebuke of Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul… since I rejected him", 1 Sam. 16:1. He knew God well enough to know that He does rethink. We have many examples likewise in the prophets. 'This is it… no re-thinking, no about turn again… I will save you no more'. But still God does.

Psa 89:36

His seed will endure forever, his throne like the sun before Me-
The emphasis is upon "will". The promises to David *will* come true. His Messianic seed would indeed have an eternal throne and kingdom. The fact that was not being immediately fulfilled in the experience of the exiles at their time didn't mean that God was a liar (:35) or incapable of doing what He has said. Rather the problem was with the exiles, in that they didn't want to believe that at some point, fulfilment would come. A demand that God's promises *must* come fully true for us in this life is really a lack of faith in His future Kingdom. Faith in the things of the Kingdom and the name of the Lord Jesus is faith in a future reality as well as a present one. If all the focus is upon our immediate blessing, then like the exiles we will have a crisis of faith.

It was "his seed", Messiah, Son of David, who would "endure forever" with an unending throne. The complainers from :38 ff. were assuming that there would be an unbroken line of Davidic kings in order to fulfil God's promise to David. But this was a typical case

of interjecting a human narrative, what we would wish to be true, into the reading and interpretation of God's word.

Psa 89:37

It will be established forever like the moon, the faithful witness in the sky. Selah-
The solid existence of all creation is seen as evidence enough that the love of God, as expressed through the Davidic covenant, would remain firm likewise. We need only look at the natural creation for evidence that God is going to keep the promises found in the Bible. The same idea is found in :2.

Psa 89:38

But you have rejected and spurned, You have been angry with Your anointed-
This may originally have begun with David in depression feeling that although he had been anointed king, his persecution by Saul and later by Absalom indicated that God had changed His plans. These thoughts of David are now developed by the exiles and exaggerated and expanded to refer to the breaking up of Zion.

Psa 89:39

You have renounced the covenant of Your servant; You have defiled his crown in the dust-
The covenant was broken (:31 s.w.) because they had broken or profaned the laws which were part of that covenant. But there had been no change on God's side, as they perhaps imagined. God on His side had not broken covenant. Their complaint that He had broken covenant (:39 s.w.) was completely overlooking that it was they and not Him who had broken the covenant. The exiles are specifically described as breaking the covenant in Mal. 2:10,11 s.w. They are acting like a serial adulterer who laments the break up of his marriage. But I have argued above that additionally, they failed to correctly understand what the covenant was promising- it was not promising what they assumed [an unbroken line of Davidic kings], but spoke specifically of fulfilment in the Lord Jesus.

Psa 89:40

You have broken down all his hedges, You have brought his strongholds to ruin-
The vineyard of Israel was indeed broken down by God and its protective wall removed by Him (Is. 5). But this was because they had refused to bring forth fruit to Him, and had themselves introduced the Gentiles into that vineyard, worshipping their idols in His

temple. The complaint against God focuses upon the consequences of sin, rather than recognition of sin and repentance.

Psa 89:41

All who pass by the way rob him-
The same word for "rob" is used to the exiles in warning them that even the restored Jerusalem is to fall and the houses robbed (Zech. 14:2). God's purpose with David's seed was no guarantee that in this life, that seed would not suffer. The exiles were refusing to understand that what they were complaining about was merely the consequence of their sins, and not due to God's unfaithfulness. These same exiles had been reminded that they had committed fornication with all those who "pass by the way" (s.w. Ez. 16:15,25). It was as if they had hardened their hearts against all these prophetic messages. And Malachi accuses them of robbing God.

He has become a reproach to his neighbours-
This Psalm may have originated in David's complaint that he had become a reproach to his neighbours and family after his sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 22:6; 31:11). But such complaints were a willful disregard for Nathan's prophetic word to David about the consequence of his sins. And it seems that the exiles were making the same mistake in refusing to accept that their situation was a result of consequence of sins.

Psa 89:42

You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries, You have made all of his enemies rejoice-
This seems an intentional repost to the statement in :13 that God's own right hand is exalted (s.w.). The exiles refused to see that God's hand can be exalted even in His apparent silence; and went further to imply God was being somehow vindictive and unreasonable. This is the classic mistake made by all who stumble at the problem of evil.

Psa 89:43

Yes, you turn back the edge of his sword and haven't supported him in battle-
This however was exactly what was promised as a consequence of breaking the covenant. Israel had signed up to that, and God had been patient in bringing those consequences for centuries. And when it came, finally, they accuse Him of hating them. Again, all stumbling over the problem of evil results is rooted in a denial of the

consequences of human sin [whether it be our own or the sin of others]. And as a result, God ends up being falsely accused.

Psa 89:44

You have ended his splendour, and cast his throne down to the ground-
This again fails to factor in the reality that God can fulfil His promises at a later date, even through resurrection from the dead. Abraham died in full faith that the promises to him would be fulfilled at the resurrection, although he didn't receive them in this life (Heb. 11:13,39,40). But the exiles didn't have this faith; they considered God was only any good if they had it all now. And they went further to almost mock God when they didn't get what they expected, with no account of their own sins and the consequence of sin. They also failed to consider that David's throne was the throne of Yahweh; and He remained enthroned as king in heaven, with the earth [s.w. "ground"] as His footstool (Is. 66:1).

The complainer saw the throne as cast down to the ground, presumably from some symbolic 'heaven' of power. But earlier in the Psalm we have seen the assurance that God is still king in Heaven, in Heaven He and His Angels are still faithful to the covenant, and His throne will be eternally established through the Son of David resurrected and enthroned. But the complainer saw only the situation on earth and lacked the eye of faith to see Heaven's perspective.

Psa 89:45

You have shortened the days of his youth, You have covered him with shame. Selah-
LXX "the days of his throne". This reflected a total lack of faith and willful lack of understanding of the fact that the promises of an eternal throne depended upon the revelation of the individual Messianic seed of David. He had not come at that point, but the exiles still demanded the blessings promised to Him.

The complainer may have the sons of Zedekiah and especially Jehoiachin in mind, who was only 18 (2 Kings 24:8), or according to 2 Chron. 36:9, only 8 years old, when he came to the throne, and he reigned only three months and ten days. The prime of his life was spent in exile, apparently in actual confinement in which he was literally ‘clothed with dishonour’ (2 Kings 25:29). Likewise the complaint in :51 that the footsteps of the anointed were mocked could allude to Jehoiachin as he was led through the streets of Babylon in the conqueror’s triumph.

Psa 89:46

How long, Yahweh? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire?-
The answer was that God had hidden His face from His people because they had hidden their faces from Him. They were as Cain, exiled from Eden [the promised land] to the east, hidden from God's face (Gen. 4:14). This was the specific curse for breaking the covenant (Dt. 31:17). Is. 40:27; 45:15 specifically rebuke the exiles for saying that "My way is hid from Yahweh", because they should rather have faith that ultimately God's face would in due time shine forth. It was their sins which had hidden God's face from them (Is. 59:2; Jer. 33:5; Ez. 39:23; Mic. 3:4). Again there is a focus simply upon removing the consequence of sin, rather than repenting of sin.

God's wrath was indeed like fire, but that fire had a purpose. It was to purify the dross from God's people. But they didn't respond: “in vain did the smelter smelt - the dross is not separated out” (Jer. 6:29). Likewise Jer. 2:29,30: “in vain I have beaten your sons; they would not accept correction”. But the complainers only saw the suffering and refused to accept that human sin was the essential problem. We note the parallel: "How long will You hide… how long will Your wrath burn?". The complaint considers God hiding unless He stops being angry about sin and basically dishes up all the good stuff. Anything less than that warrants criticism of Him. This is man at his most petulant, spoilt, autistic and unreasonable.

Psa 89:47

Remember how short my time is! For what vanity have You created all the children of men!-
This may well have been based upon an original prayer of David, lamenting the brevity of his life as in Ps. 39:5 (s.w.). But the exiles are reasoning as if this life is all we have; and therefore to not see the restoration in their lifetime was tragic. And they considered God somehow cruel to not bring about the restored kingdom in their lifetimes. Because life is short, they therefore expected Him to act very quickly; or else, they accused Him of creating people for "vanity". This is the kind of unreasonable talk which comes from all who stumble over the problem of evil. David's perspective was that it is "men of the world" who have "their portion [s.w. "short"] in this life" (Ps. 17:14). The exiles were totally devoid of the hope of resurrection and final fulfilment then. This lack of faith in the things of the future Kingdom of God, sometimes encouraged by theological misunderstandings, is often at the root of stumblings over the problem of evil. If the perception is that man only has this life, then the problems of evil within that life will indeed weigh heavy, as life then appears a mere lottery, with some people getting a better deal than others.

Indeed if we expect the fulfilment of God's promises in this life, we will come to consider life as vain. Life ends with unsatisfied longing for every man. But our labour is not in vain exactly and only because of the hope of resurrection to a future Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:58,

in context). As happens today, those who complain about God's apparent injustice go on to complain that life itself is vain, why did God create man and only give him a limited lifespan? So many such complainers live futile lives, ever struggling with man's search for meaning. The answer to man's limited life is, in one word, sin. And facing the consequences of sin isn't what the complainers want to do. By contrast, :10-15 cite God's creation as evidence that He will therefore be faithful, ultimately, to that creation. He keeps it all in existence and active, and likewise He will actively keep His covenant through the generations, coming to its fulfilment in the enthronement of His Son for ever upon David's throne.

Psa 89:48

What man is he who shall live and not see death, who shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah-
This continues the false argument of :47; that because life is short and there is only hope for this life and no further, therefore God should hurry up and restore their kingdom. David's temporary crisis of faith in God's power to resurrect is repeated by the exiles, in stronger terms. They seem to have no sense of any future fulfilment of the covenant; they wanted to see it all now, just as many do today.

It is in the context of God promising David eternity that he questions: "*Shall* He (God) deliver his soul from the grave? What man is he that liveth and shall not see death?" (AV). He goes so far as to feel that God's "former graces (a word often used about the promises), which You swore to David" had been at best suspended (Ps. 89:49 AV).

The reasoning of :47,48 is that death and the brevity of human life is unfair. God should act because life is brief and He is somehow forgetting the brevity of human life. But this arises from a total failure to perceive that the promises to David are about resurrection, and the fulfilment of His covenant is set in the future not now. And God has not forgotten the nature of how we are. The Son of David would be "set up" or resurrected, as Acts 2:30 interprets this, at a point after David has "slept with [his] fathers". And yet David would see all this "before you", in his presence, again implying David's resurrection. But instead, the complainers were focusing upon a fulfilment right now in this life, of an unbroken line of kings. There was no appreciation that the wages of sin is death, and that the eternity promised to David was all on account of making identity with His greater "son" who would live and reign eternally.

The complainer is answering how own question really. No man can resurrect himself. But resurrection is at the heart of the Davidic covenant which the complainers wrongly claim has been broken. The complainer likewise answers his own question by asking "What / which man" lives for ever? What man can save himself from the grave? Not one apart from the Son of David, the resurrected Lord Jesus, who never sinned, and so death

had no power over Him. And those who are in Him and choose to accept the Davidic covenant, as Is. 55:3-5 invites.

Psa 89:49

Lord, where are Your former graces which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?-
Surely David is close to the edge here; there almost seems to be a sense of mocking in his comments on the promise that his throne would endure for ever as the sun: "His throne (shall endure) as the sun... but... Thou hast cast his throne down to the ground", rather than it being like the sun (Ps. 89:36,44 AV). Yet truly in the spirit of Job, he was able to praise God in this very same context: "Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and amen" (Ps. 89:52). Presumably this Psalm was written (or thought out) whilst fleeing from Absalom, or possibly during one of the later rebellions, when it seemed that all hope of holding on to the throne was lost. Here is David in depression, making hasty comments about the faithfulness of God, reacting to the position of the moment. This is surely an indication of his mental make up. One cannot be persuaded that the Lord Jesus did not experience the temptations which go along with this kind of personality. "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46) and the following thoughts in Ps. 22 seem to be Christ's equivalent of David's crisis in Ps. 89.

Psa 89:50

Remember, Lord, the reproach of Your servants, how I bear in my heart the taunts of all the mighty peoples-
This is the language of earlier Psalms concerning how David so took to heart the words of his enemies at the time of Saul and Absalom's rebellion. But his feelings are now reapplied by the exiles to the taunts of the "peoples", the Gentiles, such as those recorded in Ps. 137:1-3.

"Your servants" assumes that all Israel are Yahweh's servants. But at the time they were serving idols as well. Again there is no awareness of personal failure and breakage of their covenant with Yahweh. The promises to David were to "My servant David" and David responds to them by agreeing that he was indeed "Your servant David". To be truly one of the servants meant identifying with David. We noted on :19 that individuals were called to accept the covenant and become "servants" of Yahweh in that they were "in" His servant David and especially "in" the Messianic Son of David, achieved in our age through faith and baptism into the Lord Jesus. But the complainers just assumed they were Yahweh's servants and failed to see the promises in the Davidic covenant concerned the Messianic Son of David and all who chose to be "in" Him.

The complaint about "reproach" or shame is typical of those who feel shame because of the gap between expectation and reality. But the problem was that the expectation was wrong because it was founded upon a wrong interpretation of what God had actually

promised. The full wonder of it, eternal life in and with David's Son in the future, had been ignored and instead the complainers had settled for a very human narrative of their own creation, about an unbroken line of Davidic rulers in Zion.

Psa 89:51

with which Your enemies have mocked, Yahweh, with which they have mocked the footsteps of Your anointed one-
David was God's anointed one and so supremely was his Messianic son, Jesus the Christ. But the complainers assumed they were the "anointed one" by reason of physical descent. They failed to perceive, as noted on :19, that to be truly the "anointed one" they must personally identify with David and his Messianic Son, like David having a heart after God's own heart. But they shied away from such personal relationship with God and assumed they had some kind of collective status as God's anointed one.

LXX "wherewith they have reviled the recompense of thine anointed" could imply that David's enemies mocked the promises to David as now having no chance of fulfilment. And the exiles felt that the mocking of their captors in Ps. 137 was a mocking of David, seeing they considered themselves to be his seed. Their "steps" may refer to their steps from Judah to Babylon, mocked at every step.

These things had application to the Lord Jesus, the "Christ", the "anointed one", who bore Israel's judgment. Every step of the way along the Via Dolorosa, Yahweh's enemies reproached every stumbling footstep of His anointed, just as they did every step of Judah as they were marched into captivity.

Psa 89:52

Blessed be Yahweh forever. Amen, and Amen-
As noted on :1, despite all the doubts and struggles of the psalmist, the Psalm concludes with praise to God. This is a great challenge to us, no matter what struggles we have with God. We are to all the same love and praise Him. This is where the problem of evil, the difficulty of understanding the apparently harder side of God, is designed to elicit humility and tenacity of love for Him.

PSALMS CHAPTER 90

Psa 90:1

Book IV
A Prayer by Moses, the man of God-

I suggest this is inserted at this point in the Psalter because it is being used in the context of the exiles. Although Psalm 89 is in book 3 of the Psalms and Psalm 90 begins book 4, there are connections between the two Psalms; not least Ps. 89:47,48 = Ps. 90:3-10. This prayer of Moses is an appeal for God to rethink His condemnation of Israel to not entering the promised land, and to the 40 year period of exile from it before they could enter it. This of course meant that the generation which had left Egypt would die without entering the land. And Moses seeks to change God's mind about this, just as he had changed God's mind about His intention to destroy Israel completely; and just as Moses sought to have his own rejection from entering the land abrogated. This was exactly relevant to the exiles, who wanted the 70 years exile to be shortened, and for their generation to reenter the land and see the restoration of the Kingdom of God there. As noted on Ps. 89:47,48, they did not want to die before seeing this happen: "How long, Yahweh? Will You hide Yourself forever? Will Your wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is! For what vanity have You created all the children of men! What man is he who shall live and not see death, who shall deliver his soul from the power of Sheol? Selah. Lord, where are Your former graces which You swore to David in Your faithfulness?". But as Moses' intercession for these things was not answered as he wished, so the exiles were to largely die in exile. Psalm 91 however is connected to Psalm 90, and speaks of how the salvation of Israel was to be through Joshua - Jesus. This was the answer to Moses' struggle and for that of the exiles.

The Psalms 90 and 91 are full of language found in Deuteronomy, the address Moses gave at the very end of his life. Dt. 33, the final song of Moses, has many connections. Thus Dt. 33:1 also calls Moses the man of God, as does the title of Ps. 90; Dt. 33:15 speaks of the ancient mountains as does Ps. 90:2. So I see Psalm 90 as his prayer of depression at the end of life, wishing so much to change God's mind and let him enter Canaan, and to have had mercy on Israel who died in the desert. Moses is depressed- he had earlier changed God's mind about destroying Israel, but now he laments he cannot change God's mind about himself nor Israel. And he comes to the end of his life depressed and perhaps not as spiritually strong as he earlier was- just as Gideon, John the Baptist, David, Jacob etc. were all spiritually weaker at the end of their lives than they were at some points during their earlier lives. God's answer is in Ps. 91- that he should rejoice that Joshua and others would enter the land, and that because Moses had loved Yahweh's Name, for all his depression and struggle with God, he was assured of great honour and eternal salvation. Ps. 91:16, the final verse of these two Psalms, is therefore the climax to it all. Although Moses felt his prayer of Ps. 90 was unanswered, Ps. 91:14 comforts him that "When he calls to me, I will answer him". The essence of his prayer was that he would be saved- and that would be eternally granted.

Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations-
The allusion may be to Moses' words that God was the safe dwelling place of Israel (Dt.

33:27). Joshua is commended for making Yahweh his dwelling place (Ps. 91:9). But He was not the point of refuge for Israel in all their generations, in that they had chosen other gods.

There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. For example, we dwell in God (Ps. 90:1), and He dwells in us (1 Cor. 3:16). Thus "he that dwells in love dwells in God, *and God in him"* (1 Jn. 4:15,16). We respond to God's *call* of us by *calling upon* Him (1 Cor. 1:2).

The relevance to the exiles, who had no temple, is that God has always been the temple / dwelling place of His people, even when there was no temple. The lack of external religious symbols like a church building don't mean that God has no dwelling place. For He dwells in human hearts and those hearts dwell in Him. But it could be that Moses is trying to argue with God that His people have always dwelt in Him, and so He should cut them some slack and relent on banning them from entering the land because of their refusal to enter the land in Num. 14. What Moses says is true only on one level.

Psa 90:2

Before the mountains were brought forth, before You had formed the land and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God-
We are reading here the "prayer" of Moses (:1). But these opening verses make it clear that prayer is meditation before God, and not simply requests. "Brought forth… formed [Heb. 'give birth to']" suggests that the world was formed out of God. The idea of literal *creatio ex nihilo* isn't Biblical. This world is made *out of* God and is therefore not separate from Him. Man is not alone; we aren't cut adrift from our creator. God is so closely with us. He isn't far from every one of us. The fact God is in Heaven and we on earth doesn't mean He is far from us. In human terms, spatiality means apartness; but not for God, who fills Heaven and earth. His being in space and time breaks in to our experience of space and time. Note too that God is perfect / complete in and of Himself; He didn't "need" us. But He created us and then speaks as if He does in some sense "need" us. The point is, creation was an act of grace. All complaints at the seeming injustice and suffering of creation miss this point. Note too that "brought forth" implies God as a mother / female. His nature is such that He is able to identify with both male and female.

Psa 90:3

You turn man to destruction saying, Return, you children of men-
Ps. 90:3 implies that each person dies as a result of a conscious, specific command from God; not just because of natural processes. The specific reference is to God's command that Israel were to die in the wilderness. Moses is begging God to change this

judgment; hence LXX "Turn not man back to his low place, whereas thou saidst, Return, ye sons of men". But the Hebrew for "destruction" means 'to pulverize to dust', and we wonder whether Moses is wrongly considering that the sentence of Gen. 3, to return to dust, is somewhat unfair- that the punishment is as it were brutally executed by God, out of proportion to the sin committed. Moses likewise always blames his not entering the land upon Israel's provocation of him, rather than accepting the consequence of his sinful response to their provocation. Moses himself died by the mouth / kiss of the Angel, surrounded by God's love, rather than being brutally pulverized by God as he here describes death.

And yet the allusion is also to the curse in Eden; it is as if God speaks Gen. 3:19 to each person who dies. In this sense the Bible is a living word; the Red Sea and other salvations of God are as it were performed in an ongoing sense to us each one today. Likewise Abel "is yet spoken of" (Heb. 11:4 AVmg.).The passage in the scrolls that said "I am the God of Abraham" was "spoken unto *you* by God", Jesus told first century Israel (Mt. 22:31). And so Moses really provides his own answer. He is desperate for the 40 year condemnation period to be changed so that he and his generation could enter Canaan. But in fact they were all going to return to the dust anyway, in accordance with Gen. 3:19. And the conclusion really is that our focus ought to be upon a resurrection from the dead, rather than seeking some kind of kingdom now.

"Return" to dust is picked up by Moses later on in his prayer when he asks God to "return" to His people (:13), to return or repent of His intention for Israel to return to dust in the desert, and for Moses to return to dust before entering Canaan. But Moses is overlooking the fact that man must return to dust by the nature of who he is. Even if he and Israel were to enter Canaan, they would still die. But perhaps he has the idea that God could return / relent from His purpose of returning man to dust- through a resurrection, "in the morning" (:14). That is what Moses is implying, and God's final answer in Ps. 91:16 is that indeed, He will show Moses His great salvation, through saving him from the plague of death (Ps. 91:3- alluded to by Paul when he talks of how the resurrection saves from the plague of death). So we see here how prayer works- by stating the problem and our inner longings, we come to some kind of answer. In this case, Moses reflects that although God will indeed return man to dust, He can also return or relent from that- through resurrection of the body.

Psa 90:4

For a thousand years in Your sight are just like yesterday when it is past, like a watch in the night-
Was Moses right to imply that God forgets about His creatures, just as we sleep through the night watch unaware of its passing? Ps. 90 is Moses' prayer asking for God's judgment against Israel and himself in the wilderness to be changed. He had reasoned with God and changed His earlier decision to destroy Israel and make of Moses a great

nation. But this prayer of Moses went unanswered- "speak no more unto Me of this matter" (Dt. 3:26). But here Moses is doing just that- speaking again to God of this matter.

However, this Psalm is an example of how intimate a man can become with God. Moses pleads that man only lives 70 years, maybe 80- so, cut us some slack, God, and reverse our judgment (Ps. 90:10). He waxes very poetic and eloquent about our humanity. But fails to persuade God. And he also rather oddly seems to ignore the fact that he was blessed with 120 years of life with his youthful vigour unabated. He describes our return to dust as being a result of God's wrath and anger (Ps. 90:3,7)- suggesting some resentment at God's judgment of man in Gen. 3, just as Moses resented how God had judged him and Israel. He argues that they had already suffered quite enough evil in Egypt (Ps. 90:15) and asks if God can't give that generation just a little joy in life.

Ps. 90:4 could be seen as Moses arguing 'You've got eternity; we only have a delicate, fragile, grief-filled 70 years. So please, relent on your idea of filling all our human lives with grief by not letting us into the promised land'. Ps. 90:8 sounds like Moses objected to God scrutinizing our "secret sins", and Ps. 90:11 speaks as if God's anger and wrath were just too much. He clearly had a problem accepting the justice of God's punishment against sin, as did the exiles; hence this prayer wasn't answered. But it's the intimacy with God, that a man feels he can speak like this to God, which is the exhortation.

Psa 90:5

You sweep them away as they sleep; in the morning they sprout like new grass-
LXX "Years shall be vanity to them: let the morning pass away as grass". Moses is complaining that the 40 years of wandering would just be wasted years of vanity. But that is indeed what condemnation will be like, and Moses and the exiles (in different contexts) all come over as railing against consequence of sin, rather than focusing upon repentance and the final fulfilment of God's purpose. The language here is that used of the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ps. 77:17 is the only other occurrence of "You sweep them away"), where "in the morning" the Egyptians were dead (Ex. 14:24,27) and had to be replaced by a new generation ["new grass"]. Moses is complaining that the condemned generation were being treated like the Egyptians slain at the Red Sea. But that was indeed appropriate; for in their hearts they had returned to Egypt, and Ezekiel records that they had taken the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea. But again, the consequence of sin is focused upon, rather than admission of sin.

"New grass" is GNB "weeds". Again, Moses is failing to give due weight to the fact that man has sinned and is under the consequences of the curse, "thorns and thistles", weeds.

Psa 90:6

In the morning it sprouts and springs up; by evening, it is withered and dry-
Indeed this is the case. Moses seems to be arguing that the condemned generation would have a tragically vain life experience, as if they were grass which grew up in the morning and then was dead by evening. But this therefore leads the condemned sinner [which is all of us] to a desire for forgiveness and resurrection to eternity. But that connection isn't made here as the prophets intended it to be made.

But all this is interpreted in James 1:11 so positively. If we are indeed so fleeting and weak, then don't worry about getting rich. Don't trust in man nor in wealth. Because man is so weak. Likewise in Ps. 90:12- numbering our days, realizing their brevity, will help us get a heart of wisdom.

Psa 90:7

For we are consumed in Your anger, we are troubled in Your wrath-
God had earlier wanted to "consume" Israel, but the intercession of Moses had stopped this (Num. 16:21,45 s.w.), as did that of Phinehas (Num. 25:11 s.w.). The threat of being "consumed" by God's anger was part of the covenant Israel had made with Him (s.w. Dt. 28:21). They were suffering the agreed consequence of sin, and yet Moses presents this as being unreasonably harsh (:6). And so Moses' request was not answered, at least not as he then desired. For God did indeed "consume" Israel with vanity, a vanity they themselves had chosen (s.w. Ps. 78:33). But this was only after vowing to "consume" them both in Egypt and in the wilderness, and then He had relented out of pure pity and grace for them (Ez. 20:13,14,21,22). He had relented multiple times before; but Moses was not allowed this time to cash in on that. And this was true of the exiles, whom God also "consumed" for their sins (s.w. Jer. 5:3; 9:16; 14:12 and very often).

Psa 90:8

You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your face-
Moses perceived that Israel [and his?] rejection from the land wasn't just due to one incident, but because of their secret sins being viewed by God. Moses himself had been often in the light of God's countenance. David in his penitential Psalms concerning Bathsheba and Uriah likewise at times perceives that there were many other sins involved than "just" adultery and murder.

This is not Moses reproaching God; rather is it him soberly recognizing why they were barred from the land. Notice "*our* iniquities... *our* sins". Moses was completely at one with condemned Israel, he knew exactly how they felt- just as the Lord Jesus with us. It is a fundamental, if neglected, doctrine that the Lord Jesus was our representative. This really ought to be a source of comfort to us, as we sense the involvement of the Son of God in our lives, one who can truly empathize (rather than just sympathize) with our spiritual struggle. This is so clearly taught by the typology of Moses as a type of Christ. Although he spoke to God as a friend, with an open-faced relationship, he still took upon himself the sin of Israel, he felt as condemned as they felt (Ex. 34:9 cp. Ex. 33:11); when he pleaded for God's sentence on him to be lifted, he pleaded for the same sentence on Israel to be lifted too (Ps. 90:8).

So here in Psalm 90 Moses pleads for his rejection and that of his people to be reversed. He says that the reason for their rejection was God setting their "secret sins" in the light of His countenance. He felt his rejection was due to his secret sins- not the one painfully public failure. The Hebrew for "secret" means 'that behind the veil'; it is from the same root as the Hebrew for 'young girl', i.e. a veiled one. He felt the sins he had committed behind the veil he wore before Israel had been exposed in the light of the Angel's face. Remember that Moses *always* appeared to Israel with a veil (Ex. 34:33-35; 2 Cor. 3:16-18 RV), only removing it when he spoke face to face with the Angel, radiating the light of God's glory to him. It seems Moses is alluding to this in Ps. 90:8; he felt that he had many secret sins of the heart, hidden to Israel, but completely open to the Angel when he met with him. Likewise Israel were rejected because of the sins of their *heart* rather than their grosser failures (Acts 7:39; and see the reason for their condemnation given in many other passages). And yet Moses presents as the child who is angry that the parent happened to enter their room and find them doing something naughty. He blames God for looking at secret sins and therefore condemning man. Despite God being so clear that He is interested in the secrets of the heart, and judges these more than external behaviour.

Psa 90:9

For all our days have passed away in Your wrath, we bring our years to an end as a sigh- This is clearly relevant to the wilderness generation, who spent their years suffering God's wrath. They were ever complaining, and ended their years with a groan, just as the first sound they heard on entering the world was the groan of their mother bringing them forth. God swore in His wrath that Israel should not enter into His rest. But Moses seems to resent that wrath, despite sharing it and understanding it when he returned to witness the golden calf apostasy, and broke the tables of the covenant. But a man can rise to great peaks of spirituality and perception, yet fall away from them at the end of his life. I

suggest this is what has happened here to Moses as it did with Gideon and John the Baptist. But Ps. 91 assures Moses that despite this, he will be saved.

"Bring... to an end" is s.w. "consumed" in :7; see note there. It seems Moses is making this prayer towards the start of the forty years wandering and exile from the land. Otherwise there would be little point in begging for the judgment to be reversed. So he may be speaking imagining how things would be at the end of the period; their days would have been wasted in vanity, coming to an end with a sigh of regret. But he fails to see the possibility of being resurrected to eternity in a future, restored Kingdom situation.

"As a sigh" is AV "As a tale that is told", perhaps a reference to the tradition of giving a summary of the deceased's life at their funeral? Is. 53:8 laments that this wasn't done at the death of Messiah. The idea perhaps is that as it takes a mere 20 minutes to summarize a person's life, so in the context of infinity, that is indeed how brief it is.

Psa 90:10

The days of our years are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty years- Lifespans were still relatively long at Moses' time; his father Amram apparently lived to over 130 years, and Moses to 120. The mention of 70 years may have been the result of an edit by the exiles, lamenting that the 70 years of exile from the land would be pointless living; just as Moses had complained about the 40 years of exile from the land at his time. As noted on :1, Moses is speaking in depression- for he appears unmindful and ungrateful of the fact he has come to 120 years with full faculties.

LXX "As for the days of our years, in them are seventy years; and if men should be in strength, eighty years: and the greater part of them would be labour and trouble; for weakness overtakes us, and we shall be chastened". The idea is that there is just no point in life if they could not enter the land. Normally, we would prefer to die at 80 rather than 70. But in the context of the argument here, if they weren't going to enter the land, then living another ten years in exile was vanity and worthless.

Yet their pride is but labour and sorrow, for it passes quickly, and we pass away- "Labour and sorrow" is the phrase translated "iniquity and perverseness" (Num. 23:21), which initially God saw in the wilderness generation, but did not count against them. But they chose to live in it, and so they were made to live like that for 40 years. The same phrase is used of how the exiles chose to live in "mischief and iniquity" (Is. 59:4), and so their glory flew away (s.w. "pass away") as a bird (s.w. Hos. 9:11).

Psa 90:11

Who knows the power of Your anger, Your wrath according to the fear that is due to You?-
Moses could be saying that God's anger was incomprehensible, out of proportion to the sin committed, too much wrath for Israel not showing Him enough fear. And of course he would have been wrong in this. Or it could be that he is musing that according to our perceptions of God we will be judged. God's mercy is upon us according as we trust in Him. And His wrath according as we fear it, Moses appears to be saying. The way the servant was judged out of his own mouth, with the Lord being the kind of "hard man" he thought He was (Mt. 25:24), is surely the principle of Ps. 90:11 AV: "Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath" (in practice).

Moses had previously interceded with God for His anger to turn away. But now he realizes more what God's anger. "Who can plumb the extent of His anger?" is really asking "Who can plumb the extent of His love?". Because indeed "the wrath of God is the love of God". He revealed Himself to Moses as jealous, very jealous- and that jealousy, with its associated wrath, is a function of the extent of His love for Israel. In an age that likes to speak so much of God's grace, we must not forget to try to plumb the extent of God's wrath with our sin and unfaithfulness. Unfashionable as it may be to say this. Because only then will we perceive the full wonder of His grace, and apply our hearts to wisdom and a focused, committed usage of our brief life (:12).

One translation is: "Who knows Your wrath, so as to fear You?". In this case, for the first time, Moses perhaps accepts Israel were guilty. God's wrath did not make them fear Him. Or perhaps this too reflects resentment; as if to say, 'Despite all this wrath, did it lead a single person to fear You? So it was pointless...'.

Psa 90:12

So teach us to number our days so that we may gain a heart of wisdom-
The condemned generation knew that within 40 years they would be dead. And so they could number their days. But the time to be wise had passed; they had chosen not to be, hence the lament: "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" (Dt. 32:29). So we could read this as Moses sarcastically asking them to be given a heart of wisdom, when he knew actually they had not attained this in their time of opportunity.

LXX presents this as a another plea for God to become active in the salvation of His people immediately, rather than after the 40 years wandering: "And who knows how to number his days because of the fear of thy wrath? So manifest thy right hand". This would suggest that numbering days was pointless because they were under God's wrath. They were indeed, but instead of pestering God to change their condemnation,

the focus instead might have been upon confession of sin and hope in the resurrection of the body to the restored Kingdom at the last day.

The other references to people having a heart of wisdom are also in Moses' experience, when the wise of heart make things for the tabernacle (Ex. 35:25). Perhaps Moses is answering his own question here- given their brief lives, the 25,600 days that make up 70 years, they should put their best effort into the Lord's work. Which at their time was the making of the tabernacle. True wisdom is therefore not academic, but rather perceiving our brief life and earnestly devoting every day to His service, knowing our work for Him will be blessed and endure.

Psa 90:13

Relent, Yahweh! How long? Have compassion on Your servants!-
This is the "How long?" asked by the exiles so often in the Psalms. They wanted immediate restoration, just as Moses wanted the 40 year period to be cut short. This 'prayer of Moses' (title) is lamenting how Israel were being destroyed by the Angel as they wandered in the forty year period of punishment. It may even be that the Angel left Israel in a sense (hence "Return O Lord") although still leading them. Thus there are different degrees of the Angelic presence- as at the restoration the Angel did in a limited sense return to the temple, having left them when the cherubim departed from Zion (as Ezekiel records).

Yet Moses clearly believed that this period of decreed punishment could be shortened ("satisfy us early with Thy mercy") by the Angel repenting. Previously his prayers had succeeded in making the Angel repent of the evil that He had planned to do to Israel, and Moses evidently hoped the Angel would again repent.

"Relent... have compassion" are the same words as in Ex. 32:12, "Turn and change Your mind from Your wrath". Ps. 90:11 has just spoken of God's fierce wrath. God was persuaded by Moses after the sin with the golden calf, but now Moses is struggling to do so again- in appealing for Israel's punishment to be changed, and perhaps for his own ban on entering Canaan to be lifted. He is failing to realize that judgment is still part of God's Name as declared in Ex. 34:5-7. Sin still has consequences. And he himself struggled with this when he continually blames Israel for his not entering the land- true as that was, he still was responsible for his words and his sin at that time. Those who make others stumble are guilty, but so is he who thereby stumbles. And Moses is struggling to accept this. He is depressed, and died depressed, that he could not achieve what he had done earlier... which is typical of the old man's depression syndrome.

Moses' hope was always that God would "repent" if He perceived the depth of Israel's suffering (Dt. 32:36 "The Lord will repent Himself for His servants when He sees that

their power is gone"]. "Return" may also be a request for God's presence to return again to the tabernacle rather than being outside it. All this was exactly what the exiles were asking; and yet they failed to focus upon the fact they had sinned, failed to give much emphasis to repentance, and seem more concerned about the immediate removal of the consequence of sins, rather than looking ahead to the last day.

Psa 90:14

Satisfy us in the morning with Your grace, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days-
AV has "satisfy us early", i.e. 'reduce the time period of judgment upon us, and let us enter the land'. Or [Heb.], Moses may be asking for an answer "in the morning", immediately, right after his night of prayer.

Psa 90:15

Make us glad for as many days as You have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen evil-
The thoughts of Moses here were reflected in the exiles; but they all failed to perceive that they had been judged less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). Whereas the reasoning here seems to be that God needs to as it were put right what He did in judging His people. The "afflicted" years would refer to the entire sojourn in Egypt (s.w. Gen. 15:13; Ex. 1:12). But this "affliction" was intended to bring them to repentance (1 Kings 8:35; Ps. 119:67,71). The affliction could therefore be ended by repentance; but instead of that, there is simply a demand that God simply overturn the consequence of sin.

Moses seems to be asking God to now make up for His affliction of His people by giving them a commensurate blessing. But surely Moses is failing to perceive that the afflictions were just, a result of human sin, as God's answer in Ps. 91 will explain. And likewise he is not seeing that God's blessings of salvation are not a kind of apology for His affliction of us, they are not deserved because we suffered- they are by pure grace, seeing we deserve only death. It may be that Moses is saying that since God's affliction had lasted for 40 years, could Israel, and himself, not be given 40 years of blessing in the land. But again, he fails to accept the affliction as the consequence of sin, and that the wages of sin is death. So many complaints about God are the same- focusing upon the consequence of human sin, rather than accepting human sin and begging for the grace of resurrection and the Kingdom of God. Moses was 120 with all natural faculties still strong; he had been already given 40 years over the usual span of 70 or 80 years. He had been given 80 rather than 70 years, and then 40 on top of that. But now he demands another 40 years. When God had asked him "Speak to Me no more of this matter". He really seems to be at a weak point now, at the end of his life. Just as Gideon, Jacob,

David, John the Baptist etc. all died at a lower spiritual point than they had earlier achieved. But will still all be saved by grace.

Psa 90:16

Let Your work appear to Your servants-
But God's work had appeared to them all, but they had chosen to disbelieve it (s.w. Ps. 95:9 "Don't harden your heart, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted Me, tested Me *and saw My work*. Forty long years I was grieved with that generation and said, It is a people that errs in their heart. They have not known My ways"); and the phrase is used of how the exiles had done likewise and were therefore in exile (Is. 5:12).

Your glory to their children-
Moses desired that God's glory would "appear... upon / unto" the children of God's servants. He wanted all God's children to have the same experience of glory appearing to them as he had had. And according to 2 Cor. 3:18, this desire is fulfilled every time a man turns to the Lord Jesus, and like Moses, with unveiled face, beholds that same glory. In the immediate context, he wanted the visible glory of God to appear not just to him in his separate tabernacle, but to all God's people. For as explained on :17, the Angel of glory no longer was going in their midst (Ex. 33:3).

Psa 90:17

Let the grace of the Lord our God be upon us-
LXX "And let the brightness of the Lord our God be upon us". This would be a request for the Angel of glory to return amongst the Israelites. God had clearly stated "I will not go up in the midst of you" (Ex. 33:3); but Moses asked all the same for God [in the form of the Angel of glory?] to go among them" (Ex. 34:9). And he is doing the same here. For the exiles, it would have meant a desire for the shekinah glory, perhaps literally associated with the same Angel, to return to Zion. Ezekiel had in vision seen it departing.

Establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands-
In Dt. 16:15 is used of Israel in the land, obedient and blessed. Moses wishes that the condemned generation could enter the land and experience the blessings promised.

Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord... praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3). As it was God's intention

that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: “Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.).

He twice repeats the request to establish the work of their hands. This is one of the oft repeated blessings for obedience to the covenant, often found in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 16:15; 24:19; 28:12)- that Israel would be blessed in "the work of your hands". Nehemiah ends his days likewise, asking God to "Remember me, my God, concerning this, and don’t wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God" (Neh. 13:14). This is the huge significance of a life lived in His service- what we did will be of eternal moment. Paul likewise felt that the success of his efforts to spiritually build up his converts would be his eternal crown. All we build up by way of career, wealth and natural family will not be remembered. Truly, only what is done for Christ will last. How true are the simple words: "One life, soon past. Only what's done for Christ will last". In the Kingdom age, "My chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Is. 65:22).

PSALMS CHAPTER 91

Psa 91:1

He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty-

This follows on from Ps. 90, where Moses had begged for God's condemnation of the wilderness generation to be abrogated, and for that generation to enter the land. It was the same plea of the exiles; they didn't want to wait the required 70 years in exile, as the wilderness generation didn't want to wait 40 years. The answer from God is here in Ps. 91. He speaks about Joshua as one of the very few who would not perish in the wilderness, and bids all Israel follow his example. It all has relevance to the Lord Jesus; for "Jesus" is the Greek form of "Joshua". In the context of the exiles, the Joshua the High Priest of Zechariah's prophecies could have been a Messiah figure who would have led the exiles back to Judah. But he failed, as did Zerubbabel, and so the prophecy was rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord Jesus.

Joshua dwelt in the tabernacle where Moses met with God, "without the camp" of Israel. This was "the secret place", where the word was spoken (see the connections between the "secret" place and God's word: Job 15:8; 29:4; Ps. 25:14; Prov. 3:32; Is. 45:19; Dan. 2:18; Am. 3:7). It was because of this love of the word that Joshua was preserved in those wilderness years, as the bodies of his peer group were abandoned

in mass graves in the Sinai scrub: "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee". Joshua calmly looked at those sights, *knowing* whom he had believed: "Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold *and* see (i.e. meditate upon) the reward of the wicked" (Ps. 91:7,8).

Joshua had been charged to be strong, of good courage, not fearful nor be dismayed. Yet he had a tendency to forget those charges, the implications of his having been called by God for a purpose; and needed to be reminded of them as he forgot or lost faith in them. Perhaps this is why he is an otherwise surprising omission from the list of faithful men and women in Hebrews 11. And here of course is the challenge to us. We too have been given commissions and callings. Whether it be to raise a Godly family, to establish an ecclesia in a certain place, to overcome a specific vice… the obstacles will flee before us, every place where the soles of our feet rest, will be blessed…if we truly believe in God's purpose with us. Yet like Joshua, we usually fail to have a full faith in this. We get distracted by the views of others, peer pressure, worried by lack of resources, discouraged by setbacks; when it is belief in God's most basic initial promises to us that will overcome them. Joshua's fear is all the more reprehensible when we consider the testimony of Ps. 91. Here Moses speaks about Joshua, the one who dwelt in the secret place or tabernacle of God (Ps. 91:1 = Ex. 33:11), and who therefore was miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness wanderings. Thousands of Joshua's generation died at his side from the various plagues which wasted out his generation during those wanderings; but they never came near him (Ps. 91:5-8). As a result of this, he was commanded by Moses to "not be afraid" (Ps. 91:5); perhaps Moses was thinking specifically about peer pressure, with the assurance that truly God would hear Joshua's prayers (Ps. 91:14,15). His amazing preservation during the wilderness years ought to have instilled a faith and lack of fearfulness within him; and yet the implication is that he did very often fall prey to fearfulness in later life. Just as with us, the circumstances of earlier life are controlled by the Father to give us faith with which to cope with later crises; but we don't always learn the lessons we are intended to.

This Psalm is God's response to Moses' depressive prayer of Psalm 90. He is asked to remember that Joshua will enter the land, but that all the same, God will take due note of Moses' love of His Name and will eternally save him- :16 is the climax of the whole answer. Moses argued in Ps. 90:1 that God's people have always dwelt in God, and so, He should relent of His judgment and condemnation of them. God's reply here is that whoever dwells beneath His cherubim, trusting in Him and not idols (:2), will be saved. It's a kind of correction of Moses' assumption that all Israel had always dwelt in God. God is saying that He deals with individuals and their personal relationship with Him, and will not therefore save "Israel" on a collective basis.

Moses' point is that because He has no beginning nor end, by nature, He therefore cannot understand how awful it is to have your existence terminated. Moses lived 120 years with full faculties, but begrudged God not letting him enter Canaan. He had so set his mind on this short term dream that he had lost the perspective of the eternal Kingdom. When he complains man only lives 70 or 80 years maximum, he seems to forget he has lived 120 years with full faculties- and hardly comes over as grateful, because he is so focused upon his own obsessive, self declared dream of changing God's mind so he could cross over into Canaan himself.

Psa 91:2

I will say of Yahweh, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust- This was the attitude which God wished to see from Joshua in his own self talk; and if

others in Israel had displayed this, they too would not have perished in the desert but would have lived to enter the land. And yet only twice does Joshua use the phrase "my God" or "my Lord". It seems that he didn't fully live up to these things.

It has been observed that this Psalm has an "antiphonal arrangement- the first speaker delivering Ps. 91:1,2; the second, Ps. 91:3,4; then the first responding with Ps. 91:5-8; and again the second with Ps. 91:9-13. In conclusion, a third speaker, making himself the mouthpiece of Jehovah, crowns all by declaring the blessings which God himself will bestow upon his faithful ones (Ps. 91:14-16)". The Psalm was to be recited, because every man was intended to follow Joshua's intended pattern.

Psa 91:3

For He will deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the deadly plague-
The exiles were intended to follow Joshua's example. For the Babylonian captivity was "the snare of the fowler" (Ps. 124:7). The plague is that of :6, which destroyed many of the wilderness generation but didn't touch Joshua.

Psa 91:4

He will cover you with His feathers, beneath His wings you will take refuge; His faithfulness is your shield and rampart-
It would be as if Joshua was located beneath the wings of the cherubim, over the blood of atonement, and beneath the shekinah glory of God seen between the cherubim. This was the intimacy with God which was possible for him. He would be shielded by God from all the plagues which slowly wiped out the wilderness generation. But this promise of being covered with God's wings and feathers was equally to all God's people who chose to go the way of faith of Joshua and Caleb (Ex. 19:4; Dt. 32:11).

LXX has "He will overshadow thee between his shoulders", "alluding to the custom of parents carrying their weak or sick children on their backs, and having them covered even there with a mantle". Elsewhere God is presented as having carried His child Israel through the wilderness. This theme is continued in :12, where we read that the Angels will seek to ensure that we don't even trip up over a stone- language appropriate to guiding a young child in its first steps. Indeed, Hosea uses the same figure- "When Israel was a child...", God took them by the arms and taught them to walk.

God is comforting Moses that he has in fact been preserved through the 40 years wanderings, and didn't die along with that generation.

Psa 91:5

You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day-
The terror at night may refer to marauding tribes of Bedouin who attacked the Israelites and also contributed to the destruction of the wilderness generation. The arrow of the day time would be the arrows of God, even if they were shot by the Bedouin, as in Job 6:4.

Psa 91:6

nor of the plagues that stalks in darkness, nor of the destruction that wastes at noonday-
This is the destruction threatened for those who break covenant (s.w. Dt. 32:24). The plagues were personified as stalking in the dark. But equally at noonday they were to be destroyed by the plagues. LXX "from ruin and the demon of the midday" perhaps

refers to sunstroke. Whatever belief in demons the people held, the simple truth was that God destroyed the wilderness generation; all was under His absolute control. There is no radical evil in the cosmos. The exiles were comforted likewise in Ps. 121:6, "The sun shall not smite you by day". They were to follow the path intended for Joshua, and earnestly believe they could participate in the restored kingdom of God.

Psa 91:7

A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you-

A clear reference to how the wilderness generation fell dead, those whom Joshua knew well, those at his side. Sometimes a thousand fell, other times ten thousand. But his life was to be preserved.God is comforting Moses that his life has been preserved, he has not failed of God's grace.

Psa 91:8

You will only look with your eyes and see the recompense of the wicked-

The idea is that Joshua would look at the corpses of the slain amongst his fellows, and reflect that this was the recompense for their wickedness. And that wickedness was essentially their unbelief that they would enter the Kingdom. Moses is being reminded that the generation who died in the desert did so because they were wicked. Their death had been their recompense. And he had been preserved from that. Again he is being shown that he was wrong to complain in Ps. 90 about the consequence of sin.

Psa 91:9

Because you have made Yahweh your refuge and the Most High your dwelling place-

The stress is upon "you"; Joshua would not fall and be slain because of his unbelief, because he had in faith focused upon the things of Yahweh. Not simply in having faith that Israel could easily enter the promised land, but in his subsequent choice to live in the tabernacle, to dwell in God's presence.

Moses too is being comforted that he has indeed taken refuge in Yahweh and would be blessed for it- but with ultimate salvation, not with short term entance into Canaan as he so wished.

Psa 91:10

no evil shall happen to you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling-

This seems to look back to Job 5:19: "He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee". Ps. 91 is Moses' encouragement to Joshua that the destroying Angel in the wilderness would not harm him, but he would be protected by the Angels who would "keep you in all your ways" (:11). Thus Moses may have seen Job 5:19 to be talking about evil brought by Angels of evil (Ps. 78:49)- i.e. Job's satan Angel who brought the trials, as discussed at length on Job 1. "Your dwelling" would refer to the tabernacle "without the camp" where Joshua lived.

Psa 91:11

For He will put His angels in charge of you, to guard you in all your ways-

Instead of the Angels bringing plagues of death upon Joshua, as did upon the wilderness generation after the pattern of what they did in Egypt, instead the Angels would guard him. The Psalm describes how Joshua was miraculously preserved from

the punishments which befell his generation in the wilderness; thousands fell at his side from the various plagues sent to waste away his peer group. But he was preserved. It is in this context we read that the Angels would be given charge over him, lest he dash his foot against a stone during that wilderness journey (Ps. 91:11,12).

Yet these words were understood by the Lord Jesus as relevant to Him personally, when *He* was in the wilderness (Mt. 4:6). The Lord Jesus clearly saw Joshua as a type of Himself. The double application of Psalm 91 to both Joshua and Jesus makes Joshua a potential Messiah. He and the High Priest Joshua at the time of the restoration could have been Messiah figures; but they failed to rise up completely to this. So Joshua is not simply a type of the Lord Jesus. Rather were the potentials possible for him, which he didn't totally fulfil, reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus.

"Guard" is the same word used in Gen. 3:24, and thus alludes to the Angels keeping men in the way to the tree of life- not only physically but spiritually preserving them. The figure of dashing the foot against a stone suggests the idea of spiritual stumbling against a "rock of offence" or stumblingstone (s.w. Jer. 13:16, of how the exiles refused this potential help and did stumble). The Angels bore up the Lord Jesus to help Him avoid these. But only because He Himself wished for that strength, and avoided the temptation He faced to abuse it and wrongly use it. But "to guard you in all your ways" is omitted when the 'Satan' of the Lord's own human mind cited this verse to Himself in the wilderness temptations. He was tempted to omit the fact that God's protection was not a blanket promise [as He was tempted to think], but only in the context of the person who is walking in the way to the tree of life. And this is a common failure of believers- to grab hold of a verse promising protection and blessing, and assume it applies in a general sense, without paying attention to the context of the promise. Thus men charge into battle with these words written on their helmets...

Psa 91:12

they will bear you up in their hands, so that you won't dash your foot against a stone-

See on :11. God was willing to "bear up" Israel and bring them into the land / kingdom (s.w. Dt. 32:11). But only Joshua and Caleb made use of that. Nothing need have caused them to stumble. And the same is true for us. But we need to want that, whereas Israel in their hearts turned back to Egypt. As noted on :4, this is the language of a parent leading a child in its first seps, ensuring they don't trip over a stone. Moses is being reminded that God had so gently cared for him through the wilderness journey, and he should focus upon that rather than his personal bitterness and ranting against God of Ps. 90.

Psa 91:13

You will tread on the lion and cobra, you will trample the young lion and the serpent underfoot-

The treading underfoot of the adder must have a connection with Genesis 3; the seed of the woman trampling sin underfoot. This conquest of sin by Jesus was therefore partly due to Angelic strengthening of Him (see on :11,12). Through them "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself", making Christ a sin-offering for us. There are also connections with the restoration prophecies of Isaiah, which speak of

these wild animals being subdued. But again, the exiles didn't want this; just as it seems the full potential of these things was not realized by Joshua.

The prophecy about Christ personally that He would tread upon snakes and wild animals (Ps. 91:13) is quoted as being fulfilled in the disciples, who 'were' Christ on their preaching mission (Lk. 10:19; Mk. 16:18). In Old Testament times, God described His whole people as His anointed one, His Christ: "The Lord is a strength unto his people, and he is the saving strength of his anointed" (Ps. 28:8 RVmg.). The whole people were His anointed King, His Messiah, the anointed one. And so it is for all those today who are "in Christ".

The 'devil' of the Lord's own nature tempted Him to apply Ps. 91:11 in a wrong context, and jump off the pinnacle of the temple. But if the Lord had gone on, as surely He did, He would have found the words: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet" (Ps. 91:13 AV). This promise would have been of wonderful comfort, as throughout the wilderness temptations the Lord "was with the wild beasts" (Mk. 1:13).

Psa 91:14

Because he has set His love on Me, therefore I will deliver him. I will set him on high, because he has known My name-

This implies that our love of God is expressed in seeking to appreciate His name. To know Him is to love Him, and to want to be like Him; there is something compulsive and magnetic about who He is. The knowledge of God elicits quite naturally a merciful spirit (Hos. 6:6).

But it seems that :13-16 speak of potentials which Joshua personally didn't fully realize. But they did come true of the Lord Jesus. It is therefore not the full picture to just say that "Joshua was a type of Christ". He was, but the connection is also in the fact that what Joshua didn't realize, the Lord Jesus did. And the fulfilment therefore came about in even more wonderful terms; for the Lord Jesus was "set on high" through exaltation to Heaven and being made prince of the kings of the earth, and being delivered from death through resurrection.

The word for "To set love upon" is that used about how God set His love upon Israel (Dt. 7:7; 10:15). We see here the mutuality between God and man, and especially Moses. For all Moses' depression and anger with God in Ps. 90, for all his desire to see immediate answers, for all his refusal to accept the just consequences of sin, God recognized that Moses had set his love upon God, just as God had set His love upon him. Moses was the one who supremely "has known My Name", witnessing the declaration of the Name on Sinai. Despite Moses' ranting of Ps. 90, God saw his heart was set in love upon Him. And we should be prepared to see that in other believers.

Psa 91:15

He will call on Me and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honour him-

Again, this only partially came true for Joshua, and was fulfilled above all in the deliverance and honour of the Lord Jesus. The exiles failed to make use of these potentials, as it seems Joshua didn't fully either. "Troubles" is the word used of Jacob's time of trouble (Gen. 35:3; Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1). David's experience of trouble was representative of how the exiles and all God's people could ultimately follow the path of Jacob to deliverance out of exile and from his strong enemies. But in Ps. 71:20 David sees his deliverance from the day of trouble as ultimately being in the resurrection of the body, being 'brought up again from the depths of the earth'.

This is clearly relevant to Moses, who is honoured more than any man apart from the Lord Jesus, throughout Scripture. Only the Lord Jesus "has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb. 3:3). Although Moses' requests of Ps. 90 appeared unanswered, God assures him that He will answer him- in that the essence of his prayer, his desire for salvation, will be eternally answered (:16). Through all our depression and even ranting at God, as Moses in Ps. 90, God sees to the core desire- for eternal salvation. And He will give this to us as He promised Moses. This will eternally answer every impression of unanswered prayer that we ever struggled with.

Psa 91:16

I will satisfy him with long life, and show him My salvation-

This came ultimately true for the Lord Jesus when he was given eternal life. The fulfilment in Joshua was pale in comparison to this, and he lived slightly shorter than Moses. There are a number of occasions where the Lord's need for salvation by God is emphasized. Ps. 91:11,12 is quoted about Jesus in Mt. 4:6. Now Ps. 91:16 goes on to prophesy how God would give the Lord Jesus salvation: "With long life (i.e. eternal life) will I satisfy him, and shew him my salvation." Ps. 69:21 refers to Christ's crucifixion (Mt. 27:34); the whole Psalm describes Christ's thoughts on the cross: "Save me, O God... Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it...Let your salvation, O God, set me up on high" (Ps. 69:1,18,29). This need of the Lord for salvation is impossible for the Trinitarian paradigm to cope with.

PSALMS CHAPTER 92

Psa 92:1

A Psalm. A song for the Sabbath day-

This Psalm was intended for usage on the Sabbaths. "Jewish tradition says that it was sung in the morning at the time of the drink offering of the first lamb". But much of the language is used in Psalms of David, and so it seems it originated with him.

It is a good thing to give thanks to Yahweh, to sing praises to Your name, Most High- This is in contrast to the complaint that it was profitless to keep the Sabbath (Mal. 2:15). The Sabbath was understood here as intended for praise. The Psalm will go on to be concerned with issues of justice and whether God is right. The conclusion is that indeed God is just and right; and so, it is indeed a good thing to praise His Name, the essence of His being and personality.

Psa 92:2

to proclaim Your grace in the morning and Your faithfulness every night-

"Proclaiming" or showing forth praise of God's ways is what David did in this life (Ps. 71:17,18; 92:2,15 and often). But he imagines himself doing so "forever" (Ps. 75:9). This is an example of how we can live the eternal life now, acting now as we shall eternally do in the Kingdom. It is in this sense that the Lord Jesus in John's gospel offers eternal life right now; even though we shall die and only enter eternity at the resurrection of the

body. This Psalm was specifically for the Sabbath (:1), and perhaps David saw the Sabbath as a foretaste of the future Kingdom of God. Those in Israel who despised it and broke it were therefore not interested in living the Kingdom life now. "Grace and… faithfulness", or "mercy and truth", is a phrase often used about the promises to Abraham. These were the basis of the new covenant, and it was these which should be praised on the Sabbath. But we note that David speaks of doing so "every night", as if implying that the spirit of Sabbath praise should be lived out every day.

The allusion is to the morning and evening sacrifices. As elsewhere in the Bible, these are seen here as representative of praise and proclamation. Disicipline in spiritual life is critically important. Morning and evening prayer time are to be the pillars of spiritual life. Perhaps "grace" is to be on our hearts in the mornings because a new day, life itself, is a gift of grace- to sinners who don't deserve another day and who ought to be dead.

Psa 92:3

with the ten-stringed lute, with the harp, and with the melody of the lyre-
Very clearly the style and language of David (see on :1,4).

Psa 92:4

For You, Yahweh, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands!-
The "me" is clearly David (see on :1), but he wishes all men to share his relationship with God. The idea of the Sabbath (:1) was to rest from human works in order to accept the saving power of God's work (Heb. 4:3,4,10). Hence on the Sabbath especially, it was appropriate to triumph in *God's* work and not our own. God's "work" here refers to creation, for God ceased from His work on the Sabbath, which this Psalm commemorates. Looking at God's work in creation is a source of joy.

Psa 92:5

How great are Your works, Yahweh! Your thoughts are very deep-
God's works in creation, to be considered every Sabbath, reflect His thoughts. Quite opposite to the idea of creation by random mutation and atheistic evolution. Again the emphasis is upon praising *God's* works on the Sabbath rather than our own; see on :4. God's works and His thoughts are paralleled here (as in Ps. 40:5; Prov. 16:3). Thoughts are therefore our "way" of life in practice (Is. 55:7). This is because thought and action are understood as essentially the same; hence the sermon on the mount condemns thoughts of sin as if they are the sin itself.

Psa 92:6

A senseless man doesn't know, neither does a fool understand this-
As discussed on :4,5, the senseless and fool are those who don't stop and behold God in the natural world, and who in their worldly wisdom commit the folly of atheism. Yet David admits that temporarily, he had been like this himself (s.w. Ps. 73:21). The fact is, even those as spiritual as David can at times be totally unspiritual in their perspective, and like him need to take a grip and return to reality. We surely have all known this.

Psa 92:7

though the wicked spring up as the grass and all the evildoers flourish, they will be destroyed forever-
The apparent prosperity of the wicked is a major issue, so much so that this weekly Sabbath liturgy (:1) mentioned it. The same concern is found in Job (Job 21:7-21) and Asaph (Ps. 73:2-15). But their flourishing is presented here as being a prelude to their being cut down; they grow up quickly, but so as to be cut down at the last day. "Grass" is really "weeds". They may briefly bloom with bright flower, but will "be destroyed forever". They are aligned with the curse of Eden, that the earth would bring forth such weeds. Possibly the allusion is to the way that some weeds are allowed by man to spring up, so that they can more easily be grabbed hold of and rooted up. That is a profound perspective on why the wicked temporarily prosper. The righteous are described as trees that keep standing, keep bearing fruit into their old age. The wicked are as weeds with bright colours that last just for a day and produce no visible fruit. The weeds / grass remain close to the ground, the righteous are as cedar trees that rise far above the earth towards Heaven. The psalm contains 100 Hebrew words, and the centre point is "They will be destroyed forever". Many of the psalms beg God to judge the wicked and save the righteous. This psalm states calmly and simply that He will do this; and in :10,11 the psalmist cites his own experience of it in his own life.

Evildoers "flourish" briefly; but the righteous "flourish like the palm tree… they are planted in Yahweh's house, they will flourish in our God's courts" (:12,13). We could think that their flourishing is in the future, and it is eternal. But surely the contrast between the two types of plant [grass / weeds compared to the palm and cedar] suggests that the contrast is right now. The image of the righteous as a flourishing tree is used about them in this life (Ps. 1:3 "He will be like a tree planted by the streams of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also does not wither; whatever he does shall prosper"; 52:10 "I am like a green / flourishing olive tree in the house of God"). Likewise Jer. 17:8 "he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, who spreads out its roots by the river, and shall not fear when heat comes, but its leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit". The

righteous also flourish, but their growth is far slower. We think of the Lord's parable of the fast and slow builders. Both built, but one slower and eternally. All some comfort for those of us who feel our spiritual growth is very slow.

Psa 92:8

But You, Yahweh, are on high forever-
The problem of the apparent prosperity and high exaltation of the wicked (:7) is resolved by reflecting that it is Yahweh who is ultimately exalted, and He will be so eternally. The "height" of God is a common reflection of David in the Psalms.

Psa 92:9

For, behold, Your enemies, Yahweh, for, behold, Your enemies shall perish; all the evildoers will be scattered-
This clearly alludes to the Baal epic of the Canaanites, when Baal defeats the sea: “Look, your enemies, O Baal; look, your enemies you will smash; look, you will destroy your foes”. The deconstruction is to show that all that was believed about the gods of this world wasn't ultimately true, but it is true of Yahweh. We too are surrounded by the gods of our worlds... but they are in fact the very antithesis of God's Truth. He will be eternally victorious, and they will be the losers and will cease to exist.

David often talks about the perishing [s.w.] of *his* enemies (Ps. 9:3,6, 41:5; 143:12). But here in Ps. 92:9 he speaks of them as *God's* enemies. He considers his enemies to be God's enemies. That may well have been true, seeing that God did indeed become the enemy of Saul, who was clearly the great enemy of David in his earlier life (1 Sam. 28:16). But we must sound a caveat; because it can be that those within the body of believers whom we consider our enemies are in fact loved by God. We cannot automatically assume in times of inter-personal strife that our enemies are also God's enemies. Likewise our enemies' friend is not always our enemy, and our enemies' enemy is not always to be our friend.

Psa 92:10

But You have exalted my horn like that of the wild ox; I am anointed with fresh oil-
Verses 10 and 11 are the psalmist's personal testimony that God has indeed been just, upright and gracious to him. They are inserted in the midst of the more philosophical argument that God is indeed just and of integrity. A horn anointed with oil speaks of victory- the vanquished in battle laments "I... have laid my horn in the dust" (Job 16:15). The horn was used to store oil (1 Sam. 16:1), but the psalmist's horn was itself anointed

with oil. The oil of God's blessing was super abundant. And "he who has anointed us is God". We are in the Christ, the anointed one.

The talk of being anointed is clearly relevant to David as the anointed king under persecution; but this is a generic psalm for the Sabbath, to be used in the liturgy every week (see on :1). We are bidden see David as our representative; and indeed we too are anointed in that we are in Christ, the anointed one (2 Cor. 1:21). Just as all Israel were to see themselves as somehow "in" David. David is here quoting from Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:10). He appropriates her words to himself personally, and now bids all Israel apply them to themselves every Sabbath. Hence "*our* horn shall be exalted... *his* horn shall be exalted" (Ps. 89:17,24).

Psa 92:11

My eye has also seen my enemies, my ears have heard of the wicked enemies who rise up against me-
The idea is, "see my desire on my enemies", as AV. Remember that this is part of a Sabbath liturgy, to be used every week (:1). David assumes that every man will have "enemies" just as he does, and that we also hear of others are rising up against us. Perhaps the Psalm was written at the time of his persecution by Saul or Absalom, who 'rose up against' David. He speaks in the past tense, so certain is he that his desire will be fulfilled. And yet we wonder why every Sabbath, men were to gloat over the fact their enemies amongst God's people would be destroyed, and to reflect upon their "desire" for that. We would rather imagine that the Sabbath was a time to rest from all such thoughts. Often, “desire” is seen by God as prayer (Ps. 10:17; 21:2; 27:4; 59:10; 92:11; 140:8; 145:19; Mt. 18:32; Rom. 10:1; 1 Jn. 5:15). God interprets that inner desire as prayer, even if it is not articulated in specific requests.

Psa 92:12

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon-
This is in contrast to the temporary flourishing of the wicked (see on :7). The implication therefore is that the righteous will *eternally* flourish, whereas the wicked only do so for a moment. The righteous are to be upright as the cedar and palm trees, because Yahweh is upright (Ps. 92:12,15). This is why bearing the name of Christ is in itself an imperative to witness it. The same words are used here as in David's vision of how Solomon's kingdom would be in Ps. 72:7: "In his days, the righteous shall flourish". In Ps. 92:11,12, David thinks that he himself will see the righteous flourishing (s.w. Ps. 72:7). So he may be imagining that he would somehow be resurrected and see this happening in Solomon's reign. His hope will come ultimately true, but through the kingdom of the Lord Jesus and not Solomon.

Psa 92:13

They are planted in Yahweh's house, they will flourish in our God's courts-
Again the present tense is used for the future, so certain is David that his prayer will be heard. This liturgy was for the weekly Sabbath celebrations in the temple (:1); but the hope of the righteous is that they will not just come into the courts of the sanctuary once every week, but live and flourish there eternally. Ideally, such regular meetings of God's people should be foretastes of the eternal experience of the Kingdom. So whilst the Psalm may have originated with David, it has been modified under Divine inspiration to be used at the time when the temple was built. If we enquire how a "cedar of Lebanon" (:12) could be planted in the temple courts in Jerusalem, the answer surely is that it was transplanted. The picture may be of Gentiles coming to dwell and grow in Yahweh's temple in Jerusalem. Both the first and second temples were built with cedars of Lebanon (Ezra 3:7; 1 Kings 6:9,15,16,18,20,36). Those dead cedar panels are seen as representative of living cedar trees, people, from whom God's living temple is built. The wicked grow as the grass or weeds, and they flourish but perish. The righteous grow in the confines of God's house and last [relatively speaking] eternally, bringing forth useful fruit for others. The environment of "God's house" is a key difference... and it does point up the need for association within the house of God, His collevtive people, rather than trying to grow independently like the grass out on some random hillside.

Psa 92:14

They will still bring forth fruit in old age. They will be full of sap and green-
"Old age" in secular life is a grim acceptance that our fruitfulness and vitality are passed. But in spiritual terms, we live in "newness of life" through the work of the Spirit. We are to be spiritually fruitful till the day we die. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it, until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

Psa 92:15

to show that Yahweh is upright. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him-

This Psalm has been concerned with justice. The conclusion is that His ways are indeed right, ultimately: "God is upright, He is my Rock in whom there is no wrong".

This is a quotation from Dt. 32:4. The context there is of Moses at the end of his life, like David in "old age" (:14), lamenting the general apostasy of Israel; and yet rejoicing that Yahweh for him is his "rock" and His ways are ever more evidently "right" in his life. This may seem a strange way to conclude a liturgy which was to be read or sung weekly at

the Sabbath meetings of God's people (:1). But in that context it is appropriate; for the majority of God's visible community have nearly always been astray, and it is appropriate that a genuine worshipper would at times feel this, and would want to take comfort from the words of Moses which David here appropriates.

PSALMS CHAPTER 93

Psa 93:1

Yahweh reigns!-
The preceding Psalm 92 was a Psalm for the sabbath, and it seems Psalm 93 follows on from this. In some traditions it is recited at the end of the Sabbath. It was understood at the time that a god became enthroned eternally as king after he had defeated his enemies. This is why God's enemies are described in :3,4 as floods of waters that He has overcome. And so this proclamation implies an eternal Divine victory- although in fact He had always been king, from eternity (:2). It is why the Lord's crucifixion was in a sense His enthronement in glory. And yet in another sense, God has won every battle before it happens and was always king from the beginning. God's kingship is as firmly, eternally established as is the world: "The world also is established to stand firm, so that it can't be moved. Your throne is established..." (:2). God's Kingdom, His Kingship over the earth, was established from the beginning; for now, the waters have arisen over the earth for a brief moment, especially during Israel's exile from their land. But His Kingdom is eternal and will soon be re-established visibly upon the earth. Hence the big theme that the Kingdom of God existed in the past but will be established again on earth at the Lord's return. For then the disciples' question will be answered: "Will you at this time restore the Kingdom?".

Literally, 'has become king'. Perhaps this Psalm is David's reflections at the time when *he* became king, realizing that Yahweh is the true king of Israel.

He is clothed with majesty! Yahweh is armed with strength. The world also is established to stand firm, so that it can't be moved-
The solid kingship of Yahweh is contrasted later in the Psalm with the swelling of the waters against Him. David felt this to be appropriate to himself, for when he became king he was surrounded by surges of opposition. The language here is of a king clothed with all the insignia of active kingship. His "Majesty" and royal clothing are the terms used of how He was displayed at His victory at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1,3,13). There it was stated that "Yahweh shall reign for ever and ever" (Ex. 15:18). The Jews in exile, like us at times, felt that God existed but was somehow not reigning any more. These Psalms insist that He is as active and gloriously reigning as He ever was. His people are the dominion over which He is King; we are His Kingdom, although at this point His visible

Kingdom is not established on earth over men. It will be re-established at the Lord's return. We recall the disciples' question, "Will you at this time restore again the Kingdom to Israel?". And the way at Zedekiah's time, the Kingdom was overturned *until* Messiah comes to reign upon Yahweh's throne which is also David's throne (Ez. 21:25-27). We have a king, a culture, a history, principles and laws under which to live. We are in a kingdom. We are not in this world. "My Kingdom is not of this world", the Lord said, having just told His Father that His people were "not of this world". God is King. He still reigns. And this is the great comfort in times of crisis, when it seems random forces and the winds of fortune blow hard against us. The earth is established, it will not be destroyed, Yahweh is King, your king, you are His, one of His people. He has not gone anywhere. In fact, He was king from before time. Always king. Always in perfect control.

Psa 93:2

Your throne is established from long ago; You are from everlasting-
David is humbly reflecting that his throne is in fact God's. And that throne has always been, and is certain. Any opposition to him was therefore ultimately going to fail, so long as he retained his perspective- that he was reigning on God's throne and not his own, as God's agent, and not as king himself purely in his own right and name.

The idea of a "throne" is of judgment. God is *now* enthroned as judge (Ps. 93:2; Mt. 5:34 “the heaven *is* God’s throne”). We are now inescapably in God’s presence (Ps. 139:2); and ‘God’s presence’ is a phrase used about the final judgment in 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10. Hence “God is [now] the judge: he puts down one and setteth up another” (Ps. 75:7) – all of which He will also due at the last day (Lk. 14:10). The essence of judgment is ongoing now; “we make the answer now”. God’s present judgment is often paralleled with His future judgment. Thus “The Lord *shall* judge the people… God *judges* [now] the righteous, and God *is* angry with the wicked every day… he *will* whet his sword; he *has* [right now] bent his bow, and made it ready” (Ps. 7:8,11-13). We are come *now* “to God the judge of all” (Heb. 12:23).

As discussed on :1, the surrounding culture was familiar with the idea of Mesopotamian and Canaanite deities fighting against the sea gods, winning, and then being enthroned. Psalm 93 deconstructs that by presenting Yahweh as the victor from the start, enthroned from infinity and to infinity; and so the lifting up of the waters in opposition to Him (:3) is utterly vain. He doesn't have to fight for His Kingship nor struggle to defend and retain it. It is this kind of kingship that we are to praise; it is why God's Kingship is the cause of praise (:1 "Yahweh reigns!"). Likewise in all our conflicts, victory is assured because it was there from the beginning. The lamb was slain from the foundation of the world.

Psa 93:3

The floods have lifted up, Yahweh, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves-
As noted on :1, the floods and waves represent the opposition of peoples to God's rulership. David, as king on Yahweh's throne, faced huge opposition from the house of Saul to his kingship, as well as many later challenges to it. But he took comfort that all this swelling of peoples was as nothing against the eternal Kingship of God which he represented.

On one hand, the waters represent powerful natural forces that are beyond human control. In the context of the exile, they refer to the Gentile nations. Thus Is. 17:12,13 speak of "the uproar of many peoples, who roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters! The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters: but He will rebuke them, and they will flee far off". Assyria was likened to the Euphrates (Is. 8:7,8), Egypt to the Nile (Jer. 46:7,8). But throughout the Psalms, God orders them to praise (Ps. 98:8), to rejoice and clap their hands (Ps. 69:35; 98:8; 148:4) and even to roar in praise (Ps. 96:11; 98:7). It is God "who stirs up the sea, so that its waves roar; Yahweh of Armies is His name" (Jer. 31:35). And He sets limits for the mighty waters of the seas (Job 26:10). "He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses.... Yahweh brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; He makes the thoughts of the peoples to be of no power" (Ps. 33:7,10). God is in complete control. There is no radical evil out there which is outside of His control. And He is able to turn the roar of enemies into praise of Him. Thus the meaning of the symbolism is double- waters represent enemies or issues that seem to have crushing power, but their lifted up voices or noise can also represent praise.

Psa 93:4

Above the voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of the sea, Yahweh on high is mighty-
As explained on :1,3, this refers to the "voice" of the opposition to David's kingship. He was particularly sensitive to words, as so many of his Psalms indicate. The allusion is to how the waters of the Red Sea were totally under God's control (Ex. 15:10). Despite the loud and scary noise of the waters, the forces of apparent chaos around us, our lives are not chaotic. God is in control and mighty and high above all that background noise. The lives of believers in God's Kingdom differ starkly from those of unbelievers, whose lives are indeed chaotic, influenced by apparent chaos, as they stumble from one wave of crisis to another. Until they die.

Psa 93:5

Your words stand firm. Holiness adorns Your house, Yahweh, forever-
The words in view may be God's statements that David indeed was to be king. But David realized that if God's throne was David's throne, then David's house was to as Yahweh's house, adorned with holiness. Solomon interpreted this in physical terms, adorning the temple with symbols of holiness (the cherubim) and gold; but the real adornment was of personal holiness, which Solomon failed in ultimately because of his obsession with the external and material. In the context of the exiles, the words that stood firm were that God's house would eternally exist. They thought that promise applied solely to the physical temple; but God's holy house is now clearly redefined as His people, not any physical building.

PSALMS CHAPTER 94

Psa 94:1

Yahweh, You God to whom alone vengeance belongs, You God to whom vengeance belongs-
I suggest this began as a Psalm of David pleading for vengeance against Saul and / or Absalom's group, which under inspiration was then reused by the exiles in their pleas for vengeance against Babylon. The stress that vengeance belongs to God was of course a major theme with David, in that he refused twice to take Saul's life when he easily could have done- because vengeance belongs to God and not man. And likewise it was stressed to the exiles that vengeance upon the Gentiles who had abused them belonged to God, and they were to pray for the time of *His* vengeance to come.

Shine forth-
A request for the shining forth again of God's glory from between the cherubim (s.w. Ps. 80:1); even though the ark seems to have been lost during the captivity. The first seven verses contain requests for God's immediate, visible action. But the answer is 'This will come at the Lord's coming to establish the Kingdom of God on earth'. And His shining forth will be in the rays of the Lord Jesus as the sun of righteousness.

Psa 94:2

Rise up-
There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. David lifts himself up to God (Ps. 25:1; 28:2; 86:4), and asks God to lift up Himself in response (Ps. 7:6; 10:12; 94:2).

You judge of the earth, repay the proud what they deserve-
This again is in line with the note on :1, that God and not man is the judge who will repay the proud. And yet Israel had been punished far less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13), and this desire for their abusers to receive precisely what they did, to be punished *as* their sins deserved, seems to reflect a lack of appreciation of that grace. This is very much the language of Lam. 3:64, asking God to repay the Babylonians, whose essential sin was pride. Even with Jerusalem and the temple in ruins, and Israel's hope apparently lost, the psalmist still sees God as being the ultimate judge. Even if the result of His judgments is not immediately seen. And we are to believe in Him likewise, even when He is apparently silent. He is judging all through that silence... The request is for God as judge to "rise up", as a judge rises from his deliberations to deliver the verdict. His apparent silence is whilst He deliberates... His mind is so actively working, whilst man wrongly perceives He is ignoring us.

Psa 94:3

Yahweh, how long will the wicked, how long will the wicked triumph?-
This really had the answer "How long will it be before you exiles repent and desire to return to your God as well as to your land?". The truth was that they had gone into exile because they had 'triumphed' in their wickedness (s.w. Jer. 11:15). But it had its basis in David's wondering whilst persecuted by Saul "how long" before he would become king.

Psa 94:4

They pour out arrogant words; all the evildoers boast-
The psalmists adopt God's perspective, that the essence of sin is pride, and the greatest sin of Israel's abusers was their pride and boasting. Whilst this complaint is obviously relevant to the Babylonians, the words are used by David about the proud and arrogant words of those within Israel (Ps. 31:18).

Psa 94:5

They break Your people in pieces, Yahweh, and afflict Your heritage-
This is clearly relevant to the actions of the Babylonians (s.w. Lam. 3:34).But it was true also of David's enemies within Israel, especially Saul (Ps. 143:3). The truth is that the exiles were broken because they had broken each other in pieces (Is. 3:15 s.w.). Yet that brokenness was intended to bring forth the humility which would enable them to repent and be restored (s.w. Is. 57:15 "contrite"). And it was the suffering servant as representative of Israel who was broken, as their representative (s.w. Is. 53:5,10).

Psa 94:6

They kill the widow and the alien, and murder the fatherless-
This went on at the time of the Babylonian invasion, as Jeremiah's Lamentations testify to. But we wonder whether the psalm had its origin with David lamenting similar behaviour from Saul and his men. The reference to "the alien" would be hard to understand in a Babylonian context. But if done by Saul, it would show a conscious disobedience to the spirit of the Law of Moses, which required that aliens be treated with the utmost respect. It seems that the psalm reflects the complaints of the exiles at what had been done by the Babylonians, lamenting God wasn't judging the Babylonians for what they had done. But the complainers are one track thinkers-for it was exactly these three groups that the Jews had themselves oppressed (Is. 1:17). And when the exiles returned, Nehemiah finds them guilty of abusing the alien and other vulnerable groups. There is simply a refusal to accept that the wages of sin is death. Just as there is today, although many will pay lip service to the idea.

Psa 94:7

They say, Yah will not see, neither will Jacob's God consider-
This was the subconscious attitude of Saul and David's persecutors within Israel. Whilst they may not have said these words, it was a fair summary of the implications of their positions and actions. But it's quite likely that the Babylonians actually said this in so many words. But David's frequent plea for Yahweh to awake from sleep and hear, as if He were deaf, is not far off the same attitude of those who acted as if God were blind or willfully closing His eyes. The wicked say these things to themselves in Ps. 10:11. But here we read they say these things. Self talk is counted as actual talk. And that is worthy of our sober reflection.

Psa 94:8

Consider, you senseless among the people; you fools, when will you be wise?- "Among the people" may mean that the people being criticized were amongst God's people; they were warned that He who even disciplines the Gentiles (:10) will even moreso judge His own people. The question "When will you be wise?" suggests a strong desire in David [at this point] that his persecutors repent; although often he simply wishes them dire condemnation.

Verse 8 begins the Psalmists' response to the complaints of :1-7, that God doesn't do anything about injustice. Heb. "How long until you be wise?". To complain that God doesn't immediately come through for us is to think like an animal, senseless and fools, to be utterly foolish. It is the same idea as in Ps. 73:22 "I was as stupid as an animal; I did not understand you" (GNB). Their earlier complaint "How long?" is answered by "How long until you complainers get it?".

Psa 94:9

He who implanted the ear, won't He hear? He who formed the eye, won't He see?-
The exiles needed to be reminded of this, as they had the impression God was seeing or hearing their situation (s.w. Is. 59:21; Ez. 12:2). It was because of this attitude that they had gone into exile in the first place (s.w. Jer. 5:21; 7:24). There are huge implications of believing in God as the creator of men in His image. He can hardly be perceived as insensitive to what we see and hear, seeing that He created ears and eyes. The same logic demands that we believe that He can strengthen human faculties just as He wishes (Ex. 4:11). see on :10.

Psa 94:10

He who disciplines the nations, won't He punish? He who teaches man knows-
The people being criticized were amongst God's people; they were warned that He who even disciplines the Gentiles (:10) will even moreso judge His own people; see on :8. It makes no sense to assume that the God who teaches man is ignorant of that knowledge which He teaches; this is an extension of the logic discussed on :9.

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Psa 94:11

Yahweh knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile-
The Bible persistently emphasizes the colossal significance of the thoughts, the spirit. And this prepares the way for the huge theme of the Spirit in the New Testament, and the opportunity to receive a holy spirit, the very spirit or mind of the Lord Jesus. It was because of the "thoughts of man" that the earth was destroyed by the flood (s.w. Gen. 6:5). "Futile" is the word for "vanity", which is commonly used of idolatry. And this indeed is where modern day idolatry is committed- through having an empty mind, filled with vanity, rather than the things of God's Spirit. God sees the thoughts of every man from afar (Ps. 139); this is a huge amount of data. So He has huge experience and knowledge of human thoughts; and therefore an appreciation of just how futile they are. These words are quoted in 1 Cor. 3:20 in the argument that all human thought is indeed futile, and only the Holy Spirit can give spiritual thoughts, a spirit or thought pattern that is not "futile".

Psa 94:12

Blessed is the man whom You discipline, Yah, and teach out of Your law-
The chastening or "discipline" is the word used for David's experiences after the sin with Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 6:1; 38:1; 39:11). His eyes were opened to God's law through that. It

was the Gentile nations who were disciplined in :10; so David has in view here how from among them, there would come some who responded to God's judgments by wanting to learn His law.

We note that God is presented as the teacher. The priests were supposed to be the teachers of God's law. But they were functioning for God. Or we can understand that when they failed, God taught His people directly. Discipline and teaching will lead to blessedness / happiness- but only in the future Kingdom. That is the time when blessing will be realized, and when sinners will have their judgment.

Psa 94:13

that You may give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit is dug for the wicked-
The idea is that if the exiles repented and accepted God's discipline (:12), then their days of adversity in Babylon would come to an end, and their abusers would be buried eternally in the pit. The days of adversity or evil could equally refer to the evil which Judah had themselves wrought (s.w. Dt. 31:18), the days [of punishment] for their own evil. And these could be ended if they repented of it.

We can live at rest, at peace, knowing that the delay is only while the pit is being dug for the wicked. The judgment has been issued. The results of it are just being prepared. There is no delay in judgment.

Psa 94:14

For Yahweh won't reject His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance-
The implication could be, in the context of :13,15, that this would be the case if they returned to righteousness and followed it. For God had indeed rejected and forsaken His people because of their sins; the same terms are used about this in Is. 32:14; Jer. 12:7. The psalmist's understanding that ultimately God would not be left without a people therefore implied to him that His people would ultimately repent. Perhaps we are to read the emphasis as being upon "His people". Sinners will be rejected, and the opening complaints of this Psalm were therefore inappropriate. For the argument was that God had not come through for His people in their sufferings. But here the answer is that indeed, Yahweh will not reject His people. The fact God doesn't immediately come through for us doesn't mean He has rejected us. But it depends how we define "His people". This is surely Paul's approach in Rom. 11- that the people of God have been redefined, seeing that they are not "all Israel who are of Israel".

Psa 94:15

For justice will return to the righteous, and all the upright in heart shall follow it-
As noted on :14, the idea could be that there would be a "return" to justice, and again the righteous would follow righteousness. It was this repentance by the exiles which would lead to God no longer rejecting and forsaking His people (:14).

David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her... will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and *felt* this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to "every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. See on Ps. 41:12.

Psa 94:16

Who will rise up for me against the wicked? Who will stand up for me against the evildoers?
David had been careful to stress that justice belongs to Yahweh; hence he didn't take Saul's life when he had the chance. So the answer to this question is "God". And this was likewise to be the answer arrived at by the exiles.

Psa 94:17

Unless Yahweh had been my help, my soul would have soon been silenced-
This is very much the spirit of the exiles in Ps. 124:1,2. But they were to follow the path of David, in devotion to God's word, repentance and thence restoration. We could render "almost silenced". He feels as if his life was almost silenced, as if he were slipping down to death but God grabbed him just in time (:18). This is the same idea as in 1 Cor. 10:13 "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it". The temptation or situation is in fact not endurable- but God saves us from it. We are given situations that are too much for us. The promise is not that we will not have a test too great. We will. But, God will make the way of escape.

Verses 16 and 17 are the psalmist talking back to others; but in :18 this merges into prayer to the God whom he has been talking about.

Psa 94:18

When I said, My foot is slipping! Your grace, Yahweh, held me up-
David recognized that his steps had slid (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). But at the end of his life, he reflects that the steps of the righteous don't slip (Ps. 37:25,31). Perhaps David came to minimize his earlier slipping, especially in the matter of Bathsheba, in his old age. Or perhaps he was able to look back and see that despite temporary sliding of steps, ultimately the steps of the righteous don't slide in the overall path of their life.

Psa 94:19

In the multitude of my thoughts within me, Your comforts delight my soul-
The idea may be that David was confused, struggling with the idea of ultimate salvation and blessing being so different from current realities. But despite all that confusion, the simple love of God was his comfort. His confusion was shared by the exiles, and also ultimately by the Lord Jesus. The spirit of Christ in the prophets testified Messiah's sufferings "unto Christ" (1 Pet. 1:11 RVmg.), but He still had to figure it all out. And this enabled an element of doubt and confusion, even though in the end He knew "all the things that were coming upon him" (Jn. 18:4). To doubt or feel confused is not to sin. This Messianic Psalm had foretold: "In the multitude of my doubts within me, thy comforts delight my soul" (Ps. 94:19 RVmg.). This aspect heightens the agony of His final crisis, when He unexpectedly felt forsaken. We see how man can have "doubts", but at the same time be delighted by God's comforts. The existence of doubt is not a sin, nor is doubt a lack of faith / trust in God. For trust in God is what we do in the face of our doubts.

Psa 94:20

Shall the throne of wickedness have fellowship with You, which brings about mischief by statute?-
The initial reference would have been to the throne of Saul and perhaps later of Absalom, but was easily reapplied to the throne of Babylon. David had a marked hatred of sin, and often stated his desire to purge Israel of sinners, and his refusal to fellowship with evil (Ps. 94:20; 97:10; 101:3-8; 119:63,78,79; 139:19). And yet he had to revise these attitudes somewhat when he as the king committed murder and adultery.

Psa 94:21

They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood-
This is how David perceived his persecution by Saul and Absalom. But he was himself not innocent of blood nor was he completely righteous. David's prayer of repentance and request to be saved from "blood guiltiness" (Ps. 51:14) is literally 'from blood'. He was a man of blood and was guilty of Uriah's innocent blood. David had asked for 'men of blood' to be slain (Ps. 55:23 s.w.), those who had taken the blood of the innocent (Ps. 94:21), and for 'men of blood' to be expelled from his presence (Ps. 139:19). And it is not at all clear whether all those Psalms were written before his sin with Bathsheba. God was trying to teach David that he was the type of person whom he condemned. And yet it is unclear if he learned that lesson. Solomon liberally condemns the man who sheds innocent blood (Prov. 6:17; 28:17), refusing to recognize that his much lauded father had done just this, and was only saved by grace and not by any obedience to wisdom. There is so little grace in the book of Solomon's Proverbs because Solomon had failed to perceive the grace shown to his father.

Psa 94:22

But Yahweh has been my high tower, my God, the rock of my refuge-
David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

Psa 94:23

He has brought on them their own iniquity, and will cut them off in their own wickedness. Yahweh, our God, will cut them off-
The intentional juxtaposition of past and future tenses reflects how David believed that what he now wished in the present was utterly certain of fulfilment. God likewise sees things in this way, and faith is all about seeing things from His perspective.

PSALMS CHAPTER 95

Psa 95:1

Oh come, let's sing to Yahweh, let's shout aloud to the rock of our salvation!-
The LXX ascribes this to David, and that is confirmed by the quotation of it as from David

in Heb. 4:7. I suggest the psalm began as a response to his receipt of grace and forgiveness after the sin with Bathsheba. It is David's invitation to all on earth, especially God's people, to come to Yahweh. But it moves on to lament that God's people hadn't responded, and as Israel didn't enter the promised rest because of unbelief, so the exiles were being prevented from reentering the same land. This was because they had declined to follow in the path of David's repentance and restoration, effectively refusing the invitation to come to Yahweh found in the first half of the Psalm.

David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps. 71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

God is here and elsewhere called the rock of our salvation. His rock-like certainty applies specifically to our salvation- the very thing we are all inclined to doubt. He is a Saviour God, manifest through Yahoshua, Jesus, Yah's salvation. "That rock was Christ", Paul says. Our certainty of salvation must likewise be rock-like. And this means quite naturally that we will live a radically different life, in thought, word and action, from those who don't have this eternal perspective on today's life.

Psa 95:2

Let's come before His presence with thanksgiving, let's extol Him with songs!-
"Come before" is literally 'present ourselves', as if our praise is the sacrifice. This is a common figure (Ps. 50:14,23; Mic. 6:6).

The "presence" of God likely refers to the shekinah glory seen over the ark. The "songs" in view were the Psalms of David. For this Psalm is written by David (see on :1), inviting all people to share his experience of Yahweh's grace and to join in his ecstasy of praise

for His grace. The Psalm was likely used in the liturgy of the sanctuary, and many synagogues still use it to call to the Sabbath on Friday evenings. See on :6.

Psa 95:3

For Yahweh is a great God, a great King above all gods-
So often, the idols aren't in so many words criticized as not existing, but rather, Yahweh is so exalted above them that even if they do exist, they are so relatively powerless that they are shown to have no effective existence. It's the same with how the language of demons is used in the New Testament; the Lord's miracles demonstrated that God's power was so infinitely greater, that effectively demons don't exist.

Psa 95:4

In His hand are the deep places of the earth; the heights of the mountains are also His-
This is taken as meaning that Judah could take comfort from the fact that a God of this power would therefore not totally reject His people for all power, despite their sins (Jer. 31:37 "If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done").

Psa 95:5

The sea is His, and He made it; His hands formed the dry land-
David realized that as God fashioned / formed the earth (Ps. 95:5), so He can fashion human hearts (Ps. 33:15). His word and Spirit work in doing both things, with the same boundless possibility and power. The logic is that if God is creator, then He owns what He made. And He made us. Atheistic evolution leaves man tragically alone in this world, not owned, not belonging to anyone.

Psa 95:6

Oh come, let's worship and bow down-
See on :2; clearly the Psalm was used in the liturgy of the tabernacle services. The invitation to "bow down" was asking the people to repent. This was so relevant to the exiles, for their refusal to do so placed them in the same situation as the people exiled from Canaan.

Let's kneel before Yahweh, our Maker-
There are huge implications in believing that God is our creator We will therefore humbly bow before Him in worship, in a way that those who deny theistic creation are not motivated to.

At first blush, this Psalm appears to have a hearty appeal to praise in :1-6, which then, in mid-verse in :7, leads to a sober warning about the possibility of being like Israel in the desert- falling away, and losing salvation. The transition is sharp and intentional. Perhaps the idea is that appeals for praise are all well and good, but all ecstatic worship must be tempered with the sober realization that man can fall away from salvation and anger God. Indeed, His people have historically done just this. We have a strong caveat to the worship-oriented versions of Christianity which have become so popular. Perhaps this is why the break begins in :6, according to the LXX: "Come, let us worship and fall down before him; and weep before the Lord that made us". We should be moved to tears of repentance by reflection on how the God who so loved the wilderness generation is indeed "our God" (:7). We too are His sheep (:7), just as Israel were. "Our Maker" refers to Yahweh as the creator of Israel (Dt. 32:6,15,18; Is. 44:2; 51:13; 54:5; Ps. 100:3; 149:2). They were 'created' out of the waters of the Red Sea (Ex. 15:16 "the people You have created")- and this seamlessly leads on to the warnings in the rest of the Psalm, drawn from Israel's journeys after that.

Psa 95:7

for He is our God. We are the people of His pasture, and the sheep in His care-
The image is of one sheep speaking to other sheep. This is the same message to the exiles as they were given in Ez. 34. The God whom they considered didn't care did in fact care passionately; He was their shepherd, wishing to lead and restore them to the land. But they were disobedient sheep.

Today, oh that you would hear His voice!-
The Hebrew word for 'hear' is also translated 'obey' (Gen. 22:18; Ex. 19:5; Dt. 30:8,20; Ps. 95:7). The context is of sheep hearing the shepherd's voice. The exiles were being called to obedience to the prophetic word, so that they might be restored to their land. We can hear God's word and not obey it. But if we *really* hear it as we are intended to, we will obey it. If we truly believe God's word to be His voice personally speaking to us, then we will by the very fact of hearing, obey. The message itself, if heard properly and not just on a surface level, will compel action. We can *delight* to know God's laws and pray daily to Him, when at the same time we are forsaking Him and His laws; if we are truly obedient, *then* we will *delight* in God's law (Is. 58:2 cp. 14).

All Scripture is recorded for *our* learning and comfort (Rom. 15:4). The exhortation of Prov. 3:11 "speaks unto *you* as unto children…" (Heb. 12:5). Hebrews 3 quotes Psalm 95 as relevant to all readers. The warnings there for that "today" were also be a warning for the first century "today", and yet likewise we can still take hold of the past word of God and relate it to the needs of our "today". We can fail to personalize God's word, in the sense of realizing that it speaks to us personally.

The quotation of this in Heb. 3:7, with the emphasis upon "today", is in the context of appealing for confidence right now in the certain hope of future salvation (Heb. 3:6). We should be able to say with confidence that "today" if the Lord comes or if we die, we shall be saved. This is the meaning of the emphasis upon "today"; Peter has the same idea when writing of our rejoicing in "the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12), the ultimate truth that today at this moment we shall be saved if the Lord returns or we die. In this sense "now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). At this moment we can seek and find the Lord, "while He may be found" (Is. 55:6).

God responds to the outpouring of praise in :1-6 with this impassioned plea. The worshippers rejoiced that they were God's sheep and He was their shepherd. He interrupts them mid-verse, abruptly. His response is that He had been the shepherd of Israel through the wilderness by the hand of Moses- and they had turned away from Him. He speaks directly to the worshippers who have been talking to Him and about Him.

"Today..." is God's appeal for us to see that for us right now, individually, these things are absolutely relevant. The "Oh that you would..." is the same passionate appeal found in Paul in begging Timothy not to lose the faith ("O Timothy"), and of Moses likewise to Israel in Dt. 5:29 "Oh that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!". Moses likewise urges them to choose life that they might live: "I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed" (Dt. 30:19). In his final speech to Israel in Deuteronomy, Moses uses the word "Today" 74 times. "Today, Oh that you would..." points up the urgency of our position. We can never delay until tomorrow our decisions about salvation. Now is the today of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2). This sense of urgency for salvation is to be ours personally, and also our attitude to others, urging them towards decision for Christ and baptism into Him "today". It's a case of "Seek Yahweh while He may be found; call you on Him while He is near" (Is. 55:6).

Psa 95:8

Don't harden your heart, as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness-
The rebellion at Massah was in the 40th year of the wanderings, and that at Meribah in the first year (Dt. 9:7; 33:8). The events of the rebellion of Ex. 17 are the basis for this part of Ps. 95. This is largely a Psalm of praise for what God did for Israel in the wilderness, whilst also commenting on the way they tragically put God to the test, and complained about His care for them. Now the words of Ps. 95:7- 11 are directly quoted in Heb. 3:7- 11 concerning the experience of the new Israel. The simple conclusion from this is that we are really intended to see the events of Ex. 17 as directly relevant for us.

The exiles had gone into captivity for hardening their hearts as Pharaoh had done (s.w. Jer. 7:26; 17:23). And they would stay there until they stopped hardening their hearts, and accepted the work of the Spirit upon their hearts as promised to the exiles in Jeremiah and Ezekiel- if they were repentant.

The quotation in Heb. 3:8 is in the context of how the Jews had hardened their hearts when Paul preached to them (Acts 19:9). LXX "according to the day of irritation in the wilderness". That God Almighty can be irritated by men is a reflection of how far 'down' He came to them. His feelings as expressed here are all an indication of the degree of His love and involvement with His people; see on :10.

Psa 95:9

when your fathers tempted Me, tested Me and saw My work-
"Though they had seen my work". The testing was the worse because they "saw My work". But despite that, didn't want to believe that God could bring them into the land. The same was the case with the exiles. They had gone into captivity for refusing to 'see My work' (s.w. Is. 5:12). But even when they did perceive it, they doubted whether God's work was strong enough to save them. And this can be an abiding temptation for the new Israel; not becoming atheists, recognizing God "is" and has power; but refusing to believe He can save us personally.

The entire period of wilderness wanderings was characterized by Israel putting God to the test; they were not confident of their final salvation, and were ever looking for evidence from Him. He had brought them out of Egypt through the blood of the Passover lamb; and there were daily miracles of provision in the bread and water which pointed forward to the Lord Jesus. This desire for yet further proof is seen in various guises today; from the phlegmatic, wavering believer who wants more 'scientific proof' of God to those in the Pentecostal movement ever seeking visible evidence that the Lord is amongst them. The word of promise regarding salvation is to be believed and that faith and joy held on to (Heb. 3:6).

They continually tested God even though they saw His works daily; the manna, water from the rock, shekinah glory over the tabernacle, the cloud by day and the fire by night. But still they tested Him. This is our warning against ever seeking 'hard proof'. Even if we were to be daily given it, this would not take away the desire to test God. It is total faith in the word of promise which is required (Heb. 3:6), and the confirmation is not in petty experimentation day by day which 'proves' God, but rather has it already been provided in the Lord's death and resurrection. Most occurrences of "try" or "test" are of God's testing of His people. In the desert, He tried them at Massah (Ps. 81:7). But they arrogantly put Him to the test.

Psa 95:10

Forty long years I was grieved with that generation and said-
"Grieved" is the Hebrew word for "argued" or "quarreled". Not just at the start of the forty years, but throughout the forty years, God quarreled with Israel. Yet how can Almighty God allow Himself to grieve or quarrel with mere man? Only because He is so desperately sensitive to those whom He loves, and loves them so much that any rejection of that love is so painful to Him, 'cutting Him short' as the Hebrew could mean. And He only goes on arguing because He desperately seeks to persuade the object of His love. But "that generation" were condemned to die in the wilderness. His efforts to persuade them were therefore to persuade them to accept His grace and die in sure Hope of resurrection to life eternal. We may also reflect that God is grieved in the condemnation of the wicked. He loves to save, not condemn.

"Grieved" is the same word three times translated "loathe" for how Israel will loathe themselves for their sins (Ez. 6:9; 20:43; 36:31). Repentance means coming to see our sins as God sees them. Think about it… this is the ultimate guide for self examination.

Paul changes "that generation" to "this generation" when he quotes it in Heb. 3. This is in line with the argument that "Today…" (Ps. 95:7) appeals to every generation to know that right now, today, this argument is true for them too. And specifically, Paul perhaps saw that a 40 year period from the Lord's death was coming to an end, and the potential establishment of the Kingdom on earth, the entry into "rest", was not going to happen because like Israel, the new Israel were turning away from their Shepherd.

The parallel was with the 70 year exile of Judah. Those years were "long" to God, because He so wanted to restore His people. He was "grieved" at His heart for them. He takes no pleasure in punishing the wicked. And yet despite their impenitence, at the end of the forty years, God did bring His people into the land. By grace, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). He fulfilled His promise at Sinai that if they were obedient, He would make them His people; and He did, counting them as obedient. Yet the events of the intervening forty years hardly sound like Israel being obedient; He "suffered their manners" forty years (Ps. 95:10; Acts 13:18). And yet at the end of that period, they were counted as having been sufficiently obedient to be made God's people (Ex. 19:5 cp. Dt. 27:9). This 'displeasure' or 'grief' lasted 40 years (Heb. 3:17 s.w.); it was a daily grief that they did not trust Him. To believe in God is to trust Him. In Hebrew, belief is trust. And no amount of petty testing of God will give us that trust.

It is a people that errs in their heart. They have not known My ways-
Just as the state of human hearts was the reason for the flood (Gen. 6:5), so in essence it was a state of heart which meant Israel couldn't enter the Kingdom. The importance of the spirit / heart, of spiritual mindedness, could not be more strongly emphasized. They

saw God's work, but refused to know His ways. To recognize God's existence and work is one thing; but to know God in the Hebraic sense of relationship is quite another.

Psalm 95 gives us a unique insight into God's internal thought processes. He "said" within Himself that they problem was in Israel's hearts. They had seen "His way in the [Red] Sea" (Ps. 77:19), He had "made known His ways to Israel" (Ps. 103:17), but their heart was far from Him. But "My ways" refers so often to God's commandments; Israel were repeatedly asked to "walk in His ways" as they walked through the wilderness (Dt. 10:12; 11:22; 26:17 etc.). He sought not so much total legalistic obedience to His ways / commandments as to "know" them, to appreciate them, to perceive them in their hearts. The Hebrew word translated "err" is that used for Israel's "wandering" in the wilderness for 40 years (Ps. 107:4). They wandered in their minds, just as humanity does today- from this passing passion to that, toying with that principle or fantasy and then with this... and that mental lack of stability was reflected in how they literally wandered. This aimless wandering through life is the parade characteristic of the unbelieving world. Only a firm hope in Christ and our future salvation can give us this mental and emotional stability which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Psa 95:11

Therefore I swore in My wrath, They will not enter into My rest-
This appears a strange end for the Psalm which began with inviting God's people to come into His presence. But the abrupt and negative closure is left as a stark reminder of the realities we face. Those who do not believe shall not enter into God's rest. Heb. 3 interprets this as meaning that those who trust in their own works cannot enter *God's* "rest"; whereas those who trust in His work through the Lord Jesus and not in their own works can in one sense enter the rest right now, although there remains an entry into rest at the Lord's return.

God has emotion. The generation that were promised the rest, permanence and stability of the promised land were not given it, because in their hearts they wandered. And this was reflected in their wandering in the wilderness. This implies that God changed His mind about letting Israel enter the land; for He had promised that generation "rest" in that He promised them the land (Josh. 1:15). Or as Num. 14:34 (A.V. mg.) says: "Ye shall bear your iniquity, even forty years, and ye shall know the altering of My purpose". These were the words of the Angel to Moses. The apparent change of plans could be seen as more appropriate if it concerned the Angel which led them; and yet the Angel all the same was manifesting God. This oath they would not "enter into My rest" was solely because they did not believe (Heb. 3:18). The immorality, idolatry etc. were relatively incidental to the essential issue- that they did not believe He would give them rest in the promised land. And therefore He did not give it to them. The context of all this is Paul's

appeal for confident hope in our future salvation (Heb. 3:6). It is unbelief and a constant demand for 'proof' which was their problem which cost them salvation.

I discussed on :10 how that these words describe God's attitude to "that generation" who died in the wilderness, and His hope was that they would repent and die in sure Hope of resurrection to eternal life. The "rest" in view, therefore, wasn't so much entrance into the land- for He had already said that wasn't going to happen for them- but the "rest" of His eternal Kingdom. Which is basically how Paul interprets it in Hebrews. Or we could render, "Unto whom I had sworn" that they should not enter the rest of the promised land. For that is how "the rest" is understood in Dt. 12:9. Despite having condemned them, their thoughts throughout the next 40 years grieved God. He is so very sensitive.

Whilst the "rest" in view in Psalm 95 is indeed entry into Canaan / salvation, we note more specifically that Ps. 132:14 speaks of Zion as “This is my resting place forever”. Eternity in Zion spoke of eternal fellowship together in His house. The temple was to have been "a house of rest" for Yahweh (1 Chron. 28:2; 2 Chron. 6:41; Ps. 132:8). Insofar as this Psalm must have relevance to the restoration, as do all the surrounding Psalms, we must see the connection with God's insistence in Is. 66:1 that His place of "rest" ["where is the place of My rest?"] is no longer in any physical location nor temple, but in the humble hearts of His true people. There He will "rest" or abide. Just as the wilderness generation didn't enter the "rest" of the promised land, so He would not "rest" / abide in the physical temple any more. Hebrews 3 quotes these words and interprets the "rest" as a play on the Sabbath rest, and thereby meaning two things: 1) The experience of assurance of salvation now without works but by grace alone, entering into the "rest" of assured salvation; and 2) The future Kingdom of God, the rest which remains for the people of God to enter. This therefore becomes a classic case of Old Testament words having multiple applications over the course of God's working with man towards our final salvation. Hebrews was written approaching 40 years after the Lord's death. Perhaps the idea was that God's Kingdom could have been established in AD70. But the Hebrew Christians were falling away from the faith, and in this sense likewise would fail to enter the "rest" of God's Kingdom that was possible in AD70. Heb. 4:4 reminds us that God entered into His rest after six days of creative work (Gen. 2:2). But the rejected Israel will not enter that rest- because they were not part of the new creation God was trying to work with them. This explains why Ps. 95:11 says, "They shall never enter *My* rest," not "they shall never enter *their* rest".

PSALMS CHAPTER 96

Psa 96:1

Sing to Yahweh a new song! Sing to Yahweh, all the earth-
Even in the Old Testament, the idea of living in a spirit of newness of life is to be found. David six times invites us to sing with him "a new song" (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1 cp. Is. 42:10). Invariably these songs are associated with the experience of God's redemption (cp. Rev. 5:9). Obviously those 'new songs' were intended to be repeatedly sung. Our regular experience of forgiveness and redemption should urge us onwards in the spirit of 'newness of life'. Like Paul we die daily with the Lord, and the power of His resurrection life likewise daily breaks out in us.

Psa 96:2

Sing to Yahweh! Bless His name! Proclaim His salvation from day to day!-
The LXX uses the word *evangelion* concerning how daily we should "show forth his salvation" (Ps. 96:2). Witness is therefore a daily feature in the life of those who have known salvation; it is not something done solely by attending an ecclesial gathering once per week. This explains why frequently Paul uses the word "Gospel" as meaning 'the preaching of the Gospel'; the Gospel is in itself something which *must* be preached if we really have it (Rom. 1:1,9; 16:25; Phil. 1:5 (NIV),12; 2:22; 4:15; 1 Thess. 1:5; 3:2; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 1:8; 2:8). The fact we have been given the Gospel is in itself an imperative to preach it.
Many of the Psalms reflect David's realization that confession of sin is the basis for powerful preaching. The LXX often uses the verb *euangelizesthai* to describe his preaching after the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 96:2). Because God has mercifully forgive His people and His face shines upon them in renewed fellowship, His way is thereby made known upon earth to all nations (Ps. 67:1,2). He utters forth the mighty acts of God with the preface: "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord, who can shew forth all his praise?" (Ps. 106:2)- and then proceeds to do just that. He did so with a clear recognition of his own inadequacy. The Psalms of praise are full of this theme. David exhorts all those who have been redeemed to show forth God's praise (Ps. 107:2,22,32). He wanted all Israel to be a joyful, witnessing people. And even though it seems God's people didn't respond, David went on undeterred. Time and again he fearlessly sets himself up as Israel's example. He speaks of how he trusts in the Lord's grace, and then appeals to Israel to do just the same (Ps. 62:7,8). The strength of his appeal was in the fact that his sin and experience of grace was the bridge between him and his audience.

It was God's prophesied will that the Gospel would go world-wide; but it required the freewill strivings of Paul to enable it, and the strivings with God in prayer by the brethren.

With these thoughts in mind, bear in mind the parallels between Psalms 96 and 98. Sing unto the Lord a new song (96:1) = O sing unto the Lord a new song (98:1); His wonders among all people. For He hath done marvellous [s.w. 'wonders'] things in the sight of the nations (96:2 RV) = declare His glory among the nations (98:3); righteousness and truth (96:13) = righteousness and truth (98:3); Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof (96:11) = Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof (98:7); for He cometh to judge the earth (96:9) = for He cometh to judge the earth (98:13); The Lord reigns (96:10) = The Lord the king (98:6).

But there are some subtle differences. Ps. 96:2,3 exhorts us: "Show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen". But Ps. 98:2 puts it another way: "The Lord has made known His salvation. His righteousness has He openly shewed in the sight of the nations". These latter words are only true in that we make known that salvation, and we declare His glory among the nations. Thus a statement in Ps. 98 that Yahweh has shewed His glory to the nations becomes an imperative for us to go and do that in Ps. 96.

Psa 96:3
Declare His glory among the nations, His marvellous works among all the peoples-
See on :7. Perhaps the triple command to 'Sing to the Lord' in the opening verses of Ps. 96 alludes to Israel's three feasts, as does the triple, repetitive verses of Ps. 99:1-3, 4,5, 6-9; which likewise bid the Gentile world to come to Israel's worship.

Psa 96:4
For great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! He is to be feared above all gods-
David's focus of all his praises upon Yahweh as alone "worthy" of praise was what he now wanted his people to follow (Ps. 18:3; 22:3). The implication of "worthy" could imply a contrast with other gods, as here in Ps. 96:4 "He is to be feared / praised above all gods". This would confirm the hints we have that Saul was an idolater (see on :31; Ps. 12:8; 16:4), and that idolatry was prevalent in Israel at the time.

Psa 96:5
For all the gods of the peoples are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens-
The gods / idols aren't in so many words criticized as not existing, but rather, Yahweh is so exalted above them as creator of all that even if they do exist, they are so relatively powerless that they are show to have no effective existence. It's the same with how the language of demons is used in the New Testament; the Lord's miracles demonstrated that God's power was so infinitely greater, that effectively demons don't exist.

Psa 96:6
Honour and majesty are before Him, strength and beauty are in His sanctuary-

See on :7. This is a reference to the Most Holy Place; the reference to His "strength and beauty" going into captivity may refer to the ark (Ps. 78:61 s.w.).

Psa 96:7
Ascribe to Yahweh, you families of nations, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength- The very same Hebrew words used about how David felt he wanted to give glory and strength [honour] to the Lord (Ps. 62:7). "Families of nations" recalls the promises made to Abraham of his seed. He wished for the whole world to share his relationship with God. The radical nature of what is being suggested in Ps. 96 (especially :7,8) and many similar Psalms can easily be overlooked. The Psalmist is urging Gentiles to come and worship with Israel, proceeding into the tabernacle courts and thence into "the beauty of holiness" (:6), i.e. the Most Holy Place ['holiness' being read here as a noun rather than an adjective- it is the same Hebrew word elsewhere translated "sanctuary" and related to the Hebrew word used for "sanctuary" in :6]. The Psalmist is inviting Gentiles to come in to the worship of Israel and proceed where only the High Priest could venture once / year. It was the equivalent of proclaiming an open table policy in the most exclusive of churches.

The common assumption of expositors is that the Psalmist has in view the Kingdom age, but this seems precluded by his appeal to the Gentiles to come and worship exactly because of the good news that the Lord is coming to judge the earth in righteousness (:13)- which is quoted about the return of Christ to earth in Acts 17:31. The holiness boundaries taught by the Law were only teaching mechanisms, which is why they were removed by the open Christ. David for one got to this point well before most other Israelites did, acting as the High Priest (1 Chron. 16:3), entering the sanctuary when not a Levite (Ps. 63:2) and experiencing forgiveness and salvation quite outside the Law rather than the Law's penalty of death.

Most of Ps. 96 is to be found in David's Psalm at the bringing of the ark to Zion in 1 Chron. 16, so we can safely assume David to have been the author. His outreach to the Gentiles is typical of the spirit of the Bathsheba Psalms, where he vows to tell the whole world of God's grace. It's not that the experience of sin and forgiveness makes a person somehow weak and wishy washy acceptant of anyone and anything. The experience of God's grace at close quarters leads us to realize how radical was His acceptance of us and thereby we should proactively seek to be acceptant of all those who are afar off. And so David perceived that God's Name (His characteristics, of which grace is uttermost) deserved glory to be given to it- simply for what it was (:8). And that glory is "due" from all, including the Gentiles- and so they should be invited across all holiness boundaries to come with their offerings to God. Thus Yahweh's greatness above all other gods was what led David to appeal to "all you gods" [perhaps put by metonymy for the idol worshipping peoples] to come and worship before Yahweh (Ps. 97:7).

The appeal was to be global and not just to Israel because David perceived that actually the truth of God is proclaimed by "the whole earth" and "heavens" (Ps. 97:5,6). Of course, the call is for the Gentile idolaters to "come" to Yahweh's sanctuary, and not for God's people to leave Yahweh and go to them. And they were to "bring an offering", to make a commitment to the God they were being invited to come close to (Ps. 96:8). Ps. 98:3-5 continues this radical appeal to the Gentile world, but it urges them to come and worship (which involved coming to the sanctuary in Israel) exactly because God has been so gracious to sinful Israel. Israel's extreme sin and God's radical grace and patience with them for not being good witnesses to the Gentiles… was to serve as encouragement for the Gentiles to come to Israel's God and praise Him, confident that their sins too could be forgiven.

The same idea is found in Ps. 99:1-5- because of God's grace to Jacob / Israel, an undefined group are bidden come to Zion, to the very cherubim (in the Most Holy Place) to exalt and praise God at His footstool. This group, in line with the preceding Psalms, are surely the Gentile world. "Let them praise Your great Name" (Ps. 99:3) would surely make most sense if it referred to the Gentiles, seeing that David or the Psalmist was Israelite. We see the same idea in Ps. 97:1; it begins with an appeal to the islands of the Gentiles to 'rejoice' and 'be glad', but the same two Hebrew words are used in Ps. 97:8 about how Zion- those in the very temple mount- likewise rejoice and are glad. The very "ends of the earth" who saw God's salvation of His people are invited to praise Him for it (Ps. 98:3,4)- the invitation to join in praise was effectively an invitation to join in worship, and thereby to become part of God's covenant people.

Psa 96:8
Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due to His name, bring an offering and come into His courts-
According to the LXX titles, there were certain Psalms which were written for the dedication of the rebuilt temple, and others written by Haggai and Zechariah. They include: Psalms 96,138,147,148. These all seem to speak as if the time of a glorious temple was to be the time of God's Kingdom; this was the possibility, and it was the prevailing hope in the minds of the faithful minority. But the Psalms had to remain prophecies of the future day of Zion's glory, for the temple was not rebuilt by the returned exiles according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48. Psalm 96 is very clear: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name [i.e.] bring an offering, and come into his courts" (:8). But Judah did not bring the right offerings, although the glory of Yahweh's Name ought to have elicited them (Mal. 1:11-16). Psalm 96:13 confidently anticipate the coming of Messiah there and then: "then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness". These words are quoted about the second coming of Jesus in Acts

17:31.

Psa 96:9

Worship Yahweh in holy array, tremble before Him, all the earth-
As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should all teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord... praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

Psa 96:10

Say among the nations, Yahweh reigns! The world is also established, so that it can't be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity-
David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the wonderful willingness of God to extend this to men.

Psa 96:11

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice, let the sea roar, and its fullness!-
The idea is that all of the planet, the sea representing the peoples, would rejoice at the prospect of the coming of Israel's Lord in judgment (:13). This is not therefore speaking of the Kingdom; but rather of David's desire that before the Lord's coming, the Gentile peoples would come to such relationship with Him that they rejoiced at the prospect of His coming in judgment, knowing by faith that they would not be condemned.

Psa 96:12

Let the field and all that is in it exult! Then all the trees of the woods shall sing for joy-
David seems to have foreseen the joy of the natural and spiritual creation of the last days as they sense the approach of the Lord (see on :13).

Psa 96:13
before Yahweh; for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, the peoples with His truth-
This is quoted in Acts 17:31 concerning the final day of judgment at the Lord's return. David feels God's judgment is ongoing now (Ps. 9:4), but that is preparation for the future day of judgment. Appreciating this means that we live our lives before the judgment presence of God. See on :8. Note that the prospect of judgment to come elicits joy for David. He was not scared at the thought of meeting God in judgment.

PSALMS CHAPTER 97

Psa 97:1

Yahweh reigns! Let the earth rejoice! Let the multitude of islands be glad!-
This begins with an appeal to the islands of the Gentiles to 'rejoice' and 'be glad', but the same two Hebrew words are used in Ps. 97:8 about how Zion- those in the very temple mount- likewise rejoice and are glad. The very "ends of the earth" who saw God's salvation of His people are invited to praise Him for it (Ps. 98:3,4)- the invitation to join in praise was effectively an invitation to join in worship, and thereby to become part of God's covenant people. The earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham was to rejoice along with the islands- the Gentiles. The Psalm appears to be an appeal to the exiles to rejoice at the prospect of restoration, which would include blessing upon the Gentile world. Finally, the whole earth shall rejoice in Zion, "the joy of the whole earth"- but the rejected will not: “When the whole earth rejoices, I shall make you desolate” (Ez. 35:14).

But God reigns right now- and that is to be a source of joy even now, in a world apparently under the rulership of the flesh.

Psa 97:2

Clouds and darkness are around Him, righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne-
The language of theophany, as seen at the Red Sea and Sinai. The restored throne of David would be based upon justice and righteousness, whereas the throne of David had become characterized by injustice and unrighteousness before it was overthrown. There was envisaged a dramatic theophany which would be associated with the fall of Babylon and the restoration of God's exiled people. The cherubim which Ezekiel had seen departing from Zion would return. But this isn't what happened; Judah in exile didn't really repent, and those relatively few who did return were clearly motivated by the hope of personal benefit rather than the glory of God. Babylon didn't dramatically fall as envisaged in the prophets, there was no theophany; so much potential was wasted. But these things are rescheduled and reapplied to the final restoration of God's people at the last day.

Psa 97:3

A fire goes before Him and burns up His adversaries on every side-
As noted on :3, this was part of the potential scenario envisaged; but it was precluded by the exiles refusing to repent, and not actually wanting a restoration of the type prophesied. Most of them remained in Babylon when they had the chance to return. The fire going before the exiles is the same phrase used of how the pillar of fire went before Israel in leading them out of Egypt and to the promised land (Ex. 13:21; Num. 14:14). But the exiles preferred to remain in exile. Isaiah had prophesied a road being opened before them from Babylon to Zion, and here we have the detail that a fire would have gone before them and burnt up their enemies along the way. But so much potential was wasted. Nehemiah was even given a Persian escort along the way, and Ezra travelled it in fear of the adversaries. The latter day fulfilment will be in Ez. 38:22: “And I shall plead against him with pestilence and with blood, and rain bringing floods and great hailstones, fire and brimstone”.

Psa 97:4

His lightnings light up the world; the earth sees, and trembles-
Lightning, fire (:3), clouds and darkness (:2) are all the language of theophany, of the type seen by Ezekiel when the cherubim departed from Zion. This kind of theophany could have been seen again had the exiles truly wanted to participate in God's potential

program. This also continues the allusion to what happened at the Red Sea, although the historical record doesn't much mention the thunder, lightning and theophany which was experienced, according to this and other later descriptions of what happened (e.g. Ps. 77:17,18; 97:4). The clouds pouring out water also recalls the flood; as if the judgment upon Egypt would likewise be seen upon Babylon. But Babylon fell only very slowly, and not in the dramatic, miraculous way envisaged in the prophecies of the fall of Babylon. This was again because the Divine potential wasn't realized because the exiles didn't repent and most actually chose to remain in Babylon. The final fulfilment will be in the great earthquake of Zech. 14.

Psa 97:5

The mountains melt like wax at the presence of Yahweh, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth-
This again continues the allusion to the exodus, which could have been repeated in essence at the restoration from Babylon. The mountains of opposing nations, not least Babylon, could have been burnt up; just as the Canaanite opposition to the redeemed Israel was potentially melted (Josh. 2:11). This is why the restoration prophecies of later Isaiah are full of allusion to the exodus and Red Sea deliverance. "The Lord of the whole earth" / land promised to Abraham is a phrase associated with the exodus and possession of Canaan (Josh. 3:11,13). "The mountains" are the apparently permanent nations of the wicked: "As wax melts before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God" (Ps. 68:2). This will be at the condemnation of the last day, when their apparently hard exterior just melts into nothing as they gnash their teeth in condemnation: "The wicked will see it, and be grieved. He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away. The desire of the wicked will perish" (Ps. 112:10).

Psa 97:6

The heavens declare His righteousness; all the peoples have seen His glory-
The vision was of all the peoples in the *eretz* or land promised to Abraham seeing the restored shekinah glory in Zion, associated with the theophany envisaged in :2-4. The appeal was to be global and not just to Israel because David perceived that actually the truth of God is proclaimed by "the whole earth" and "heavens" (Ps. 97:5,6). Of course, the call is for the Gentile idolaters to "come" to Yahweh's sanctuary, and not for God's people to leave Yahweh and go to them. And they were to "bring an offering", to make a commitment to the God they were being invited to come close to (Ps. 96:8). See on Ps. 96:7. Finally this will come true at the Lord's return, when every eye shall see Him, including those who pierced Him. For they shall be resurrected to see His glory, and then die the second death (Rev. 1:7).

Psa 97:7

Let all them be shamed who serve engraved images, who boast in their idols-
“And the idols will completely pass away" (Is. 2:18). This is one window onto the Kingdom- that their followers will experience the shame of rejection (Dan. 12:2), and no idol will exist.

Yahweh's greatness above all other gods was what led David to appeal to "all you gods" [perhaps put by metonymy for the idol worshipping peoples] to come and worship before Yahweh (Ps. 97:7). See on Ps. 96:7. But Ezekiel demonstrates that idolatry was rife amongst the exiles. They would be shamed in condemnation.

Worship Him, all you gods!-
The gentile idols are not specifically stated to be non-existent. But the huge power of Yahweh was such that they were revealed as having no effective power compared to Him, and were therefore declared non-existent in any functional sense. And this is why the language of demons is used in the New Testament; but the Lord's miracles were of such magnitude that they were declared to thereby have no effective existence in practice.

Psa 97:8

Zion heard and was glad. The daughters of Judah rejoiced, because of Your judgments, Yahweh-
The daughter of Zion / Judah is a phrase used of the exiles. They were to rejoice in the prospect of what was possible for them. But instead most of them preferred to remain in Babylon, and persecuted the prophets like Ezekiel who told them this good news. This is the same reference for Zech. 9:9, which exhorts the exiled daughter of Zion to "rejoice" (s.w. "be glad") because her Messianic king was coming to restore her. This was sadly precluded at the time by the exiles' impenitence, and the failure of the potential Messianic figures such as Zerubbabel.

Psa 97:9

For You, Yahweh, are most high above all the earth. You are exalted far above all gods-
The gentile idols are not specifically stated to be non-existent. But the huge power of Yahweh was such that they were revealed as having no effective power compared to Him, and were therefore declared non-existent in any functional sense- see on :7. The exiles were intended to rejoice at the fall of Babylon because her idols would be brought down before Yahweh; but instead the exiles continued to worship those idols.

Psa 97:10

You who love Yahweh, hate evil. He preserves the souls of His saints. He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked-
This may have originated in David's thoughts about Saul, then reapplied to David's need for salvation from Absalom and Ahithophel, but, it becomes the intended appeal of the exiles for deliverance from Babylon, then Haman, and indeed from all their captors. "The hand of the wicked / unrighteous" is the term used for the Babylonians in Ez. 7:21.

Psa 97:11

Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart-
David is seeing himself and the righteous as Job, and he here continues that connection, seeing that Job is described likewise as "upright in heart" (Job 1:8; 2:3). David sees this as characteristic of all God's people (s.w. Ps. 11:2; 19:8; 32:11; 36:10; 64:10; 94:15; 97:11). He sees the wicked as those who are not upright (Ps. 14:3; 51:1,3). But these words which David writes about the wicked are then reinterpreted as applying to all men, God's people included (Rom. 3:12). Like Job, David had to be taught that actually he was failing to see the seriousness of sin; righteousness and acceptability with God is imputed to men by grace through faith, because actually there are none who are upright in heart, apart from God's representative son.

In the context of the exiles, the idea is that if the exiles were indeed righteous and upright [which required their repentance], then they had the hope of light and gladness sown for them in this prophetic word of restoration. The end of their "night", the coming of Zion's eternal light, had been sown. Light and joy / gladness occur together in Isaiah's visions of the restored Kingdom. It was a question of awaiting its coming to birth. But because that Hope of the Kingdom had been "sown", the psalmist rejoices. Just as we can, even though our Hope may still be the seed planted in our hearts, and it has not yet come to full birth. The exiles had a preliminary experience of this in Esther 8:16: "The Jews had light, gladness, joy and honour". These are the very themes found in this Psalm 97.

Future joy and gladness are a huge theme of this Psalm, found in almost every verse. But that gladness is now "sown" for the upright. It will emerge into a full plant, as it were, at the Lord's return. For then, "everlasting joy shall be upon their heads". But without doubt, the call of the Psalm is also to rejoice now, in anticipation of that future joy.

Psa 97:12

Be glad in Yahweh, you righteous people! Give thanks to His holy Name-
The rejoicing of the daughter of Zion, the exiles, required that they be righteous through repentance; in order that the envisaged restoration could happen in their days. They would then be counted righteous, and be able to praise God for that grace.

PSALMS CHAPTER 98

Psa 98:1

A Psalm

Sing to Yahweh a new song, for He has done marvellous things! His right hand and His holy arm have worked salvation for Him-
Even in the Old Testament, the idea of living in a spirit of newness of life is to be found. David six times invites us to sing with him “a new song” (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1 cp. Is. 42:10). Invariably these songs are associated with the experience of God’s redemption (cp. Rev. 5:9). Obviously those ‘new songs’ were intended to be repeatedly sung. Our regular experience of forgiveness and redemption should urge us onwards in the spirit of ‘newness of life’. Like Paul we die daily with the Lord, and the power of His resurrection life likewise daily breaks out in us.

God's "right hand" and "arm" had saved Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 15:6,11,12 "Your right hand, Yahweh, is glorious in power. Your right hand, Yahweh, dashes the enemy in pieces... You stretched out Your right hand. The earth swallowed them"). The "salvation" worked was deliverance of His people from Egypt / the world, and bringing them to the promised land [cp. salvation]. But the language of salvation by God's right hand and arm was then applied to the possibility of a second exodus from Babylon, and some form of 'salvation' in a restored Kingdom of God in Judah (Is. 52:10 "Yahweh has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God"; Is. 59:16 "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore His own arm brought salvation to Him; and His righteousness, it upheld Him"; Is. 63:5 "I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore My own arm brought salvation to Me"). But the exiles precluded that scenario from happening, and so that salvation by God's hand and arm came to ultimate application in the things of the Lord Jesus on the cross and His Kingdom- with us as the subjects of that 'right hand' salvation. And so the "marvellous things" for which God is to be praised are the things of our salvation, "openly shown" to the world (:2) and gratefully witnessed to by us. Recalling the clear connections with the song of Moses in Ex. 15, we are being asked to sing that song about our own personal salvation.

Psa 98:2

Yahweh has made known His salvation, He has openly shown His righteousness in the sight of the nations-
The parallel between righteousness and salvation is common in Isaiah. We are saved not by God turning a blind eye, but by the imputation of righteousness in His Son. As Romans exalts, this means that God is "just" and right in His salvation of us as sinners. The language is that of Is. 56:1 "My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed", that is, as Ps. 98:2 puts it, to be openly shown in the eyes of the world. All the world will one day see that you have been saved- and so we should be public to them about it now. "My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness and of Your salvation all the day; although I don't know the full account of it" (Ps. 71:15). This will be an eternal theme in our awareness, and that should begin now.

It was God's prophesied will that the Gospel would go world-wide; but it required the freewill strivings of Paul to enable it, and the strivings with God in prayer by the brethren. With these thoughts in mind, bear in mind the parallels between Psalms 96 and 98. Sing unto the Lord a new song (96:1) = O sing unto the Lord a new song (98:1); His wonders among all people. For He hath done marvellous [s.w. 'wonders'] things in the sight of the nations (96:2 RV) = declare His glory among the nations (98:3); righteousness and truth (96:13) = righteousness and truth (98:3); Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof (96:11) = Let the sea roar and the fullness thereof (98:7); for He cometh to judge the earth (96:9) = for He cometh to judge the earth (98:13); The Lord reigns (96:10) = The Lord the king (98:6).

But there are some subtle differences. Ps. 96:2,3 exhorts us: "Show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen". But Ps. 98:2 puts it another way: "The Lord has made known His salvation. His righteousness has He openly shewed in the sight of the nations". These latter words are only true in that we make known that salvation, and we declare His glory among the nations. Thus a statement in Ps. 98 that Yahweh has shewed His glory to the nations becomes an imperative for us to go and do that in Ps. 96.

Psa 98:3

He has remembered His grace and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God-
The exiles thought God had forgotten them, but now the faithful will perceive that their salvation means He has not forgotten them. They had thought that their God "has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me" (Is. 49:14). These words are a repeat of Is. 52:10 "Yahweh has made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God".

"Salvation" is *Yeshua*. Clearly the day when all the earth shall perceive the Lord Jesus is in view. In the immediate context of David and later the exiles, the hope was that the extremities of the *eretz* promised to Abraham, places like Babylon and Assyria where the exiles were, would perceive that God had saved His people.

Psa 98:4

Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth! Burst out and sing for joy, yes, sing praises!- Literally "Shout!". The ascension of kings was greeted with a shout, joy and praise (1 Sam. 10:24; 1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 11:12,14, "the shout of a king" Num. 23:21). Zion is to shout greatly for her King comes to her (Zech. 9:9). So this looks ahead to the Lord's return and establishment as eternal king of God's Kingdom, and yet we also joyfully perceive His present kingship and kingly dominion over us. This bursting or breaking out in praise is very much Is. 52:9: "Break forth into joy, sing together, you waste places of Jerusalem; for Yahweh has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem". This psalm is clearly related to the possibilities at the time of the restoration.

The very "ends of the earth" who saw God's salvation of His people are invited to praise Him for it (Ps. 98:3,4)- the invitation to join in praise was effectively an invitation to join in worship, and thereby to become part of God's covenant people. These ends of the *eretz* were places like Babylon and Assyria, who had previously abused God's people.

Ps. 98:3-5 continues the radical appeal of Ps. 96:7 to the Gentile world, but it urges them to come and worship (which involved coming to the sanctuary in Israel) exactly because God has been so gracious to sinful Israel. Israel's extreme sin and God's radical grace and patience with them for not being good witnesses to the Gentiles... was to serve as encouragement for the Gentiles to come to Israel's God and praise Him, confident that their sins too could be forgiven.

Psa 98:5

Sing praises to Yahweh with the harp, with the harp and the voice of melody- David's invitation of others to praise God with the harp was effectively asking them to share his personal praise of God- for he was known for his personal praising of the Lord with the harp. "The voice of melody" is that possible at the restoration in Is. 51:3: "Yahweh has comforted Zion... joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody".

There is a massive emphasis in the Psalm upon joy [:4 "Make a joyful noise to Yahweh, all the earth! Burst out and sing for joy"; :5 "Sing praises"; :6 "make a joyful noise"; :8 "let the mountains sing for joy"; :9 "Let them sing"]. This leads up to the reason why:

because ["for"] the Lord Jesus is coming (:9). This is the end stress of the Psalm; it's how the poetry "works", in this case. Such joy in anticipation of His return and judgment means that God's people are utterly certain of the outcome of the judgment. His coming means their salvation. And this is why salvation is such a theme of the opening verses of the Psalm: He "worked salvation" for His people (:1), "openly made known His salvation" (:2), "remembered His grace and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (:3). God has historically saved His undeserving people Israel by grace alone, as all the world knows and as God has so publically demonstated. And that is why all His people have such confidence that the Lord's coming means their salvation. This is the huge meaning of Israel's history for every believer. It's why we are given the Old Testament, the history of God's amazing grace towards Israel. Especially at the Red Sea, which salvation this Psalm begins by alluding to. This is why *we* can have such joy just at the prospect of our Lord's coming.

Psa 98:6

With trumpets and sound of the ram's horn make a joyful noise before the King, Yahweh-
These were the trumpets which summoned Israel to keep the feasts in Zion. The idea is that the Gentiles would joyfully respond to the call to enter covenant relationship with Yahweh, and therefore keep His feasts. But the exiles didn't repent, and Ezekiel records their involvement with idol worship. As happened at Hezekiah's time, instead of Jerusalem becoming the international centre of Yahweh worship, the people instead returned to the idols of the surrounding nations.

Psa 98:7

Let the sea roar with its fullness; the world, and those who live therein-
The idea is that all of the planet, the sea representing the peoples, would rejoice at the prospect of the coming of Israel's Lord in judgment (:9). This is not therefore speaking of the Kingdom; but rather of David's desire that before the Lord's coming, the Gentile peoples would come to such relationship with Him that they rejoiced at the prospect of His coming in judgment, knowing by faith that they would not be condemned.

Psa 98:8

Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing for joy together-
The rivers and mountains are personified people because they are intended to be understood as representative of peoples and nations. The "rivers" have been used as representative of the Gentile armies which overran God's people; but they were envisaged as repenting and clapping with joy at the prospect of Yahweh's appearance in judgment; for they would repent. This is Is. 55:12 "For you shall go out with joy, and be

led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands". But the stress may be on the twice repeated idea or command: "let...". This is a command to the nations [rivers and mountains] to rejoice at the prospect of the second coming. But they will not, because at the Lord's coming, "The mountains melt like wax at the presence of Yahweh" (Ps. 97:5). The fall and melting of the mountains would not be necessary if they had repented and welcomed the idea of the Lord's return.

Psa 98:9

Let them sing before Yahweh, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity- This is quoted in Acts 17:31 concerning the final day of judgment at the Lord's return: "He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by the man whom He has ordained; of which He has given assurance to all men, in that He has raised him from the dead". David feels God's judgment is ongoing now (Ps. 9:4), but that is preparation for the future day of judgment. Appreciating this means that we live our lives before the judgment presence of God. The reason for joy was that judgment day is coming- judgment was a joyful prospect, not a dread uncertainty, because God's judgments are ahead of time revealed in His word.

PSALMS CHAPTER 99

Psa 99:1

Yahweh reigns! Let the nations tremble-
This appears to be a Psalm rejoicing at the prospect of the restoration of the exiles; the Gentiles were to tremble in repentance, so that they too could join in this program. The ideas are very similar to those in Ps. 97. The emphasis upon the kingship and reigning of God is very relevant to the exiles and returnees; for they no longer had any visible king. But the assurance is that Yahweh still reigns, and that reign over His people will finally extend to the whole planet. He was no longer visibly present between the cherubim over the ark; the ark was lost, and the shekinah glory was no longer in the temple. But in Heaven, "He sits enthroned between the cherubim". This is a powerful word of encouragement to those (like the exiles) who feel "church" is devoid of God's presence, and that the world and life around them is apparently spinning radically out of control. God is in fact still reigning and is still between the cherubim, in Heaven.

This is Is. 64:2 "as when fire kindles the brushwood, and the fire causes the waters to boil; to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!". In the final fulfilment, this will be the earthquake of Zech. 14 at the

Lord's return. LXX "Let the people rage" would be a similar scenario to that of Psalm 2, where God is enthroned in the midst of angry but futile opposition.

He sits enthroned between the cherubim: let the earth be moved-
There was envisaged a dramatic theophany which would be associated with the fall of Babylon and the restoration of God's exiled people. The cherubim which Ezekiel had seen departing from Zion would return. But this isn't what happened; Judah in exile didn't really repent, and those relatively few who did return were clearly motivated by the hope of personal benefit rather than the glory of God. Babylon didn't dramatically fall as envisaged in the prophets, there was no theophany; so much potential was wasted. But these things are rescheduled and reapplied to the final restoration of God's people at the last day.

The commands concerning the tabernacle were given to Moses by the Angel- do phrases like "Let them make Me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8) have primary reference to the Angel speaking the words? In the same way, does Psalm 99:1 refer also to the physical presence of an Angel between the cherubim? Similarly "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel (the Angel- so Isaiah 63 describes the wilderness Angel), thou that leadest Joseph like a flock (the Angel lead them through the wilderness); thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth" (Ps. 80:1 AV). And again in Ps. 20:1,2 "The God of Jacob (i.e. the Angel who Jacob recognized had been so much in his life) defend thee; send thee help from the sanctuary... ", as if it was in the sanctuary (Holy Place) that the Angel was located.
The four cherubim covered the ark, over which dwelt an Angel; Ps. 99:1,7 therefore describes the Angel as dwelling between the cherubim: "The Lord reigneth... He sitteth between the cherubims... He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept His testimonies, and the ordinance that He gave them". These latter things were all done by the Angel. Also relevant is Ps. 68:17,18: "The chariots of God are... thousands of Angels; the Lord is among them, as in... the Holy place". One Angel, which dwelt in the Holy Place, was therefore central to those thousands of others. See too Is. 37:16,17 on this. Similarly, Isaiah saw "the King, the Lord of Hosts (Angels) sitting between the cherubim" (Is. 6:5). The phrase 'living God' may mean 'the God of the living ones', and would therefore describe this mighty Angel- it is linked with "the Lord of Hosts" (Angels) in Jer. 23:36 and the Angel that dwelt in the temple (Ps. 42:2).

The call for the earth / land to be "moved", and to believe that Yahweh is indeed "great in Zion" (:2), was therefore all an appeal to believe in what was not visible. Yahweh and the shekinah glory was not visibly in Zion. But the eye of faith was to see it there.

Psa 99:2

Yahweh is great in Zion, He is high above all the peoples- Because of God's grace to Jacob / Israel (:4), an undefined group are bidden come to Zion, to the very cherubim (:1;

in the Most Holy Place) to exalt and praise God at His footstool. This group, in line with the preceding Psalms, are surely the Gentile world. "Let them praise Your great Name" (Ps. 99:3) would surely make most sense if it referred to the Gentiles, seeing that David or the Psalmist was Israelite. See on Ps. 96:7.

God being so high above the peoples is Is. 57:15 "For thus says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a broken and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble". The holiness of His Name is therefore referenced in :3, "He is Holy".

Psa 99:3

Let them praise Your great and awesome name: He is Holy!-
The holiness and righteousness of God is what we praise. We love Him because of His moral perfection. And because we realize how far short of it we are. Such praise is only for the spiritually minded, those who appreciate righteousness. The "them" are the Gentile "peoples" of :2. Perhaps the triple command to 'Sing to the Lord' in the opening verses of Ps. 96 alludes to Israel's three feasts, as does the triple, repetitive verses of Ps. 99:1-3, 4,5, 6-9; which likewise bid the Gentile world to come to Israel's worship. See on Ps. 96:7.

Psa 99:4

The King's strength also loves justice; You establish equity, You execute justice and righteousness in Jacob-
"Establish" is LXX "have prepared". Justice is prepared, the outcomes are all planned- but we don't see it now. In fact, the King loves justice and it is His great strength- when the world perceives God's great weakness as being that justice is not done now. It will be revealed at the Lord's return. But "in Jacob", amongst God's people, it is perceived that already it is being executed. This is Is. 61:8 "For I, Yahweh, love justice". Again and again, we see that these psalms had potential fulfilment at the restoration. And yet that scenario was precluded by the exiles, and so will be fulfilled in far greater and more glorious measure at the Lord's return. This looks ahead to how things will be at the final judgment: "He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity". This is quoted in Acts 17:31 concerning the final day of judgment at the Lord's return. But right now, justice and righteousness were to be executed and to be the basis of the restored Kingdom. For the essence of the Kingdom is now.

Psa 99:5

Exalt Yahweh our God, worship at His footstool. He is Holy!-
The ark is called both the throne of God and also His footstool (Ps. 99:5; 132:7,8; 1 Chron. 28:2). Above or sitting upon the cherubim, the pagan mind expected to see Israel's God. But there was (to their eyes) an empty throne. Yahweh had to be believed in by faith. And His supreme manifestation was through the blood of sacrifice. Cassuto gives evidence that the Egyptians and Hittites placed their covenant contracts in a box beneath the throne of their gods; and the tables of the covenant were likewise placed beneath the throne of Yahweh. This similarity begged the comparison yet stronger- Israel's God was *not* seated there. He had to be believed in by faith. Such a concept of faith in an invisible god was quite foreign to the pagan mind; and yet the whole tabernacle plan was designed to have enough points of contact with the pagan tabernacles in order to elicit this point in very powerful form: the one true God is invisible and must be *believed in*.

God's footstool was the temple (Is. 60:13; Lam. 2:1). But the restoration of the temple didn't go as was potentially possible. Now, God has chosen humble people on earth as His footstool (Is. 66:1,2 "Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: what kind of house will you build to Me? And what place shall be My rest?... to this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a broken spirit, and who trembles at My word").

But God's true people are now at His footstool. This is the outcome of God making the enemies of His Son come to His footstool: "Yahweh says to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Ps. 110:1). We were once His enemies: "For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life" (Rom. 5:10), "being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" (Col. 1:21), "they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). God is working to bring us from enemies to His Son's footstool, His worshippers, those beneath His feet. He is actively making "your enemies a footstool for your feet" (Acts 2:35). "For he must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). And the Lord Jesus is eagerly hoping the Father's work proceeds with us, through His Spirit 'making' us His footstool, "expectantly waiting until his enemies be made the footstool for his feet" (Heb. 10:13). But this process can only happen to those convicted of the fact that they are indeed alienated and enemies from God; and that apart from accepting the Lord's work for them, God's wrath is upon them: "being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9).

Psa 99:6

Moses and Aaron were among His priests, Samuel among those who call on His name; they called on Yahweh, and He answered them-
The Psalm invites the Gentiles to make Israel's God and history their own. For :5 was an

invitation to the Gentiles to accept Israel's God. The Gentiles who chose to call upon Yahweh's Name (:3) would therefore be identified with Samuel and the great heroes of Israel's history. This of course was not what a proud and nationalistic Israel wanted to hear. So we could render "A Moses and an Aaron are among His priests, and a Samuel among those that call upon His name". The priestly role of Moses was not in offering sacrifices; it was in his mediation for God's people. Samuel likewise (1 Sam. 7:8,9; 12:16-20). We note Samuel acted as priest in offering sacrifices and blessing them in places other than at the sanctuary, building an altar at his home in Ramah- in the spirit of the exiles, having to do their best to worship Yahweh without access to the sanctuary.

The "answer" these men obtained was salvation for God's people; that answer is defined in :8 as forgiveness for the people. And this is to be the characteristic of all God's true people. Intercession for others, seeking their forgiveness, is to be our major characteristic, and that can be done by all of us, no matter how limited we feel ourselves to be in our more public ministry. We note how Jer. 15:1 speaks of both Moses and Samuel as intercessors: “Though Moses and Samuel stood before Me, yet My mind could not be toward this people”. Our intercession cannot force sinners to be saved. But so many people in our lives are not so much hardened sinners as simply weak, and our intercession for them is what may make the eternal difference for them.

Psa 99:7

He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud-
As God miraculously led Israel out of Egypt and to the promised land, so He was willing to use miracle and power to lead His people out of Babylonian exile and back to the promised land. But they were unwilling.

They kept His testimonies, the statute that He gave them-
This was likewise required of the exiles. The "they" could refer to Moses, Aaron and Samuel- but the "them" in the context is the "them" to whom God spoke in the pillar of cloud, who were given God's law ("the statute that He gave them"). That group didn't include Samuel, who lived centuries later. The "them" is the group whose sinful works are to be judged by God, albeit in mercy (:8). The "them" is surely Israel- and this is in line with God's imputation of righteousness to His people, not beholding iniquity in Jacob, because He so loved them (Num. 23:21). This is as big a problem for us to get our heads around as are the NT references to our appearing [Gk. 'being presented as'] faultless before the presence of His glory… without spot *in His sight*.

Psa 99:8

You answered them, Yahweh our God; You are a God who forgave them, although You took vengeance for their doings-

This was to be true likewise of the exiles. Forgiveness would be possible, but they had to accept that they were being punished for their sins. Ezekiel records how they insisted they had been punished wrongly and unfairly.

Psa 99:9

Exalt Yahweh our God. Worship at His holy hill, for Yahweh, our God, is holy!-
This is an appeal of the repentant Jews to the Gentiles, to come to Zion and worship *our* God. The Kingdom prophecies of the nations flowing to Zion could have had some fulfilment at the restoration. But the Jews weren't that devoted to Zion, and initially continued worshipping Gentile idols; and became proud and xenophobic rather than acceptant and welcoming to Gentiles.

PSALMS CHAPTER 100

Psa 100:1

A Psalm of thanksgiving

The Hebrew word for "confess" has two meanings. To confess sin, and also to praise. So often the structure of the Hebrew language reflects spiritual things. The point of confession is to be the point of joy in sin forgiven, so immediate and certain is Divine response to confession of sin. Quite possibly this was a psalm to be recited over the thanksgiving offerings. "Thanksgiving" [also in :4] is the word used in Josh. 7:19 for "Confession": "Joshua said to Achan, My son, please give glory to Yahweh the God of Israel, and make confession to Him. Tell me now what you have done!". This is why the Psalm concludes with the reason for the praise being asked for: "His grace endures forever" (:5). Such ecstatic praise as is called for here is because of His forgiveness and salvation.

Shout for joy to Yahweh, all you lands!-
David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps. 71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto

this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

This Psalm may also have been used by or for the exiles, envisaging the day when the Gentiles would be invited to repent and join the exiles in forming a multiethnic people of God worshipping at the restored Zion.

Psa 100:2

Serve Yahweh with gladness, come before His presence with singing-
Coming before Yahweh's presence would be an invitation to Gentiles (:1) to come and keep the feasts in the tabernacle. That Gentiles should be urged to come before His presence was a radical paradigm break with Israel's conception of themselves as God's unique people. And inviting them to "serve" Him there with singing would imply Gentiles were being asked to be priests, singing like the Levites. The ideas become even more radical if we understand God's "presence" as the Most Holy Place, where the Israelite High Priest alone could come once / year. It is indeed as if the veil has been taken down and the way to the holiest opened to all, as Paul puts it to the Hebrews; and as happened literally at the Lord's death. All this was part of the prophetic picture for the restored Zion, with Gentiles flooding to the temple and even working as priests: "Of them also will I take for priests and for Levites" (Is. 66:21). But Ezra and Nehemiah precluded the Gentiles from entering Zion, building a wall with doors and guards to keep them out. Such an amazing potential vision was wasted by parochial attitudes amongst God's people.

Psa 100:3

Know that Yahweh, He is God-
This again is an invitation to the Gentiles, perhaps initially in David's time and then later at the restoration. Yahweh and not their idols was "God". The tragedy was that Israel were serving idols at the time of the restoration as Ezekiel makes clear.

It is He who has made us and not we ourselves, and we are His. We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture-
This is a fair argument against a belief in evolution *ex nihilo*. We did not make ourselves, we were specifically created; and it is belief in this which leads us to trust in Him, that we are therefore His, His sheep, just as a creator intimately owns that which their own hands have created. But the essential argument is that these are the words of a

repentant Israel, urging the Gentiles to join them in covenant relationship with God as equal sheep, "His", in "His pasture", a restored Israel. And it was this which they found so hard to do- to invite the Gentiles to become the sheep of Yahweh's pasture along with them. And the Jews became elitist and xenophobic in exile and at their return to "His pasture". It was the Lord Jesus who arose as the one shepherd over the flocks of both Jews and Gentiles, seeing the exiles refused to realize the potentials at their time.

Psa 100:4

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, into His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him, and bless His name-
This again is a hearty invitation to enter into the rebuilt courts of the temple with praise; and to praise a God in the God's temple meant you had accepted that God. The peoples of the time usually only changed gods because they had been militarily dominated by the people of those other gods. This is why Judah were so abhorrent for changing their gods from Yahweh to the idols of the nations around them; and they stood out amongst the nations for doing so (Jer. 2:11). But here we have a repentant Israel urging the Gentiles to change their gods and accept Yahweh; on the basis of His utter grace and salvation. And they are envisaged as succeeding. But the reality at the time of the restoration was far different; and the temple finally rebuilt had a court for the Gentiles and a sign erected threatening Gentiles with death if they passed into "His gates... into His courts".

Psa 100:5

For Yahweh is good, His grace endures forever, His faithfulness to all generations-
As noted on :4, to appeal to other nations to change their gods was unheard of, unless that other nation had been dominated by force. But this appeal to the Gentiles was not at all on the basis of forceful domination. Rather was the root of the appeal the experience of His grace, which was eternal- it had promise of life eternal. Such grace and such a gift were of course unheard of in any other belief system or god.

God's faithfulness to His promises will go on for eternity. We read the words of those promises and accept them as true for me. But they will eternally be fulfilled to us. His grace, His forgiveness, unlike human attempts at grace and forgiveness, will not fade nor morph over the ages of eternity.

PSALMS CHAPTER 101

Psa 101:1

A Psalm by David-
This Psalm appears to be David's expression of faith that he would one day be king. And he promises to reign in a Godly manner. It could also have been his Psalm for his ascendancy to the throne; or perhaps it was first written after Samuel anointed him. This Psalm is David's vow at the time of his ascension to the throne. The origin of Ps. 101 may have been when "All the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a covenant with them in Hebron before Yahweh; and they anointed David king over Israel" (2 Sam. 5:3; there were similar covenants in 2 Kings 11:17; 23:3). What was that covenant undertaking on David's part? Perhaps it was what we have in Ps. 101.

I will sing of grace and justice. To You, Yahweh, I will sing praises-
We note that "grace" is parallel with justice, truth, rightness, integrity. Grace is not "cheap". It is not somehow a turning of a blind eye to human sin, or some kind of favoritism. Just as salvation and righteousness, or rightness, are often paralleled. Grace and justice feature much in Paul's argument throughout Romans. God is just and is the justifier of all who truly believe in grace: "for the showing of His righteousness at this present time; that He might Himself be just, and the justifier of him that has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

But singing of grace is the idea used in Ps. 89:1,4 of singing about God's grace in promising David an eternal throne: "I will sing of the grace of Yahweh forever. With my mouth I will make known Your faithfulness… I have made a covenant with My chosen one, I have sworn to David My servant, 'I will establish Your seed forever, and build up Your throne to all generations'". Instead of marvelling at God's personal grace to him, he instead saw "grace" as a guarantee that come what may, he would always be king. And yet the vows he makes here were all broken by his sins with Bathsheba. He should have resigned from the throne and spent the rest of his life marvelling at God's personal grace to him, a sinner. Instead he sees the "grace" as being that his line would continue eternally as kings of Israel.

"Mercy and truth" ("grace and justice") were to be the basis of David's throne because that is what upheld God's throne. And David was to reign on God's behalf, his throne was to be as God's throne (Is. 16:5; Ps. 89:14; 101:1). Solomon liked to imagine that his throne was likewise upheld by God as His throne, also on the basis of "mercy and truth" ("grace and justice"). But he assumed that would happen automatically, whereas David's response to this is given in Ps. 101- he vows that he will personally reign in "grace and justice", whereas Solomon assumes that God will provide the "grace and justice" ("mercy and truth") as it were automatically (Prov. 20:28).

Psa 101:2

I will be careful to live a blameless life. When will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a blameless heart-

We could render "I will instruct in the way of blamelessness the men you bring before me, that they may walk with wholehearted (fidelity) within my palace". But we reflect how one of the persons David had brought into his house was Bathsheba. Only after that sin did he surely realize how inappropriate it was to vow to live a blameless, righteous life before God in our own strength, without the imputation of righteousness. We are to learn from this. It is hugely relevant to those who think they cannot be baptized because they cannot promise to live a blameless life before God. No man can. Here, David did- and made a fool of himself in the eyes of us the readers.

David "walked on the roof of the king's house", lusted after Bathsheba, committed adultery and then murder (2 Sam. 11:2). Indeed it could be argued that this Psalm is a vow of a man about to be made king, promising to reign justly. CEV offers "Please help me learn to do the right thing, and I will be honest and fair in my own kingdom". There are specific undertakings as to how the king will rule his own "house", reflecting the New Testament principle that if a man cannot rule his own house, he cannot rule in God's house (1 Tim. 3:5 "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?"). David in later life failed in this spectacularly. God's judgment of his sin with Bathsheba was that he would have such bad things in his own "house" (2 Sam. 12:10). In line with this opening vow of David, this was tantamount to God telling him that he was no longer able to be the true king of Israel. David should have abdicated; for he himself had taught that he who rules over men must be just, of integrity. And he had failed in that. He didn't abdicate, and so much needless suffering happened as a result. David taught Solomon that it was by "wisdom", a life lived according to God's wisdom, that kings rule and govern the land (Prov. 8:15,16; also Prov. 31:4 "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine"). His sins related to Bathsheba broke this covenant- but still he kept the throne. There is no record of him apologizing to his people for breaking this covenant, nor any attempt to get a mandate from them to continue as king. Which all underlines my common observation that David's repentance wasn't very deep, and he didn't do what he should've done- to abdicate the throne and live quietly with his God going forward for the rest of his days. All this failure by David points forward to the Lord Jesus, the perfect Davidic king.

"When will You come to me?" could be another longing by David for the ark of the covenant to come to his house and sanctuary. We could translate: "When You will come to me, I will walk within my house with a blameless heart". In which case, David had a tokenistic understanding of righteousness, thinking that the presence of the ark would somehow make him walk blamelessly. Or more generally, God's 'coming' to David could refer to his establishment as king. However, God 'coming' to him is a strange way to express this. Possibly David feels that he can only be "perfect" and have a totally

blameless heart if God comes to him, and he asks for this. Possibly the Lord picks up this idea in John 14-16, where He speaks of His going away and coming again to the disciples. He had three levels of meaning in saying this. Going away to the cross, and coming again in resurrection; going away to Heaven and coming again at His second coming; His going away to the cross and coming again to His people in the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. It is this 'coming' to man which alone can give us a blameless heart.

David's heart was not consistently of integrity, as we see in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah; it was only by grace that David was counted like this (s.w. 1 Kings 9:4). It was indeed whilst walking within his own house that he revealed the lustful state of his heart. We query whether David was right to promise to "live a blameless life", especially since he recognizes that "a blameless life" reflects "a blameless heart". How we think in our hearts is how we live. He is clearly over confident of his own self control and righteousness. The question "When will You come to me?" is likely his request that the promise of his kingship be fulfilled soon.

David at this stage had a far too simplistic view of spirituality, dividing men into the sinners and the perfect. He speaks of "those whose ways are blameless… he who walks blamelessly" (Ps. 119:1; 15:2). He considered that he was "blameless": "I was also blameless before Him… I will be careful to live a blameless life… he who walks in a perfect way will serve me" (Ps. 18:23; 101:2,6), whereas in his more honest moments in Ps. 119 he recognizes he had gone astray from God even in his younger life. Yet he confidently asks God to judge him according to his [supposed] integrity (Ps. 7:8; 26:1,11). Paul shows a far greater realism and maturity in Romans 7.

Psa 101:3

I will set no vile thing before my eyes; I hate the deeds of faithless men. They will not cling to me-
David here vows to have nothing evil (GNB) before his eyes. But we note the contrast with what actually happened in God's eyes: "Why have you despised the word of Yahweh, to do that which is evil in His sight?" (2 Sam. 12:9). His idea of keeping this vow is shown in :7- he thought it was enough to have no vile person before his eyes: "He who speaks falsehood won't be established before my eyes". He failed to personalize spirituality and sin, seeing "sin" only as in bad people, rather than within himself.

The "vile thing" in view was likely idolatry; "faithless men", AV "them that turn aside", were those who left Yahweh for idolatry. He probably has in view Saul and his men. But David walked within his house later and looked lustfully with his eyes at Bathsheba (:2). This was his idolatry. "Not cling to me" is a quote from the law's prohibition of idolatry (Dt. 13:17).

Psa 101:4

A perverse heart will be far from me. I will have nothing to do with evil-
We could understand this as AV, referring to men of perverse heart and evil doers, who David says he will put far away from his court and kingdom. He correctly understands that evil action reflects wrong thinking in the heart. But again we pause to consider that David appears over confident in his ability to judge the hearts of men, just as he was over confident in pledging that he would have a "blameless heart" himself (:2). He was to learn that he, a man after God's own heart, could still commit lust and adultery in his heart and be led thereby into the actual sin. Things were far from as black and white as he imagined in his youth.

LXX "I have not known an evil man, forasmuch as he turns away from me". The wicked will indeed turn away from us if they sense our commitment to spirituality.

Psa 101:5

I will silence whoever secretly slanders his neighbour. I won't tolerate one who is haughty and conceited-
Uriah was described as David's "neighbour" in Nathan's parable. And David did secretly "speak against" Uriah. And he definitely tolerated his own son Absalom, who without doubt was "proud in look and insatiable" (LXX).

We note that David says he will judge those who commit secret sins- secretly slandering a neighbour, practicing deceit (:7) and those with a perverse heart (:4). This is a most unusual credo for a king- to claim to be able to see the hearts of his people and to judge them. We could therefore take this as an appeal from David to God for the ability to judge the secrets of human hearts, seeing God alone can see the heart and know secret sins. Indeed, David says he is going to do things regarding judging secret sins that only God can- his eyes will be on the faithful (said of God, Ps. 33:18; 34:16; Jer. 5:2; 16:17). David's vow to "cut off" evildoers (:8) is what God does (Ps. 34:17). "I won't tolerate one who is haughty and conceited" (:5) is the language of how God cannot tolerate such evil (Is. 1:13). So David is perhaps obliquely requesting God's help in knowing and judging secret sins; or, more likely, he is assuming he can act as only God can in seeing and judging sins of the heart and sins performed secretly.

This points up David's deep wrong in thinking he could sin secretly with Bathsheba, and why his sin had to be declared "before all Israel", "in the sight of this sun". David's later sins present this overly spiritually ambitious oath as hypocrisy, or at least, serious failure:

"I will live an upright life within my house… I will avoid sin… I will destroy slanderers and not tolerate arrogant people… I will help the faithful of the land… I will not tolerate deceivers… I will destroy the wicked and cleanse the city of Yahweh".

David took a strong view against slander- having suffered so much of it himself. He vowed to put to death, i.e. to set up the death sentence, for anyone caught privately slandering or backbiting against a neighbour (Ps. 101:5 Heb.). That's how bad are backbiting and slander, however quietly ("privily", the AV quaintly says) they're done. And of course the Lord shared this understanding, by teaching that hatred of our brother is in fact the kind of murder which carried the death penalty in Old Testament times.

The Chaldee and some LXX versions have "He who speaks with the triple tongue against his neighbour". The triple reference would be to the slanderer himself, the man slandered, and the person to whom the slander is told. All three are damaged by the "triple tongue"; and we see this has timeless relevance and truth.

Psa 101:6

My eyes will be on the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He who walks in a perfect way, he will serve me-
GNB "I will approve of those who are faithful to God and will let them live in my palace". Every one of these undertakings of David were impossible for him to fulfil. Just as all leaders of men in the end disappoint. For no man is perfect, all have feet of clay. The repeated failures of David to live up to these vows only point up the fact that it is vain to look to man for true leadership. The constant failure of every human leader points us towards the Lord Jesus as the only true king.

We wonder at David's possible arrogance in assuming that he (:2) or any man can walk blamelessly; and that he could judge men that well, that he would only allow the "perfect" into his court and cabinet. Only the Lord Jesus fits this. And yet this is the phrase used in God's command to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:1), and it is maybe to this which David alludes. It was only possible for Abraham to do so by his faith in imputed righteousness, by grace through faith. But it's questionable as to whether David at this point realized that; he had to learn it through reflection upon the wonder of how God had counted him righteous after the sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 101:7

He who practices deceit won't dwell within my house. He who speaks falsehood won't be established before my eyes-
"Speaks falsehood" reflects again David's deep sense of injustice (see on Ps. 35:7). He uses the word for "false witness", as if they were breaking one of the ten

commandments; and he uses it often, heaping condemnation upon any who dare lie / bear false witness about him (Ps. 38:19; 52:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:29,69,86,118; 120:2; 144:8,11).

And yet David lied and deceived in order to get Uriah killed so that he could take his wife for himself. Surely reflection upon that sin made him realize that his zeal to condemn dishonesty was at best misplaced; to lament it is one thing, but David was to be taught that he had himself done the very thing he so condemned. David plotted the destruction of Uriah by his false words; and when he repented of this in Ps. 32:2, he says that lack of deceit / guile (s.w.) is only possible through imputed righteousness. David's intolerance of "deceitful" persons (Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:3) must be compared with the fact that he himself was only counted as not deceitful by grace; for he was very deceitful regarding Uriah. CEV "No one who cheats or lies will have a position in my royal court". GNB "No liar will live in my palace; no hypocrite will remain in my presence". But David was revealed to all as the ultimate cheat and liar. The word for "deceit" recurs in Ps. 32:2: "Blessed is the man to whom Yahweh doesn't impute iniquity, in whose spirit there is no deceit". This was written by David after his sin with Bathsheba, in recognition of the fact that righteousness and lack of any deceit has to be imputed to sinful man, through faith in God's grace. But in his immaturity, David supposed that some men had that lack of deceit by their own efforts. He considered himself to be one of them, and vows to reject anyone else. Perception of sinfulness, both in ourselves and others, is all part of our spiritual growth path. As we mature, we progressively downgrade our view of people.

Psa 101:8

Morning by morning, I will destroy all the wicked of the land; to cut off all the workers of iniquity from Yahweh's city-
This sounds like David promising a total purge of "the wicked" from the and royal city. There is no evidence David actually did this; he surely realized it was too hard in practice to judge who was "wicked", perceiving that bad men do what good men dream of, and all human motivation is so mixed. And we recall that Absalom's rebellion was fuelled by a general feeling in Israel that David was not judging rightly after his sin with Bathsheba. A more mature David was to admit: "I have sinned and I have done wickedly" (2 Sam. 24:17).

PSALMS CHAPTER 102

Psa 102:1

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his complaint before Yahweh-

This appears to have begun as a prayer by David, lamenting that his promised restoration hasn't come, and that he continues to be in suffering. But it was appropriated by the exiles, who had the same feeling and complaint.

Hear my prayer, Yahweh! Let my cry come in to You-
A number of Psalms appear to have some verses relevant to the exile, and others relevant to earlier historical situations. It would seem that an inspired writer inserted the verses which spoke specifically to the exilic situation. Psalm 102 is an example. Ps. 102:2-12 and 24-25a appear to be the original lament; and the other verses are relevant to the exile. This was all done under the process of Divine inspiration.

The request for human words to "come in to You" invites us to see the marvel of our words entering the very presence of God. The Lord taught us to begin our prayers with this awareness- by saying "Our Father who is in Heaven...". He, there, hears me, here.

Psa 102:2

Don't hide Your face from me in the day of my distress, turn Your ear to me. Answer me quickly in the day when I call-
David asked God not to hide his face from him, David personally, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's sins (Ps. 51:9). And one wonders whether the way the records of the Lord's temptations are written implies some similar recognition by the Spirit of the two 'men' within the Lord. Recognizing the existence of the new and old men within him, Paul can speak in Rom. 7 as if he is two different people; "I myself serve the law of God", but "my flesh" serves sin. David sees a difference between "me" [from whom God did not hide His face] and "my sins" [from which God hid His face]. This is how we are to see ourselves and our sins, as somehow not that "me" with which I myself identify. Because that is in fact how God looks upon us. In Christ, we are empowered to see ourselves as God sees us.

Psa 102:3

For my days consume away like smoke, my bones are burned as a torch-
David feels he is about to die, seeing similarities between himself and Job. And these feelings were identified with by the exiles, who perhaps felt that the national life of Israel was at an end. The Job allusions are typical of how a spiritually minded person will see similarities between themselves and Biblical characters. For God is working according to a template with all His children, the result being that we realize again that man is not alone.

Psa 102:4

My heart is blighted like grass and withered, for I forget to eat my bread-
Despite his undoubted physique stamina, David was a broken man, even quite early in his life, prone to fits of introspection; dramatic mood-swings (cp. 1 Sam. 24:14 with 1 Sam. 25:6,22,34;), sometimes appearing a real 'softie' but hard as nails at others (consider Ps. 75:10 and the whole of Ps. 101); easily getting carried away: be it with excessive emotional enthusiasm for bringing the ark back, in his harsh response to Hanun humbling his servants, his over-hasty and emotional decision to let Amnon go to Absalom's feast when it was obvious what might well transpire, his anger "flaring up" because of incompetency (2 Sam. 11:20 NIV), or in his ridiculous softness for Absalom. He had a heart cruelly torn so many ways. All these traits are amply reflected in the Psalms: Ps. 6:7; 31:10; 42:3,6; 38:8; 55:4; 56:8; 69:3,29; 88:3,9; 94:19 (what introspection!); 102:4; 116:3; 143:4.

Psa 102:5

By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones stick to my skin-
This has connections with David's Psalms of suffering at the time of Absalom's rebellion, which are often applied to the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross. He there also knew the feelings of the exiles.

Psa 102:6

I am like a pelican of the wilderness, I have become as an owl of the waste places-
These were ritually unclean birds. The exiles felt unclean, without access to the cleansing rituals of the law because they required a temple and priesthood which had been destroyed. They were thereby driven to seek their cleansing not by law but by grace. LXX heightens the application to the ruined Zion: "like an owl in a ruined house". Often David likens his enemies' plans to catch him as snares, gins etc. set for birds (e.g. Ps. 84:3; 102:6; 124;7; 140:5)- all the language of hunting birds. He had probably done plenty of this as a youngster caring for the sheep, and the influence of those formative years remained.

Psa 102:7

I watch, and have become like a sparrow that is alone on the housetop-
The connection between watching and feeling like a sparrow is in the way that David, Hezekiah, the exiles etc. all 'watched' or waited for God to respond and intervene, and His apparent silence made them feel alone. The Psalm originated in David's feelings of

dejection whilst enduring the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba- which all began with his lustful looking from his housetop. And he now feels alone on that housetop; for one result of sin is psychological isolation. Yet through that loneliness there is enabled even more powerful and intimate connection with God.

Psa 102:8

My enemies reproach me all day, those who are mad at me use my name as a curse-
LXX "they that praised me have sworn against me". The initial application was probably to the rebellion of David's former friends, when they joined forces with Absalom. The language is again based upon Job, whose book was probably one of the few scriptures available to David. The application to the exiles is very clear. In the historical application, we again see David marvelling at and clearly struggling with the consequences of his sin with Bathsheba. For it was quite to be expected that everyone would be "mad at me".

Psa 102:9

For I have eaten ashes like bread and mixed my drink with tears-
This may be another allusion to Job (see on :8), attempting to describe in words his grief. But it could also be a reference to his fasting which had apparently not brought about any response from God.

Psa 102:10

because of Your indignation and Your wrath; for You have taken me up, and thrown me away-
The idea is, lifted me up and thrown me down. This could refer to David's sense of having been exalted to the throne, and then apparently cast down at Absalom's rebellion. But the idea also alludes to a lion, lifting up and then throwing down the prey it has caught. The Babylonians were likened to lions, and this indeed is how they treated Judah.

Psa 102:11

My days are like a long shadow, I have withered like grass-
After the initial application to David, there is clearly some reference to Hezekiah, whose days were lengthened by the shadow on the sundial being changed. LXX "have declined like a shadow". The same ideas are in Ps. 109:23. David's feelings at this time are also appropriate to Hezekiah, whose feelings were responded to by God by making the shadow of the sundial reverse. The same words are used in 2 Kings 20:10. But the withering like grass is the language of the restoration prophecy of Is. 40:7,8. Even though

the grass of that generation might wither, the prophetic word of restoration would ultimately come true.

Psa 102:12

But You, Yahweh, will remain forever; Your renown endures to all generations-
Despite the pain and struggle arising from feeling that God isn't coming through for the psalmist as he expects, there is this significant statement beginning "But…". Faith remains strong in God and His eternal purpose and the continual, eventual articulation of His name. This kind of juxtaposition of doubt and ultimate faith is common in Job and the Psalms and should be our pattern too. The eternity of God's Name ["renown"] means that whatever trauma we now have, even if it ends in death itself, we are assured of eternity. If we are identified with Him and His Name.

Psa 102:13

You will arise and have mercy on Zion; for it is time to have pity on her, yes, the set time has come-
When “the time to favour Zion” came, at the end of the 70 years, God’s servants Israel were to “take pleasure in her stones, and favour [even] the dust thereof”; and then, “when the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory” (Ps. 102:13-16). But the few Jews who returned chose not to live in Jerusalem, preferring to carve out for themselves farmsteads in the countryside (Neh. 11:1), and the strength of those that shifted the rubble in Jerusalem decayed…they saw her dust and scattered stones as a nuisance, and didn’t take pleasure in them (Neh. 4:10). And so the Lord could not then appear in glory.

The "set time" of 70 years was however elastic; as Daniel and Ezekiel were taught. The period was extended due to Judah's impenitence, and Daniel 9 explains how it was turned into seventy sevens… and the final restoration of a redefined Zion was to be through the work of the Lord Jesus.

"The set time" is a phrase used about the feasts, and there is reason to believe that God delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrians at Passover time (see on Ps. 75:2) and would do so again. All these things look forward to the final "time" coming for Zion's final deliverance at the last day.

Psa 102:14

For Your servants take pleasure in her stones, and have pity on her dust-
This was only true of a minority, for the majority preferred the opulence of Babylon to the rubble of Jerusalem. And as noted on :13, the few who did return initially preferred not

to live in Jerusalem. But the argument of the psalmist is that as the exiles had "pity" on the dust of Jerusalem, so God should "pity" Zion (:13). But the reality was that most of the exiles didn't "pity" Zion as God did, and thus precluded His potential program for her restoration into the Kingdom of God on earth at that time.

Psa 102:15

So the nations will fear the name of Yahweh; all the kings of the earth Your glory-
Ps. 102 has many connections with the events during the time of Hezekiah, when after the salvation of Zion, the surrounding nations in the land promised to Abraham came up to worship there. Here, “the nations” refers specifically to “the kings of the earth / land”. And one wonders how many other times the phrase “the nations... of the earth” refers specifically to the powers in the land from the Nile to the Euphrates. But the great prophetic potential at this time was precluded by Hezekiah welcoming those kings to see *his* glory rather than God's; and then going after their gods, rather than leading those nations to the God of Israel. Likewise the restoration was intended to lead the nations within the *eretz* promised to Abraham to see Yahweh's glory, which was intended to shine forth literally and morally from Zion. But this didn't happen, and the restoration was characterized by apostacy, whilst the Jews who remained in Babylon continued in their idolatry, as Ezekiel records.

Psa 102:16

For Yahweh has built up Zion; He has appeared in His glory-
He had not then done so (:13)- the earlier part of the Psalm laments this. But the Psalmist believed in God’s prophecies of doing so, and considered them as good as already fulfilled. Faith is all about adopting God’s perspective, seeing future promises as if they have already been fulfilled, thereby enabling us to live the Kingdom life now in its essence. But LXX reads this in the future tense: "For the Lord shall build up Sion, and shall appear in his glory". This glory of Yahweh appearing in Zion is a theme of the restoration prophecies of later Isaiah. This could have happened, had the exiles rebuilt the temple as commanded in Ez. 40-48. But they didn't, and so the shekinah glory didn't return to the temple as envisaged in the prophecies.

Psa 102:17

He has responded to the prayer of the destitute, and has not despised their prayer-
As noted on :16, the prayer had not yet been answered. But faith is about feeling and acting as if our prayers have been answered even when they haven't been (Mk. 11:24). The captives were despised (s.w. Neh. 2:19) as David was for his sin (s.w. Ps. 22:6,24), and as was the Lord Jesus on the cross (s.w. Is. 53:3), but God did not despise them and

would destroy that opposition. Yet perhaps it had a historical basis in David appreciating that although he had despised God in his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (s.w. 2 Sam. 12:10), God by grace had not despised him. Because God did not despise David's contrite and broken heart (s.w. Ps. 51:17, a passage also alluded to in :31). The exiles had likewise despised God (s.w. Ez. 16:59) but would not be despised by God.

Psa 102:18

This will be written for the generation to come. A people which will be created will praise Yah-
David's personal experience of God ultimately saving him was going to be a pattern for all within the new creation. Hence :20 will speak of how on this basis God hears the prayers of all condemned to death, who likewise seek salvation.

This connects with Isaiah's restoration prophecies of a new creation, of a multiethnic people of God comprised of repentant Jews as well as those of the nations amongst whom they had been in exile. But this didn't happen. The people didn't repent as required. And so the prophetic potential of a new creation of a new people of God was reapplied and rescheduled to the new creation of that people which occurs "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Psa 102:19

For He has looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven, Yahweh saw the earth-
This is an awesome conception; that God in Heaven 'sees the earth'. That the huge distance between God and man is collapsed. God's sanctuary was in ruins on earth, but still existed in Heaven.

Psa 102:20

to hear the groans of the prisoner-
The same phrase used of God hearing the groans of Israel in Egypt. The idea was that God would miraculously empower an exodus from Babylon just as He had delivered His people from Egypt. Tragically, most of them preferred to remain in Babylon.

To free those who are condemned to death-
LXX "to loosen the sons of the slain". This would mean that the Psalm refers to the second generation of exiles, whose parents had been slain. For the exiles in Babylon / Persia were prosperous, as witnessed by the situation in the book of Esther. They were not "condemned to death"; although perhaps Haman's persecution is here in view. In the bigger picture, we are all condemned to death, but our salvation at the last day will

be in Jerusalem, at the day of judgment (:22), and there we will declare the characteristics of Yahweh's Name in praise (:21).

Psa 102:21

that men may declare the name of Yahweh in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem-
The idea is that the "men" who would return in the new exodus from Babylon (see on :20) would be Gentiles as well as Jews; and this is confirmed in :22. Praise is here defined as declaring the Yahweh Name. Praise is about appreciating the characteristics of Yahweh, which is what His "Name" is all about; and declaring them in praise. It was God who declared His Name to Moses, but here we have Gentiles declaring that same Name, having come in homage to Jerusalem to do so. This was the potential at the restoration, but the prophetic program was rescheduled and reinterpreted.

Psa 102:22

when the peoples are gathered together, the kingdoms, to serve Yahweh-
The Gentiles were to gather together to Jerusalem "to serve Yahweh", language appropriate to priestly service. They who had gathered together against Jerusalem in battle were to repent and again gather together there, but as the priesthood in the new people of God who were to be created (see on :18). God would take of the Gentiles for priests and Levites (Is. 66).

Psa 102:23

He weakened my strength along the course, He shortened my days-
LXX "He answered him in the way of his strength". God's strength is contrasted with the Psalmist who feels his days have been "shortened". This may initially refer to David at the time of his disease after the sin with Bathsheba, feeling he was going to die young. But it has clearly been reapplied to Hezekiah's feelings when his days were shortened and then lengthened by God's grace.

Psa 102:24

I said, My God, don't take me away in the midst of my days. Your years are throughout all generations-
As noted on :23, both David and Hezekiah felt their lives were being ended in the middle. The appeal for healing and more life is based upon God's eternity. The psalmist is asking for God to share something of His eternity with him. And this will be ultimately true when we partake of His immortality at the last day.

Psa 102:25

Of old, You laid the foundation of the earth, the heavens are the work of Your hands-
The language of laying foundations is nearly always used about the laying of the foundations of the new, rebuilt temple at the time of return from exile (Ezra 3:10-12; 5:16; Is. 44:28; Hag. 2:18; Zech. 4:9; 8:9); and this is the context of this Psalm (see on :13 and :16). The 'heavens and earth' refer to Israel (Is. 1:2) and the temple. Although they had 'perished' in the Babylonian invasion and destruction of the first temple, God remained and would, the Psalmist believed, install a new temple system (as outlined in Ez. 40-48). However, this never quite happened as God intended due to Judah's weakness, and so these prophecies were reapplied to how the entire Jewish system based around the temple and Law of Moses would 'perish' and God's new temple system based around the exalted Lord Jesus would come into existence (Heb. 1:10 and context).

Psa 102:26

They perish, but You will endure. Yes, all of them will wear out like a garment-
In the same way as the Angels are so closely associated with their charges that they are identified with them, so the Angels are described as the things in the natural world which they have created. The quotation of Ps. 102:26 in Heb. 1:10 can appear to pose major problems for belief in the humanity of Christ and that the world will never be destroyed. "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands: they shall perish, but Thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail". The context in Hebrews is again Christ's superiority over the Angels; however, the context in Ps. 102 is of Christ on the cross thinking of the eternity of God, how that "of old", "in the beginning" (clearly alluding back to the beginning of the natural creation in Gen. 1), God created the Heavens and earth by His Angel-hands. But "they shall perish… wax old like a garment… as a vesture shalt thou change them" (Ps. 102:26). This language is similar to that used elsewhere about the ending of the Angel-oriented Mosaic Law (e.g. Heb. 8:13). Thus the literal Heavens and earth will not perish, but the Angelic system that created them will do. Thus both the natural creation and the Mosaic system are identified exactly with the Angels that created them.

The purpose of the quotation in Hebrews 1 is to demonstrate the Lord's superiority over Angels. One approach is to understand the Hebraic way of stating that 'even X shall happen to prove the greatness of Y'; e.g. heaven could pass away [X] but the Lord's words would not [Y] (Mt. 24:35). This is not to say that X shall literally happen; it is stated as a hyperbole, to demonstrate the greatness of Y. And that may be the case here too.

God's eternity is contrasted with the [relative] passing of the Heavens, which were made by Angels. "They shall perish" may not therefore mean they shall literally perish. See on Ps. 103:20.

The context of Ps. 102 is however pertinent. The "set time [had] come" suggests that the Psalmist is writing maybe in captivity in Babylon as the predicted 70 years of Judah's captivity there came to a close, and he looks forward to the promised restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem. He enthuses in :16 that "Yahweh has built up Zion"- although He had not then done so (:13). The earlier part of the Psalm laments this. But the Psalmist believed in God's prophecies of doing so, and considered them as good as already fulfilled. Faith is all about adopting God's perspective, seeing future promises as if they have already been fulfilled, thereby enabling us to live the Kingdom life now in its essence. See on :25.

You will change them like a cloak, and they will be changed-
The Jewish system would be rolled up, as a scroll that is not going to be read any more; the Law would end. But Messiah would remain eternally. It was the Lord Jesus by His sacrifice which changed the Jewish system. The same Greek word (used in the LXX and the quotation in Heb. 1:12) is used of the Lord's 'changing' the customs delivered by Moses (Acts 6:14).

Psa 102:27

But You are the same, Your years will have no end-
Heb. 1:10 appears to quote words about God (from Ps. 102:25) and apply them to Jesus. To take a Psalm or Bible passage and apply it to someone on earth, even a normal human, was quite common in first century literature (Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology Of The New Testament* (London: SCM, 1971) p. 234). It's rather like we may quote a well known phrase from Shakespeare or a currently popular movie, and apply it to someone. It doesn't mean that that person is to be equated with Romeo, Juliet, Othello, Hamlet, Macbeth etc. By quoting the words about them, we're saying there are similarities between the two people or situations; we're not claiming they're identical. And seeing that the Son of God was functioning for His Father, it's not surprising that words about God will be quoted about the Lord Jesus.

Psa 102:28

The children of Your servants will continue, their seed will be established before You-
The context of the Psalm is that the historical David, along with Hezekiah and the exiles, feared they were not going to continue. But the Psalm ends with a bold statement that the true seed (even it was to be redefined) would be "established", the restoration and eternal reestablishment of Zion was to come, finally. Even if it didn't happen when and

how it was originally intended, and as hoped for by that generation. And this is an abiding comfort and challenge for us all.

PSALMS CHAPTER 103

Psa 103:1

By David-
I have often suggested that the Psalms are often paired together. Ps. 103 appears to continue the faith expressed in Ps. 102; that whatever present appearances, God's purpose to ultimately restore David and his throne / kingdom was going to come true, finally. The exiles doubted it, but the faithful remnant were to rejoice that finally, it would come true- even if not in their lifetimes. Such confident joy presupposes a firm faith and understanding of the resurrection of the body at the final eternal restoration of Zion.

Praise Yahweh, my soul! All that is within me, praise His holy name!-
There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father is essentially *mutual*. He has blessed us with all things (Eph. 1:3), and we all bless Him with all that is in us (Ps. 103:1,22; Eph. 1:3). David is here talking to himself, reminding himself to be grateful for huge grace and restoration of life given him. We too need to consciously speak to ourselves in our self talk, urging ourselves to greater gratitude. Especially in :3 David reminds himself of his sins [regarding Bathsheba, surely] and urges himself to greater gratitude for grace.

Psa 103:2

Praise Yahweh, my soul, and don't forget all His benefits-
David often takes strength from God's previous deliverances to cope with whatever he was now facing (Ps. 61:3). This may sound natural, but in fact it isn't; because we are inclined to forget the great things He has done for us, as Israel did in the desert. We all have a tendency to see the glass half empty rather than half full. Hence the need to continually remind ourselves to not forget all His benefits; and they are particularly expressed in the form of His forgiveness and avowed intention to finally save us (:3,4). Hezekiah, to whom Ps. 102 (which seems paired with Ps. 103) partly applies, did forget Yahweh's benefits to him (s.w. 2 Chron. 32:25). But "benefits" is also the word used for "rewards", which rewards of judgment are promised to Babylon and all who abused the exiles (Ps. 137:8; Is. 35:4; 59:18; Jer. 51:6; Lam. 3:64). The downtrodden were to take comfort in judgment to come.

Psa 103:3

who forgives all your sins; who heals all your diseases-
The blessing which should never be forgotten (:2) is supremely our forgiveness. Hezekiah had been healed, but he forgot that great "benefit" (:2; s.w. 2 Chron. 32:25). In those times when we consider our cup half empty rather than half full, we will be helped to appreciate "all His benefits" if we recall our own forgiveness received. It is those who refuse to accept their own sinfulness who tend to question where God's promised blessings are. "All your sins" means every aspect of every sin- truly amazing. David was clearly very ill soon after his sin with Bathsheba, as other psalms also imply, not least "There is no soundness in my flesh, because of Your indignation; there is no welfare in my bones, because of my sin" (Ps. 38:4, also Ps. 32:3,4). And yet David in his later psalms seems to bitterly resent the remaining consequences for his sins. In this Psalm 103, he does realize them and thanks God for life itself, as the greatest example of grace at this present time. A perspective we need to remember.

We could get the impression here and in other Psalms that David tends to see the removal of the punishment of sin as the proof of its forgiveness (Ps. 85:1-3 "You have been favourable to Your land. You have restored the fortunes of Jacob, You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people; You have covered all their sin"; 147:3). Yet Nathan had warned him that there were going to be ongoing consequences in his case. Yet here David writes as if all has magically been erased. Giving Nathan's words priority, it would therefore seem David is here wishing to feel as if all consequences are now done with. When that wasn't in fact the case.

Psa 103:4

who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with grace and tender mercies-
As noted on :2,3, the great blessing is of forgiveness and grace. God's "mercy and truth" (s.w. "grace… mercies") is seen in the fulfilment of His promises to David and Abraham. This day of crowning is not now; it is at the time when our life is redeemed from death / destruction. This hope of the future resurrection of the body is the great "benefit" of :2 which we must never forget, and which gives perspective to all current sufferings. David initially had in view his salvation from the death sentence required for his behaviour with Bathsheba and Uriah, and the crown remaining upon him by grace (the same language as in Ps. 21:4 where he thanks God for placing a gold crown upon him). To "redeem" is literally to be a *go'el,* a kinsman redeemer, to pay the ransom because we are relatives. Hence David goes on in the psalm to plead the tender fatherhood of God. And that became true through God's connection with us through His Son. Yet without any

reference to atonement or sacrifice, God is stated here to be able to do that- simply so. Job 19:25 is another example.

Psa 103:5

who satisfies your desire with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's- The "desire" of all the truly spiritual is for redemption from death (:4) through resurrection to eternal life, and the receipt of forgiveness (:3). It is these desires of our soul which will definitely be met, if indeed they are our dominant desires. As God doesn't faint or weary, so somehow those who identify their lives with His will also keep on keeping on- even now (Is. 40:31 cp. 29). This was clearly the promise to the exiles, if they realized the prophetic potential for them explained in Is. 40. David felt that his youth was renewed like the eagle's in his repeated experience of God's grace (Ps. 103:5), that his soul was restored (Ps. 23:5), and that a right spirit could be renewed by God within him (Ps. 51:10). This is the equivalent of the "newness of life" which is promised to us through acceptance of God's Spirit.

It could be argued that David here is asking for, or assuming, a complete return to his earlier life, despite the sin with Bathsheba. He is rejoicing in the idea that all consequence for his sins regarding her had now been removed. But his other Psalms reflect a regret and bitterness that he was suffering those consequences- which was exactly what Nathan had told him at the time. David would therefore be similar to those who latch on to various out of context Bible verses about a prosperous life, and wonder why they have not come true for them.

Psa 103:6

Yahweh executes righteous acts, and justice for all who are oppressed-
The exiles and David at times felt they were suffering injustice. But the comfort is that God has historically been just to the oppressed and executed judgment, especially at the Red Sea. This is where faith comes in. If we feel we are suffering intolerable injustice, this is no reason to doubt God; for He has operated extreme justice in the past, and shall do so ultimately.

David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her… will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and

felt this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to "every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. See on Ps. 41:12.

Psa 103:7

He made known His ways to Moses, His deeds to the children of Israel-
This could refer to the revelation of God's law to Israel. The commands which constituted the covenant were given to Moses personally (Neh. 1:7,8), insofar as he represented Israel. Thus there is a parallel drawn in Ps. 103:7: "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel". "After the tenor of these words have I made a covenant with you [Moses] and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27). The revelation of God's law was therefore cited as an example of His love and grace; it is not to be seen as an onerous burden laid upon Israel.

But the reference could also be to God's revelation of Himself through His saving deeds towards Israel at the Red Sea, or to the declaration of His Name in Ex. 34 (see on :8). Just as is true today, and as is often mentioned in Ps. 119, God is willing to operate directly on the hearts of men in a way over and above His written word. David realized this, and asked to be taught and shown God's ways (Ps. 25:4; 143:8). Knowledge in its ultimate, spiritual sense is not attained simply by reading or hearing the text of the Bible; not that I am at all decrying that. But there is a higher, Divine hand at work in making us know Divine knowledge. Moses had prayed the same words in Ex. 33:13: "Show me [make me to know] Your way, that I may know [s.w. "show"] You [and] find grace in Your sight". The gift of knowledge, in the Hebraic sense of relationship, is related to God's grace. That knowledge which is in view is not the same as technical, theological knowledge. Moses' prayer was answered; the same words are used here in saying that God "made known His ways to Moses".

Yet this making known of God's ways to Israel as clarified in the next verse as referring to the declaration of His Name / characteristics in Ex. 34:6. This was done immediately after Israel's sin with the golden calf and their condemnation by God. Perhaps that is what ties this verse in to the overall narrative of forgiveness which there is in the Psalm. It is through the experience of sin and forgiveness that we actually come to know / experience God's essential character.

Psa 103:8

Yahweh is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in grace-
This is an appeal to the essential characteristics of Yahweh as declared to Moses in Ex.

34, and it is perhaps to this that :7 refers. On one hand, God does not become quickly angry (Ps. 103:8), and yet on the other hand He *does* get angry quickly in the sense that He immediately feels and responds to sin (Ps. 2:12); His anger 'flares up in His face'. The implication is that we should respond 'quickly' to the Gospel; we should not have any element of indifference in our response to the call of God, and yet the foundations of a true spiritual life cannot be laid hastily.

We note however that David doesn't go on to quote or allude to the rest of Ex. 34:6,7: "Yahweh! A merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth, keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children". David's own child died because of his sin with Bathsheba. He may possibly be guilty of assuming that forgiveness meant there were to be no consequences for his sin. When Nathan had made it clear that there were to be. Ex. 34:7 says God will not leave sin unpunished; David in :9 says God will not always accuse, nor forever keep his anger. God says in Ex 34:7 that He will visit the sins of the fathers on the children, whereas in :10 David instead stresses that God doesn't punish us according to our sin, nor reward us according to our iniquity. What he says is true but I suggest it lacks the necessary context.

Psa 103:9

He will not always accuse; neither will He stay angry forever-
This may be answer to the complaint of the exiles that God through the prophets was always 'accusing' them through the prophetic words. But "accuse" is the word for 'striving', and it was Israel who had chosen to strive with God (s.w. Is. 45:9 and often). From God's side, His 'accusing' was more of a pleading with His people (s.w. Jer. 2:9,29), pleading for their loyalty and repentance (s.w. Hos. 2:2). Ps. 103:9 says that the reason "He will not always accuse" is because we are in covenant relationship with Him, and that relationship is based upon grace. I take this to mean in practice that God doesn't always 'take up' with us the issues of our sins. He deals with some sin by overlooking, by not accusing. Just as we also do in a loving relationship. But no relationship is legitimate if the failure and disinterest of one side has to be constantly overlooked. But when He does judge sin, when He does accuse, that judgment [for us who are in covenant relationship with Him] is not proportionate to our sins (Ps. 103:10). A similar idea is in Is. 57:15,16, which seems to be saying that those with whom God lives, i.e. those in covenant relationship with Him, will not be constantly accused of their sins. Their sins are accepted as being an ever present reality, but God will not 'take up the matter' with them regarding these sins- because He lives with them in covenant: "I also live with people who are humble and repentant, so that I can restore their confidence and hope. I

gave my people life, and I will not continue to accuse them or be angry with them forever" (GNB).

Psa 103:10

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us for our iniquities-
This was exactly the case with the exiles, who were punished far less than their sins deserved (Ezra 9:13). All complaint at unreasonable behaviour from God was therefore utterly inappropriate, and was rooted in a sense that Israel had done absolutely nothing wrong and that any consequence for sin was therefore unreasonable.

"Dealt with" is a legal term, and we have likewise read of God as 'accuser' in :9. The idea is that we have not always even been accused of sins we have been forgiven of; and those we were charged with we were either punished less than prescribed, or downright let off.

Psa 103:11

For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His grace toward those who fear Him-
The same word used for how David's sins "overwhelmed me" (Ps. 65:3) is used of how overwhelming or "great" is God's grace (Ps. 103:11; 117:2). David felt overwhelmed firstly by his sin and then by God's grace. This explains his fragile emotional and nervous state, as often reflected in the Psalms. But his path is to be that of all God's true Israel, and his repentance and restoration was intended to be the path for the exiles.

Psa 103:12

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us-

This is a horizontal dimension, having spoken of the infinite vertical distance between God and forgiven human sin (:11). The image suggests being chased, the east chasing the west but never being able to catch up with the west before itself becoming the west. This may hint at a belief that sin could not catch up with David. At the risk of over interpreting, we may just possibly have a hint here that David felt that consequences of his sins should now never catch up with him. For in other psalms he appears to bitterly lament, chafe at and regret that he was suffering for his sins. As Nathan had indeed said he would.

As the east and the west can never meet in one point, the distance between them can never be closed; so our sins are removed from us. The teaching here is that they are removed *from us*. Their distance from God is not in view here- that perhaps is explained in the previous verse, stating that there is a distance as high as that between Heaven

and earth between God and our sins. But now we learn that our sins are removed *from us* so that we never again need to be identified according to them nor by them. This has profound psychological truth on the level of self identity and self perception. It raises doubts about the 12 step programs that insist an addict must always understand themselves e.g. as "I am an alcoholic".

This was appropriate to Hezekiah (Is. 38:17), but he like the exiles failed to have an abiding awareness of the magnitude of the wonder of forgiveness. The idea is that God deals with us separate to our sins; He removes those sins "from us", they are totally removed from us personally. This is another window onto what it means to be accounted righteous, to have righteousness imputed by grace through faith. God had removed His people far from Him (s.w. Is. 6:12; 26:15; Jer. 27:10) because they had removed their hearts far from Him (s.w. Is. 29:13; Jer. 2:5; Ez. 44:10). So now the psalmist is asking God to remove their sins far away, but to come near to them personally.

Psa 103:13

Like a father has compassion on His children, so Yahweh has compassion on those who fear Him-
That "compassion" is not simply in that a father forgives a repentant child. Fatherly compassion is more than that; it is compassion upon the position of the child regardless of repentance. Simply because he is the father of the child. This statement may be a tacit request by the psalmist for God to all the same restore His people from their exile simply on the basis of His grace and compassion, for most of them had not repented. The word for "compassion" is used of how God would have compassion on His people if they repented whilst in exile (Dt. 30:3). But the psalmist seems to plead for that compassion to be shown simply because they were His children.

Psa 103:14

For He knows how we are made, He remembers that we are dust-
This is effectively a plea with God to remember that "we are dust" and to show compassion on the basis of the weakness of our humanity (see on :13). But the basis for that compassion was to be Israel's repentance (Dt. 30:13 etc.). But here the psalmist seems to plead some kind of idea that our nature makes us inevitable sinners, and so God should show compassion on that basis. We aren't inevitable sinners, and whatever we posit about human nature, we say about the Lord Jesus who was perfect and spotless despite fully having that same nature as we do. So the plea appears rather lacking in integrity. And yet it is true; God does remember that we are dust, and He does

have compassion for reasons other than that His people have repented (s.w. 2 Kings 13:23). His compassion is therefore on the basis of His mercy and grace, rather than a proportionate response to steel willed human repentance and self reformation (s.w. Ps. 116:5). His compassion is actually always there for His children, even when they are in exiled punishment from Him (s.w. Jer. 31:20; 33:26). Solomon failed to perceive this grace, instead focusing solely upon the aspect of God showing compassion to those who are repentant (s.w. Prov. 28:13).

Here as often the frailty of man is used to plead for God's mercy (Ps. 78:39 "many times He turned His anger away, and didn't stir up all His wrath. He remembered that they were but flesh, a wind that passes away, and doesn't come again"; 89:47 "Remember how short my time is! For what vanity have You created all the children of men!"). "He knows how we are made, He remembers that we are dust" means He remembers our formation; what we are made of. The allusion us to Gen 2:7, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground".

The frailty of our "form" in view is our moral weakness, and the connection therefore between sin and human mortality (:15). Job especially expresses this same connection between frailty and sin (Job 4:17–21; 15:14–16; 25:1–6). It's not that God retreated from man at the fall and turned away in disgust from his sinfulness. He knows our thoughts afar off, He is accustomed to all our habitual patterns of thought (Ps. 139)- which are typically sinful. God knows the psychology of sin. And according to how David reasons, He does cut us some slack because of it. And yet in the context of David's sin with Bathsheba, it could be argued that he veered too much to the path of justifying the sin on the basis of 'I'm only human'. This is where we are cut hard and deep by the fact the Lord had human nature, with all its psychological tendencies to sin, but never sinned.

David has moved on from his own experience of God's mercy and grace to his sins, to see in that experience the truth for every man. Paul reasons likewise in Romans, that David's sin with Bathsheba is in essence the sin of every man. And so David now speaks not of himself but of "we" and "us", as in :10 "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor repaid us for our iniquities".

Psa 103:15

As for man, His days are like grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourishes-
This is the language used of the exiles in Is. 40:6-8. The idea is that the exiles were indeed like this, as are all men. But Isaiah explains that the prophetic word of restoration was to come true, even if the men of that generation faded into death. This is taught here in different words, assuring them that God's promised grace would not fail and His throne was indeed eternal and therefore would be reestablished on earth (:17,19).

Psa 103:16

For the wind passes over it, and it is gone. Its place remembers it no more-
This again is David alluding to the feelings of Job (Job 7:10; 20:9), one of the few books of scripture he had access to. But despite this understanding of the mortality of man, David is confident that God's grace will be manifest eternally to His people (:17). This can only have any sense if he understood there to be a resurrection of the body, to eternal experience of God's grace.

Psa 103:17

But Yahweh's grace is from everlasting to everlasting with those who fear Him, His righteousness to children's children-
See on :16. We note the parallel of grace and righteousness. Paul in Romans 1-8 explores this; the gift of grace is not of cheap grace, a turning of a blind eye to sin. The gift is of righteousness, counting right the sinner, by God the judge of all. This is by grace, but it has to be believed. This gift of imputed righteousness "is of faith that it might be by grace" (Rom. 4:16).

Psa 103:18

to those who keep His covenant, to those who remember to obey His precepts-

The idea is that those who keep the covenant and obey God's laws still sin, even 'badly', and are saved by God's grace. That grace is not available to those outside the covenant. It's why baptism into the new covenant is required for the remission of sins- it puts us into the status of 'covenant keepers who sin'. And that is totally necessary for salvation. We see here for all time the fact that God doesn't require perfectionism or lack of sin in order to grant salvation and forgiveness on the path there.

The keeping of the covenant, in the context of what was explained on :17, effectively means to keep on believing in God's amazing, saving grace towards sinners. "Remember" doesn't here suggest that they are commended for not being forgetful. The Hebrew carries the idea of having the mind full. Our fully conscious desire to obey His ways is going to be an outcome of continuing to believe His covenant, which promises salvation by pure grace (:17) rather than obedience. So the obedience here in view is in response to the covenant of grace, which offers salvation by grace and not works. These works of obedience are therefore done in gratitude for a salvation already received by grace, rather than in order to achieve a worthiness for that salvation.

Psa 103:19

Yahweh has established His throne in the heavens, His kingdom rules over all-
The exiles were looking for the Kingdom to be reestablished, just as David was looking for his throne to be reestablished in Absalom's time, and as he looked to have his own throne at Saul's time. But the comfort was that that throne was already established in Heaven, even if it wasn't visible on earth. And this is our comfort too.

We are to pray for His Kingdom to come, so that His will may be done on earth (Mt. 6:10). The Kingdom and the doing of His will are therefore paralleled. His Kingdom reigns over all in Heaven, for there, all the Angels are obedient to Him (Ps. 103:19-21). By praying for the Kingdom to come on earth we are not only praying for the Lord's second coming, but for the progress of the Gospel world-wide right now. Not only that more men and women will hear it and respond, but that those who have accepted it might work God's will rather than their own to an ever greater extent. Whether or not we can physically spread the Gospel is in this sense irrelevant; our prayer should be, first and foremost if the pattern of the Lord's prayer is to be taken exactly, for the triumph of the Gospel world-wide.

The Davidic covenant had failed, as far as the exiles understood that covenant- to refer to an unbroken Davidic descendant on the throne of David. But they were constantly being reminded in these Psalms rewritten for them that God was still king, and would be so eternally through His Son, also the Son of David, reigning eternally. We see here something similar to the lesson Daniel had to learn- an initial primary potential for fulfilment [in his case, restoration of the Kingdom after 70 years] was removed and it failed, but opened up a far more glorious form of fulfilment.

Psa 103:20

Praise Yahweh, you angels of His, who are mighty in strength, who fulfil His word, obeying the voice of His word-
I suggested on :1 that this Psalm is paired with Ps. 102; and indirectly, that too concludes at this point in the structure of the Psalm with reference to Angels. See on Ps. 102:26. The relevance of mentioning the power of the Angels is caught in the LXX: "mighty in strength, who perform his bidding, *ready* to hearken to the voice of his words". The word they were ready and eager to fulfil was the word of restoring Zion. They could bring this about; but Israel on earth had to be willing to return, both to their land and their God. And such vast potential was thereby wasted at the time.

The Angels obey His word, and that is what we have just been told His covenant people do (:18 "those who remember to obey His precepts"). Possibly this is one of several examples of where God's people are described in parallel with their guardian Angels above. This is seen very clearly in Dan. 8-10.

The entire theme of the Psalm to this point has been the wonder of forgiveness, and how this should elicit praise from those who have received it. There may indeed be a change of theme to speak of how all the Angels now praise God as we should- which is the opening context of this Psalm. But to start speaking of the Angels also praising God would then seem rather random. I share the speculation that the implication may be that the current Angels also once experienced something like forgiveness. The "angels that sinned" are dead or at least enchained. The wages of sin shall be death for them finally, or the wage of death has already been paid to them. But the angels who were forgiven now praise God eternally and are now fully obedient to His word.

Psa 103:21

Praise Yahweh, all you armies of His, you servants of His, who do His will-
Angels are given specific directives by God which they go and execute to the best of their ability and then report back to God- His "Angels... that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Ps. 103:21). They were eager to do this in the context of performing God's will of saving and restoring Zion. We must note that the Angels as in supernatural beings are never divided into good ones and wicked ones. "All" the Angels are obedient to God's word. They are immortal (Lk. 20:35,36) and therefore don't sin (Rom. 6:23). However the Greek and Hebrew word translated "Angel" is also used of human beings, who of course can sin.

Psa 103:22

Praise Yahweh, all you works of His, in all places of His dominion. Praise Yahweh, my soul!-
The psalmist wishes to see a unity between the heavenly armies, eager and willing to achieve the restoration (see on :20,21), and all God's works, and the individual repeating this prayer.

PSALMS CHAPTER 104

Psa 104:1

Bless Yahweh, my soul. Yahweh, my God, You are very great. You are clothed with honour and majesty-
This translation misses the fact that the Hebrew here is full of verbs and not adjectives; the reference is to a series of actions, rather than a state. Yahweh is seen as having done something which makes Him very great, creating majesty and honour for Himself through an action. It could be that the psalmist has in view the envisaged

restoration of God's Kingdom on earth at the time of the restoration; which would explain the references in some verses to a time of present oppression at the hands of the Gentiles. The psalmist looks ahead to this day as if it has happened. This didn't happen then as planned, but has been rescheduled and reapplied to the last day.

Psa 104:2

He covers Himself with light as with a garment, He stretches out the heavens like a curtain-

God dwells in light inapproachable by man (1 Tim. 6:16), but the words of prayer come before Him, into His very presence. "The heavens" at times refer to the temple or sanctuary, which perhaps is why the idea of a curtain is used, recalling the various curtains of the tabernacle. The reference may be to the hope that God would reestablish the sanctuary, and appear clothed as it were in the light of the shekinah glory over the ark. This idea of God as a figure shrouded in light is used by Ezekiel in describing the visions of cherubic glory. That cherubic system, with the form of a Divine "man" above them, was envisaged as returning to Zion.

Psa 104:3

He lays the beams of His rooms in the waters, He makes the clouds His chariot, He walks on the wings of the wind-

This continues the allusion to the cherubim (see on :2). The idea may be that the reestablishment and rebuilding of the Kingdom would begin "in the waters" in that the beams, the people, were to be prepared whilst in exile amongst the waters of the Gentiles. "Room" or "chambers" is the word used of the rebuilding of Zion in Neh. 3:31,32, and of the envisaged rebuilding of the temple in Ez. 40:49; 41:7. But the Jews didn't build as required in Ez. 40-48; they precluded the help of the Angel cherubim, upon whom God was eager to ride forth for them.

Psa 104:4 He makes His Angels winds; His servants flames of fire-

As noted on Ps. 102 and Ps. 103, the reference to the Angels is to encourage Judah that the vast Angel cherubim system alluded to in :2,3 was ready and eager to go forth for God's people. The allusion is to the statement of God's greatness at the end of Job, a book of encouragement to the exiles (see on Job 1:1): "Canst thou send lightnings (Angels) that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are (Septuagint: 'We do Thy pleasure?')" (Job 38:35). In the Hezekiah context, the reference could be to how the Angel which destroyed the Assyrians did so using fire (see on Ps. 46:9). We note that the Angels are God's servants; there is never any hint in the Bible that the "Angels" [as in supernatural beings] are divided into groups of wicked and righteous. Ps. 83:14; 97:3 speak of God as "flames of fire" burning up Israel's enemies. He was ready and able, through the Angel cherubim, to overcome all opposition to a restored Kingdom of God in Israel. But despite this, most of the exiles preferred to remain in Babylon. Just as many today likewise turn down the opportunity to be part of God's Kingdom.

Psa 104:5

He laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be moved forever-

I suggested on :1 that this is a reference to the envisaged restoration. God was not going to allow the *eretz* promised to Abraham to be moved, ultimately; even though its people had temporarily been moved into exile. LXX gives the sense: "Who establishes the earth on her sure foundation". The reference is not to God's creation of

the planet, but to His reestablishment of the Kingdom of God in the earth / land of Israel.

Psa 104:6

You covered it with the deep sea as with a cloak. The waters stood above the mountains-

Ps. 104:5-9 describes “the earth” as being covered with the deep, and “the waters stood above the mountains”- clearly alluding to the flood. Yet these mountains are those which are “a refuge for the wild goats… conies” (Ps. 104:18 RV). These sound like the mountains of Israel / the Middle East rather than any other part of the world. The idea is that during the exile, the land was as it were covered with the flood; but would reemerge into a wonderful new age. Isaiah likewise speaks of how God would consider the years in exile as "the waters of Noah" (Is. 54:9), and would never be repeated once the Kingdom was reestablished.

Psa 104:7

At Your rebuke they fled, at the voice of Your thunder they hurried away-

The reference could be to God's separation of the waters above and below the firmament at creation; or to the rebuke of the flood waters. The previous verse speaks of the waters covering the mountains, which is the language of the flood.

The same phrase used of the fleeing away of the waters of the Red Sea at the theophany which occurred then; see on Ps. 77:17. The waters are spoken of as living entities because they represented the heathen nations opposing Israel at the time; and this miracle was just as possible for God's people at the time of Hezekiah and later, the exiles.

Psa 104:8

The mountains rose, the valleys sank down, to the place which You had assigned to them-

The reference seems to be to the changed topography after the flood, and this is the imagery used about the restoration in Is. 40:4. The valleys would be lifted up and the mountains brought down [they very opposite of what is described as happening here after the flood], in order to pave the way for the coming of Messiah and God's glory to Zion. "Assigned" is the word used for the "foundation" of the rebuilt temple (Ezra 3:6,10). This potential wasn't realized at the restoration, and was reapplied to the Lord Jesus.

Psa 104:9

You have set a boundary that they may not pass over; that they don’t turn again to cover the earth-

Just as the flood waters (see on :6,7) would never return to destroy the earth, so the Babylonian destruction was potentially the final such judgment upon God's people. But their impenitence and continued sin precluded this from being the case, and so this idea of the waters [representing the nations around Israel] never covering the earth again was rescheduled to the last day. "Boundary" is the usual word used for the border of the promised land. But the rivers and floodwaters of the invading armies were frequently sent by God over this border even after the Babylonian invasion. The truth was that Judah's princes had removed the border in throwing themselves open to the gods and influences of the nations around them (s.w. Hos. 5:10).

Psa 104:10

He sends forth springs into the valleys, they run among the mountains-

The waters of the Gentile nations would be assuaged, but God would send forth His own waters, not to destroy but to create. The picture of nature in the rest of this Psalm is somewhat unreal. Nature is not perfect. There are forest fires, droughts, floods, volcanoes. Nature is cruel, animals fight each other... we have here a bird's eye view of an idealized natural world. And man and his dramas are largely absent from it. The kind of picture you get as you fly low over a rural area. On one hand, this is a picture of the ideal situation after the flood. But the language is very much also that of the blessings to be seen in the promised land *if* Israel were obedient to the covenant, which was a foretaste of the Kingdom of God on earth. One simple lesson is that the life of the obedient believer is typically far more blessed and calm than that of the unbeliever. And some foretaste of God's Kingdom is indeed possible in our lives, just as the promises to Abraham always had a primary fulfilment in Old Testament Israel, if they were faithful. We could also see this as a potential picture of the restored Kingdom after the exile. For there are several allusions to temple language.

Psa 104:11

They give drink to every animal of the field, the wild donkeys quench their thirst-

"Every" may imply 'both clean and unclean', with the unclean wild donkeys being cited as an example. God's care and saving purpose is thereby declared as being for all.

Psa 104:12

The birds of the sky nest by them, they sing among the branches-

Mt. 13:32 uses this imagery in describing the Kingdom of God. The picture here is of how God's waters would create a restored Kingdom of God on earth. This potential wasn't realized by the exiles; and so these things were reinterpreted and are reapplied to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. And therefore the imagery of this verse is used by Him about His Kingdom.

Psa 104:13

He waters the mountains from His rooms, the earth is filled with the fruit of Your works-

The allusion may be to the temple on earth reflecting that in heaven. The living water is envisaged as flowing out of the rebuilt temple (Zech. 14:8; Joel 3:18; Ez. 47:5). Sadly the possibility of this was precluded by the exiles refusing to build and operate the temple in accordance with the specifications of Ez. 40-48.

Psa 104:14

He causes the grass to grow for the livestock, and plants for man to cultivate, that He may bring forth food out of the earth-

God "makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45). God consciously makes the sun rise each day- it isn't part of a kind of perpetual motion machine. Hence the force of His promises in the prophets that in the same way as He consciously maintains the solar system, so He will maintain His Israel. Ps. 104 is full of such examples: "He waters the hills... causes the grass to grow... makes darkness (consciously, each night)... the young lions... seek their meat from God... send forth Your Spirit (Angel), they are created" (not just by the reproductive system). There are important implications following from these ideas

with regard to our faith in prayer. It seems to me that our belief that the world is going on inevitably by clockwork is one of the things which militates against a sense of God's active presence through His Spirit. See on Mt. 6:26.

Man bringing food out of the earth clearly alludes to the curse, man working the ground in the sweat of his face. But God works in and through that, and there is a grace and beauty in how He does so. He has not abandoned man to the curse.

Psa 104:15

wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face to shine, and bread that strengthens man's heart-

This doesn't mean we are to drink alcohol until we feel "merry". This phrase and those surrounding it are not talking about the effect of crops on the bodies of people, but rather the effect of a good harvest on the emotions of those gathering them. Wine, oil and bread are all associated with the sanctuary services (s.w. Hag. 2:12).

Psa 104:16

Yahweh's trees are well watered, the cedars of Lebanon, which He has planted-

God plants the grass (:14) and cedar tree seeds. Yet seeds are blown apparently at random by the wind. But God actually works through that apparently random process, to sow those seeds- even every seed of grass. And likewise there is in fact no random process in our lives either. God as ever seeking to create.

The living water of the Messianically restored Zion mentioned on :13 was intended to water trees of life (Ez. 47:12; Rev. 22:2). This didn't happen at the restoration as intended, as the Jews didn't build the temple system of Ez. 40-48. But in essence it will come true in Messiah's Kingdom (Rev. 22:2), and does come true in it even now. The promise that the restored exiles could have become the trees of Yahweh's planting (Is. 60:21; 61:3) can become true spiritually for all who now accept the message of the Kingdom.

Psa 104:17

where the birds make their nests. The stork makes its home in the fir trees-

As noted on :12, Mt. 13:32 uses this imagery in describing the Kingdom of God. The picture here is of how God's waters would create a restored Kingdom of God on earth. This potential wasn't realized by the exiles; and so these things were reinterpreted and are reapplied to the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus. And therefore the imagery of this verse is used by Him about His Kingdom. The stork was an unclean animal, but the unclean were to be welcomed into the restored Kingdom, for all such divisions between clean and unclean were to be removed.

Psa 104:18

The high mountains are for the wild goats, the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers-

"High mountains" may be an intensive plural for the ultimately high mountain, of Zion. The term is used of Zion in Is. 40:9; 57:7; Ez. 17:22; and of the restored Zion in Ez. 40:2. This mount Zion was to become a refuge for unclean animals; and we can note the emphasis in this chapter upon the beauty and acceptance of the unclean animals.

Psa 104:19

He appointed the moon for seasons, the sun knows when to set-
The surrounding peoples believed the sun and moon were gods. Hence the stress that Yahweh appointed sun and moon to do His work. The moon being for seasons recalls the language of the Genesis creation. And the seasons were specifically the feasts. These were intended to feature in the reestablished Kingdom.

Psa 104:20
You make darkness, and it is night, in which all the animals of the forest prowl-
Darkness was always feared in contemporary societies, and the animals which prowled at night were seen as in league with demons. But this common understanding is being deconstructed. God is the maker of darkness, the animals of the night are beckoned forth by Him; for the Old Testament deconstructs any idea of a cosmic 'Satan' being and associated demons.

Psa 104:21
The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their food from God-
Even the instinct of the lion to hunt is given by God; they seek their food from Him. This is significant in the context of the exiles because the likes of Assyria and Babylon are likened to lions and wild, mysterious beasts (:20). But they too were ultimately under God's control, and had sought their prey from God's people under His direct instigation. There was and is no radical evil in the conception of God's true people. See on 27.

Psa 104:22
The sun rises, and they steal away and lay down in their dens-
As explained on :21, the mysterious wild animals of the night, including the lions, were all under God's control, and would go their way from God's people when He causes the sunrise. This clearly looks ahead to the coming of Messiah as the dawn (Mal. 4:2), heralding the end of all Judah's abusers.

Psa 104:23
Man goes forth to his work, to his labour until the evening-
See on :24. The allusion may be to the curse of Gen. 3:19, that man was to work until he can do so no more, and then returns to dust (:29). This contrasts with the eternity of God (:24) and His people.

Psa 104:24
Yahweh, how many are Your works! In wisdom have You made them all. The earth is full of Your riches-
LXX "The earth is full of Thy creation". The contrast is with the weary labour of man upon earth (:23), which he eagerly brings to an end every evening; and the ceaseless, creative labour of Yahweh.

Psa 104:25
There is the sea, great and wide, in which are innumerable living things, both small and large animals-
The sea was seen by contemporary peoples as mysterious and out of human control, inhabited by monsters which equate to the cosmic 'Satan' being wrongly believed in by many today. But all within the seas are God's servants, waiting upon Him (:27) and looking to Him for food. The seas are used in the prophets to represent the Gentile

nations who had abused Israel. These too were not forms of radical, uncontrolled evil; they were all totally under God's control.

Psa 104:26

There the ships go, and leviathan, whom You formed to play there-

"Ships" here may refer to whales or other great sea beasts. See on :25. Leviathan appears to be the Canaanite version of the orthodox 'Satan' figure, perhaps a reference to the 'Lotan' of the Ugaritic myths. In great detail in Job 41, this creature and belief is deconstructed. It is shown to be a *created* being (:30) – created by the one almighty God of the Old Testament, to be completely under His control to the point that He can even tease them, playing with them as in Job 41, so enormously greater is His power than theirs. These Canaanite 'Satan' figures are thereby shown to have no significant existence; and they certainly don't exist as opposed to God. They are totally under His control. And yet these monster figures clearly have characteristics shared by known animals, such as the hippopotamus, crocodile etc. Those similarities are intended. It's been well observed: "To say that Leviathan has characteristics of the crocodile and the whale is not to say that it *is* such a creature, but rather to suggest that evil is rooted in the natural world" (Robert S. Fyall, *Now My Eyes Have Seen You: Images of Creation and Evil in the Book of Job* (Leicester: I.V.P. / Apollos, 2002) p. 27) – and the point is so laboured in Job that the natural world is of God's complete creation. 'Evil' in a form independent of Him, in radical opposition to Him, simply isn't there.

It's significant that dragons in the form of serpents were common in Babylonian theology. Figures on vases show serpent griffins, there was one on Marduk's temple in Nippur, and also on the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. These would have been familiar to Judah in Babylonian captivity. They may well have seen a similarity between the Babylonian monsters and the Leviathan beast. That God is greater than Leviathan and can do what He wills with him would therefore have had a special meaning to the faithful Jew in exile. In a restoration context, Isaiah comforted Judah that God would destroy "Leviathan the gliding serpent; He will slay the monster of the sea" (Is. 27:1). The real 'monster' faced by Judah in exile wasn't a supernatural being; it was a concrete kingdom of men on earth, namely Babylon. God taught Job, and through him showcased to the watching world, that all such imaginations of Leviathan, monsters in the raging sea, crooked serpents etc. were vain – in any case, God had created them and used them to do His will with His people, symbolized as they were by Job. His sitting in dust and ashes is very much the picture of Judah sitting by the rivers of Babylon, bemoaning their losses.

Psa 104:27

These all wait for You, that You may give them their food in due season-

As noted on :25,26, the creatures of the sea are actually God's servants, for that is the meaning of the idiom of 'waiting for'. And He feeds them; they do not randomly choose their prey purely in their own strength and of their own volition. See on :21.

Psa 104:28

You give to them; they gather. You open Your hand; they are satisfied with good-

As explained on :27, the apparently mysterious and radically evil beasts of the sea are all under God's controlled. Whatever they eat, is given to them by God's open hand. The beasts which had consumed Judah were actually given their food by God; for the prophets continually stress that these invasions came from God's direction.

Psa 104:29

You hide Your face: they are troubled; You take away their breath: they die, and return to the dust-

The hiding of God's face always speaks of His moral displeasure. This statement is specifically in the context of the death of the mighty sea beasts, although as we have seen, they represent the nations dominating Israel. Their time for judgment would come, even if it were simply in the form of their death. We could not wish for any clearer statement that death of any living creature is an undoing of creation, whereby the breath or spirit is given by God, and then when it is withdrawn, they return to dust. This language is elsewhere used specifically of human beings. For in the matter of death, man truly has no preeminence above a beast (Ecc. 3:19).

Psa 104:30

You send forth Your Spirit: they are created, You renew the face of the ground-

As explained on :26, the great sea beasts are shown to be *created* beings- created by the one almighty God of the Old Testament, to be completely under His control to the point that He can even tease them, playing with them as in Job 41, so enormously greater is His power than theirs. And likewise the nations they represented were created by God. The dust into which they returned was the "ground" from which God could use His Spirit to form a new creation, when all these beasts have passed away for good.

Psa 104:31

Let the glory of Yahweh endure forever, let Yahweh rejoice in His works-

This forms an inclusio to the opening allusions to the cherubim and the shekinah glory in :2-4. The psalmist wishes for the day to come when again the glory would return to Zion visibly, and "endure forever", never to be taken away again. And this would involve Yahweh eternally rejoicing in the works of the new creation intimated in :30.

Psa 104:32

He looks at the earth, and it trembles. He touches the mountains, and they smoke-

This continues the inclusio to the opening allusions to the cherubim and the shekinah glory in :2-4, this time further alluding to the theophany on Sinai when Israel were first declared Yahweh's Kingdom. The psalmist was looking for the dramatic reestablishment of the Kingdom, accompanied by a similar theophany.

Psa 104:33

I will sing to Yahweh as long as I live, I will sing praise to my God while I have any being-

We note again David's belief in the mortality of man, with no conscious existence after death [until the resurrection of the body]. For his time of "being" was "as long as I live".

Psa 104:34

Let your meditation be sweet to Him. I will rejoice in Yahweh-

His rejoicing in what was going to do was to be a reflection of God's rejoicing in His new creation (:31).

Psa 104:35

Let sinners be consumed out of the earth. Let the wicked be no more. Bless Yahweh, my soul. Praise Yah!-

A quotation from Is. 16:4 about the consuming out of the land of the sinful nations dominating Judah. The psalmist is praying for this time to be hastened, and until it comes, he will still praise Yahweh as if it has already happened (see on :34). For this is the nature of faith, to adopt God's timeless perspective, and look to the end as if it is even now.

This desire for sinners to be removed from the earth may be a commentary on the obvious implication of the preceding description of creation- that this is all just a bird's eye view. Look closer, and things are not so wonderful upon earth, because of sinners. In this case, we have one of many examples of where God's word sets up the reader with certain feelings or objections regarding what has been described... and then answers them. Creation groans, Paul says, in Romans 8. The picture we have in Ps. 104 is idealized. Creation groans, longing for the manifestation of the sons of God, for "the liberty of God's dear children", at the Lord's return. When He comes, our manifestation, our glorious liberty, will release creation from the groaning and pain it is in. We have in Psalm 104 a picture of what that could look like.

PSALMS CHAPTER 105

Psa 105:1

Give thanks to Yahweh! Call on His name! Make His doings known among the peoples- This is a quotation of Is. 12:8, clearly relevant to the exiles. "Call" is the word for 'declare' and alludes to Yahweh declaring His Name in Ex. 33:19; 34:5,6; cp. Dt. 32:3. What was done in such glory and majesty we are to echo in declaring His characteristics .

The language of “Give thanks to Yahweh” and “Praise Yah” is common in the Psalms, and alludes to the function of the Levites “to praise and to give thanks” (1 Chron. 16:4; Ezra 3:11; Neh. 12:24). These Psalms are inviting all God's people, all Israel, to perform the role and function of the Levites. Just as so many Christians have found themselves without a priest or pastor, and have turned to God in deep personal relationship. These Psalms were perhaps composed for the use of the exiles who were without a temple and effective Levites. Possibly they were then later used in the services of the Second Temple. David's psalm when he brought the ark to Zion (1 Chron. 16) is quoted at length in Ps. 105- and the context was that then David was acting as a priest and Levite when he was not one [being from Judah]. This is why the summary of their history doesn't mention David; and in any case, the covenant with David of eternal kingship had been brought to a reapplication now that the Davidic line of kings had ended. Ps. 106 also quotes David's psalm of 1 Chron. 16. But with a telling difference. Ps 106:47,48 concludes the psalm of Ps. 105 and Ps. 106: "Save us, Yahweh, our God, gather us from among the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise! Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting! Let all the people say, Amen. Praise Yah!". This is an appeal to "all the people" to say these words. But David's Psalm of 1 Chron. 16, which is quoted here, was written by David with his intention that it be sung by the Levites: "He appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark

of Yahweh, and to celebrate and to thank and praise Yahweh... with harps... with cymbals... With them were Heman and Jeduthun... to give thanks to Yahweh, because His grace endures forever" (1 Chron. 16:4,5,41). But Ps. 105 and 106 ask "all the people" to sing these praises; they were now performing the function of the Levites and the temple cult which David had established.

Ps. 105 focuses upon the eternal nature of the Abrahamic covenant. Paul explains that this is the basis of the "new covenant" offered for all time. I suggest this Psalm has context within the exile and restoration from Babylon- when the prophets had offered Israel a new covenant. So these Psalms are an appeal to the exiles to recall the promises to Abraham which were the basis of that covenant. The Psalm begins and ends with reference to them (:6-11,42). They generally refused this offer of a new covenant, and sought to remain with the old covenant- although God had already broken that in response to their breaking of it. Ps. 105 presents God's faithfulness to the covenant, and Ps. 106 presents Israel's unfaithfulness in response. The point was that the old covenant was broken, but the offer of the new covenant [based upon the promises to Abraham] remained. This explains why this summary of Israel's history doesn't mention the covenant made on Sinai. Ps. 105 contains David's psalm when he brought the ark to Zion in 1 Chron. 16. But now there was no ark, and perhaps no temple on Zion. The idea surely is that the same joy and certainty expressed by David in the Abrahamic promises can be felt by others- even without any ark or "Zion". It is this realization that we can be spiritual but not religious which has been the struggle for so many over the centuries- and perhaps especially felt by those who have passed through the bubble mentality of 'denominationalism'.

This is an appeal to the Gentile "peoples" to hear about God's work and praise Him; and to praise a deity in those days meant to accept that deity. Not because they were forced to by military conquest, but because they had considered God's work which had now been told to them. 1 Chron. 16:8-22 is the Psalm written by David when the ark was brought to Zion, but it reappears within Ps. 105:1-15, which is clearly an appeal for the exiles to repent so that God's salvation history might continue with them. So we see how David's original Psalms were reworked and reapplied in later contexts, under Divine inspiration. By the time of the exiles in Babylon, it seems the ark had been lost. But such external religious symbolism was unimportant; the essence was that the people of God were to come to Zion, just as the ark had done.

David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two

faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "Your strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

Psa 105:2

Sing to Him, sing praises to Him! Tell of all His marvellous works-
David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). And yet this can also be read as an appeal to the Gentile peoples of :1 to hear of Yahweh's works, believe them, accept Him as their God, and then in turn tell others of "His marvellous works". See on :45.

Psa 105:3

Glory in His holy name, let the heart of those who seek Yahweh rejoice-
The Bible continually stresses the critical importance of the heart, the mind. Our minds should glory in God's Name which is His characteristics, as articulated in His "works" (:2) in history. And this leads us to "seek" Him and His face, which I suggest on :4 refers to repentance. The words here translated "seek" usually mean to worship, the outward act of visiting the sanctuary. But now 'seeking' is done in the heart; seeking here is the inward purpose of the heart.

Psa 105:4

Seek Yahweh and His strength, seek His face forever more-
To seek Yahweh's face is an idiom for repentance (Hos. 5:15), and is specifically used by Daniel in the context of the exiles (2 Chron. 7:14; Dan. 9:3). This is therefore an appeal for the exiles to repent, so that God may continue to lavish His saving grace upon them, as He had upon their forefathers. Whilst it is true that "you cannot see My face, for man may not see Me and live" (Ex. 33:20), we are commonly asked to do just this- to see God's face. Finally we are assured that we shall see His face. But we spend this life seeking to do so, seeking what is impossible to attain right now. This explains the sense we often have of feeling that we have not attained spiritually what we would like to, and what we sense is somehow possible for us. To seek God's face is what we are

challenged to do when we are in sin- "I will go and return to My place, until they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face" (Hos. 5:15). We are not to just seek a quick flash view of God's face, as Moses did, but rather to seek a situation where we shall eternally see God's face. And that is the wonderful eternal future we have- not simply of eternity, but eternally beholding God's face in unclouded relationship. To see the face repeatedly means 'to be in relationship' throughout the many times the idea occurs in the Bible. Eternal life is all about relationship with God. It's why Moses' request to catch a glimpse of God's literal face was answered by the declaration of His Name, who He essentially is- because relationship with Him involves knowing Him for who He is. And that is what God wants, and it is likewise the desire of every truly spiritual mind.

Psa 105:5

Remember His marvellous works that He has done; His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth-
The Hebrew idea of 'remembering' is not necessarily related to 'remembering' as opposed to 'forgetting'; rather does it have the flavour of celebrating, and thus being aware of in gratitude and praise. The "judgments" in view are not God's laws but the Divine sentence pronounced and executed upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Ex. 6:6; 7:4; 12:12). And yet the allusion is clearly also to the great Deuteronomic theme of 'remembering' all God's acts of grace to us personally and historically to all His people. Whereas human nature so quickly forgets acts of love and Divine grace. By contrast, God is constantly aware of [NEV "forever"] His covenant with us (:8,42), thinking about His relationship with us all the time- whereas Israel, along with us, tend to forget it during the daily grind. We have all seen relationships like this where one party loves the other far more; that party is always thinking of the other, whilst the other is forgetful of their amazing lover and flirts with others. And this is how it is between God and His people.

Psa 105:6

you seed of Abraham His servant, you children of Jacob, His chosen ones-
David was clearly the "chosen one... My servant" (Ps. 89:3), but these very terms are applied to Israel as a whole (Ps. 105:6,43; 106:5) and to the "servant" of later Isaiah, who refers to both Israel and their Messiah as their embodiment (Is. 42:1; 45:4). David's path of sin, repentance and restoration was intended to be that of all God's people, as he himself recognizes in Ps. 32. But the exiles refused to repent and therefore their restoration was precluded. They were not therefore treated as His "chosen one".

Psa 105:7

He is Yahweh, our God; His judgments are in all the earth-
The exiles were to believe the prophetic word, that all the nations in the *eretz* promised to Abraham were to experience God's judgments; the judgments of "our God", Yahweh, the God of Israel. And they were to perceive that despite God's apparent silence, He was working behind the scenes in the nations of the *eretz* to bring about the final re-establishment of His Kingdom. That is the simple point of the visions of Ezekiel and Daniel.

Psa 105:8

He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations-
Jeremiah, Zechariah, Hosea and Ezekiel point out to Judah that they had broken the old covenant; their only basis of connection with God was therefore on the basis of the new covenant He was offering, which was based upon the promises to Abraham. That word of promise was unconditional, to all who wanted to believe it. It was therefore eternal, "to a thousand generations". It would never therefore be abrogated, unlike the old covenant based on the law of Moses.

Psa 105:9

the covenant which He made with Abraham, His oath to Isaac-
The "oath to Isaac" must refer to the repetition of the promises to Abraham to Isaac in Gen. 26:3, where the same word for "oath" is used. But the context of that repetition of the covenant oath to Isaac was in commanding him not to seek material prosperity in Egypt, but rather to remain in the famished land of Israel, then experiencing famine. This was relevant to the exiles, many of whom preferred to remain in Babylon, seeing that Malachi, Ezra and others record serious famine in the land of Judah at that time.

Psa 105:10

and confirmed the same to Jacob for a statute; to Israel for an everlasting covenant-
The "statute" doesn't refer to the law of Moses, but to the covenant with Abraham of :9. The covenant with Abraham was an unconditional offer of eternal inheritance of the land; all that was and is required is that this great salvation be believed. But it became and becomes a "statute" or "law" in the same way as grace reigns or is a ruler over us (Rom. 5:21). If we believe in God's unconditional covenant of salvation, then this becomes a law of our lives, the guiding principle in all our thinking, worldviews and

perceptions. It is in this sense that "the grace of God… teaches us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and Godly lives" (Tit. 2:11,12). Grace is grace, but the wonder of it, when believed, is such that it naturally elicits changed behaviour, and in this sense is a "statute" or law.

Psa 105:11

saying, To you I will give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance-
As discussed on :10, the promise of eternal inheritance of Canaan was unconditional, by grace. It just had to be believed. This verse has been wrongly used by Christian Zionists to argue that the physical land of Israel is the eternal possession of Jews and therefore they have a right to it now. But we must remember that the New Testament labours the point that the promises to Abraham were not fulfilled to God's people; even when Jews lived in the land in Old Testament times, it had not been given to them in the terms of the Abrahamic covenant. Heb. 11:39,40 is clear that even the faithful amongst Israel died in faith without having received the Abrahamic promises- even though they lived in the land. Even the patriarchs had to buy part of the land as a burial plot. The fulfilment of the promises will be in the future, in the eternal Kingdom of God on earth under the Lord Jesus. It is not now.

Psa 105:12

when they were but a few men in number, yes, very few, and foreigners in it-
God rejoices to work with the small and feeble. The "few men" must refer to how Jacob's family only numbered about 70 people when they went into Egypt. The same phrase "few men in number" is exactly that used by Jacob in lamenting how very small his tribe was compared to the aggressive tribes amongst whom they lived in Canaan (Gen. 34:30). And it is the phrase used of how when Israel were to be judged for their sins in exile, they would be left "few men in number" (Dt. 4:27). The exiles are being encouraged to see the similarities between them and Jacob's family in Egypt, the original 'Israel' at its first beginnings.

Psa 105:13

They went about from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people-
This seems to refer, in the context, to the journeyings of the patriarchs amongst the peoples of Canaan, Philistia and Egypt. Although they suffered at the hands of those peoples, they were miraculously preserved; and so would God's people be despite their current exile in Babylon / Persia. Their journeying to the land of the Philistines and Egypt were wrong and from their own weakness. Yet the wonder is that God guided them through those journeys too.

Psa 105:14

He allowed no one to do them wrong. Yes, He reproved kings for their sakes-
In this we see God's absolute grace. For both Abraham and Isaac were rightly reproved by the Abimelech kings for lying about their wives, and yet God reproved those kings. He was openly showing His passionate love and preference for His people; they were rightly reproved by the kings (Gen. 20:16), but those kings were reproved by God for their sins of ignorance. And it was this same grace which was available to the exiles. "Wrong" was indeed done to the exiles (s.w. Jer. 50:33; Hos. 5:11), as it was done to the historical Jacob; but the point is being made that it was not ultimately allowed because there was the final restoration of Jacob's fortunes, as there would be ultimately for God's people- but in God's own way and time.

Psa 105:15

Don't touch my anointed ones! Do my prophets no harm!-
This refers to how Abraham and Isaac were not harmed despite lying to Abimelech (see on :14). It definitely doesn't mean that God's visible public servants are beyond criticism*;* for Abraham and Isaac most definitely are reproved for their actions in the Biblical record. The point is that they, weak as they were and deserving of "harm", were preserved from ultimate harm by God's grace. And they are cited as an example to the exiles, who were all "anointed ones" (Lam. 4:21), they had a special purpose before God; just as all in Christ, the anointed one, are likewise "anointed ones" (2 Cor. 1:21). So this doesn't give pastors or church leaders special privilege of being beyond criticism, as this verse is misused to teach.

Psa 105:16

He called for a famine on the land, He destroyed the piles of food-
This verse must be understood in its context within this chronological account of God's grace towards His people at the time of the patriarchs. The Joseph story begins in the next verse, and so we are to understand that God gave a prophetic word about the famine *before* Joseph was sold into Egypt (:17). This theme is continued in :19; God made a prophetic word about Joseph, but it took time to come to fulfilment. And during that time, he suffered. But although God foresaw the time of famine, He had made plans right from the start of it to also save His people from it- even it involved factoring in their sinfulness within those plans. This was exactly the situation with the exiles; God's word had sent them into captivity, but that word had also arranged a salvation from it, even though they were suffering whilst that was brought about. God's plan of a famine and for Israel to be in Egypt was made by Him before Joseph was sold into Egypt.

Psa 105:17

He sent a man before them- Joseph, who was sold for a slave-
See on :16. In the context of the Psalm, God is comforting Israel that all their sufferings had been experienced by Joseph. The exiles are often spoken of as being in prison in a Gentile world (Ps. 79:11; 102:20; Is. 42:7,22; 49:9); just as Joseph was. Prison and death are often associated because a spell in prison was effectively a death sentence, so bad were the conditions. Israel being in prison is therefore a symbol of a living death. The Lord Jesus as the suffering servant experienced all the sufferings of the exiled people of God, as their representative. On the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ was the great, supreme prisoner (Ps. 69:33- this is an intensive plural, referring to a singular great prisoner). Like Joseph, He went through all the emotions of the prisoner; the shame, depression, introspection. As Israel were comforted in their living death by the fact that there was an individual in the past who had gone through all they were going through as a group; so the new Israel ought to take comfort together in contemplating the experiences of the Lord Jesus. He bore *our* communal sorrows, griefs and sins. In this sense He was "sent before" both the exiles and ourselves.

The amazing thing is that God "sent" Joseph to Egypt, but his brothers "sold" him there. They sold, but God sent: "you sold me here, for God sent me")Gen. 45:5). He himself makes this point to them. Whatever men do to us, it is of God and in fact part of His wider, saving purpose.

Psa 105:18

They bruised his feet with shackles; his soul was locked in iron-
This highlights the mental aspects of Joseph's suffering. The verse is badly translated in the AV: "Whose feet (the same word is translated ability, endurance, journey) they hurt (Heb. 'to browbeat or depress') with fetters: (i.e.) his soul (AVmg.) came into iron". His very soul was in iron, trapped, oppressively boxed in as he lay in the darkness. As the Lord Jesus Christ hung in the darkness He too was depressed by the weight of His mental burden, a burden so great it must have pushed His brain to maximum neurological capacity. The spirit of the crucified Christ is also in Ps. 142:7: "Bring my soul out of prison… the righteous shall compass me about" (cp. Ps. 22:22). The Lord Jesus poured out His soul unto death; "He was taken away by distress" (Is. 53:12,8 AVmg.) suggests that it was the mental crisis in the Lord's heart on the cross which resulted in His death. This is why Pilate marvelled that He died so quickly. It is evident from this that the physical process of crucifixion did not kill the Lord, but rather the heart burst (both figurative and literal) which it brought upon Him. Do we not sense that striving in our minds as we fellowship His sufferings? Here is the challenge of the Joseph

record and seeing Joseph as a type of Christ; to just begin to capture the mental anguish of the Son of God as He hung there.

Psa 105:19

until the time that His word came true, and Yahweh's word proved Him true-
We could read this "His word" as referring to Joseph's word, which was also God's word.

Just as the prophetic word for Joseph came true when it appeared at times to have no chance of fulfilment, so the word of restoration would come true for the exiles. See on :16. God has arranged our lives according to a pattern; we have specific times in our lives for various situations. Looking back at the Biblical record of Joseph and Moses, whose life was divided clearly into three periods of 40 years, we see this clearly; but it's of course harder to discern in our own lives as we are still living through it. But God is in control and has a plan for us, desiring only our eternal good in our latter end. Joseph was in this situation until the determined time came for God to suddenly deliver him thanks to the unexpected word from a king; and so Judah, depressed in Babylon, were being comforted that when the predicted 70 years captivity were ended, they too would be likewise delivered- which came true in the decree of king Cyrus for them to return to their land with his every blessing.

Psa 105:20

The king sent and freed him; even the ruler of peoples, and let him go free-
The deliverance of Joseph by the edict of a powerful king looked forward to the deliverance of the captives by the decree of Cyrus. Pharaoh's behaviour is recorded in terms appropriate to Cyrus, e.g. describing him as "ruler of peoples". "Freed" is AV "loosed" (s.w. Ps. 146:7). The exiles were prisoners who could have been loosed from Babylon- had they wished. The book of Esther makes clear that the Jews were far from impoverished prisoners. The imagery of being in prison and slavery is therefore in spiritual terms; and most of the exiles refused that great deliverance because they didn't perceive their condition. And that's exactly why folks today turn down the great offer of freedom made to them in Christ.

Psa 105:21

He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all of his possessions-
As explained on :22, this could imply that such a situation was potentially possible at the time of the restoration under Cyrus. The allusion to Joseph continues; he was in a prison "house" under a "lord" (Gen. 39:2; 40:7), but there was a sudden, radical inversion of everything. He was exalted from that position to be lord of Pharaoh's "house" (Gen. 45:8). This sudden inversion could potentially have happened with the decree of Cyrus.

Psa 105:22

to discipline his princes at his pleasure, and to teach his elders wisdom-
"Discipline" is AV "bind" and maybe continues the theme of :21, of sudden inversion. Instead of being bound by princes, Joseph bound princes. This isn't recorded of Pharaoh and Joseph; but I have suggested in commentary on the Joseph story that there are hints that the worship of Yahweh and the acceptance of His principles was established by Joseph at a high level in Egypt. Perhaps the idea is that potentially, Cyrus could have allowed a Joseph figure at the time of the restoration to teach the entire Persian leadership of Yahweh's wisdom. And thus the Kingdom of God would have spread throughout the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham. But these things were precluded by Judah's impenitence, no such Joseph figure arising, and Cyrus also failing to live up to his potential. All these things come to their reapplied fulfilment in the Lord Jesus and the things of His Kingdom.

Psa 105:23

Israel also came into Egypt, Jacob lived in the land of Ham-
The force of "also" is that as the exiles had gone into Babylon, so also had Israel gone into Egypt, and been blessed there and delivered from it.

Psa 105:24

He increased his people greatly, and made them stronger than their adversaries-
The hope was that a small minority nation like Judah could have become stronger than "Babylon" and arisen from their exile in supernatural strength given by God. But the majority of them preferred to remain there, and initially, as Ezekiel laments, they worshipped the gods of Babylon. This is also hinted at in the book of Esther.

Psa 105:25

He turned their heart to hate His people, to conspire against His servants-
This is further evidence that God can work directly upon the hearts of people, including those like the Egyptians who are not His people. The heart of Saul was likewise turned (s.w. 1 Sam. 10:9). This is effected today by the work of the Holy Spirit directly upon human spirits / hearts. The same word is used in :29 of how water was turned to blood; and of how Saul was "turned" into another man, and was "given another heart" (1 Sam. 10:6,9). Is. 60:5 uses it of God converting men unto Himself.

Psa 105:26

He sent Moses His servant, and Aaron whom He had chosen-
The phrase "chosen… servant" is used of David (Ps. 78:70). But it is particularly used of the people of God whilst exiled (Is. 41:8,9; 43:10; 44:1 etc.), and of Zerubbabel, the potential Messiah at the time of the restoration (Hag. 2:23). Zerubbabel could have been David *redivivus,* a Messiah figure who was the Davidic ruler, representative of God's people, who were also the chosen servant. Just as Moses and Aaron had delivered the people from Egypt, so this individual could have delivered the exiles from Babylon and led them to a restored Kingdom of God in the land. But he failed, as did the people; and so these things were reapplied to the ultimate "chosen servant", the Lord Jesus (Mt. 12:18).

Psa 105:27

They performed miracles among them, and wonders in the land of Ham-
Mizraim or Egypt was the descendant of Ham (Gen. 10:6; Ps. 105:23,27; 106:22). There may be an allusion to Khem, one of the main Egyptian gods. For the purpose of all the plagues was to demonstrate that Yahweh was the only God, and the Egyptian gods had no real existence. The "signs" performed by Moses and Aaron (:26) could have been matched by the "signs" performed by the two "men of sign" at the restoration (Zech. 3:8).

Psa 105:28

He sent darkness, and made it dark. They didn't rebel against His words-
It is possible to see in the ten plagues brought about by God's word to Moses an echo of the ten times it is recorded that "God said" in Gen. 1. Ps. 105:28-36 describes the plagues on Egypt as a reversal of creation - starting with darkness (cp. "let there be light") and ending with the slaying of the firstborn to match the creation of man last of all. The words which were not rebelled against would then refer to the words of creation. But the point may simply be that Moses and Aaron (:26) weren't rebellious but performed the miracles and thereby delivered the people from Egypt; whereas as noted on :26, Zerubbabel and other potential Messiahs failed in this.

We wonder why the ninth plague is mentioned first. Perhaps because it was the plague which convicted the Egyptians of their sin in keeping Israel enslaved. "And they rebelled not against His words" could confirm this. Yet again, we could see this as an example in this Psalm of how God sees His people so positively because they are in covenant with Him; He imputes righteousness, under the new covenant. For it is not totally true that Moses and Aaron, and possibly Israel, "didn't rebel". Moses himself calls them "rebels" and himself at that time rebelled against God's word by hitting the rock rather than speaking to it. See on :40,44 for other examples.

Psa 105:29
He turned their waters into blood, and killed their fish-
The miracles upon the waters were in a sense repeated upon Babylon when the waters were dried up from around the city so that the Medes could take the city. This admittedly was not by miraculous means; but perhaps the idea is that potentially, there could have been similar miraculous acts to cause Babylon to fall and enable the exodus of the exiles.

Psa 105:30
Their land swarmed with frogs, even in the rooms of their kings-
Potentially, there could have been similar miraculous acts to cause Babylon to fall and enable the exodus of the exiles. The descriptions of the fall of Babylon never came about as was potentially possible. Babylon decayed rather than being struck with the supernatural plagues envisioned in the "fall of Babylon" prophecies; they will come true in the last days, however, for they are alluded to in Rev. 18.

Psa 105:31
He spoke, and swarms of beetles came, and lice in all their borders-
As noted on :28, the plagues came about by the word of Yahweh, alluding to His creative words which brought about creation in the first place. The same prophetic word had been spoken about the restoration and recreation of God's Kingdom in the land.

Psa 105:32
He gave them hail for rain, with lightning in their land-
Hail and lightning (AV "flaming fire") are the words used for the destruction of Assyria / Babylon (Is. 30:30). They are also associated with theophany (Ps. 18:12,13). Hail and lightning could have been used to destroy Babylon and thereby fulfil God's prophetic word of restoration for the exiles (Ps. 148:8). But these great potentials were not realized because the Jews didn't repent and didn't for the most part actually want the restoration of the Kingdom. They preferred the good life in Persia.

Psa 105:33
He struck their vines and also their fig trees, and shattered the trees of their country-
Not recorded in the Exodus record. The language of vines and figs is more relevant to Babylon (Is. 36:17) rather than Egypt; but the plagues upon Egypt are being described as being potentially possible upon Babylon, if Judah repented and really wanted restoration. We therefore read of Babylon's latter day plagues (Jer. 50:13; Rev. 18:4,8). These things have been reapplied to Babylon of the last days seeing they didn't happen as potentially possible at the restoration.

Psa 105:34

He spoke, and the locusts came, and the grasshoppers without number-
As noted on :28,31, the plagues came about by the word of Yahweh, alluding to His creative words which brought about creation in the first place. The same prophetic word had been spoken about the restoration and recreation of God's Kingdom in the land. The language of creation is used about the destruction of Babylon; because the idea was that the fall of Babylon would presage the new creation of God's people and land. But this was conditional upon their repentance. Because they didn't repent and preferred Babylon, Babylon didn't therefore fall at the time in the dramatic way which the prophecies show was potentially possible.

Psa 105:35
ate up every plant in their land and devoured the fruit of their ground-
The prophets envisage the fall of Babylon meaning that her land would be damaged by supernatural visitation. But Babylon fell slowly, the prophetic picture didn't come about at the time of the restoration, but is reinterpreted to the latter day Babylon; see on :34.

Psa 105:36
He struck also all the firstborn in their land, the first fruits of all their manhood-
The death of the firstborn was because either the individuals or their parents refused to be obedient to God's offer of salvation. It was therefore a result of human sin; and part of "sin" is that it hurts others. "The chief of all their strength" (AV) is another way of saying 'the firstborn' (s.w. Gen. 49:3). The idea is that human strength was to be taken away, because Egypt was not trusting in God's strength. But God did the same to His own "strength", His people (Ps. 78:61).

Psa 105:37
He brought them forth with silver and gold, there was not one feeble person among His tribes-
Amazingly, there was nobody sick amongst the three million or so who left Egypt that night. At our exodus from this world through our Red Sea baptism into Christ, we are made spiritually strong- and must abide in that strength. "There was not one feeble person among His tribes" (Ps. 105:37), but prior to this the Israelites had indeed been "feeble" before their Egyptian captors (s.w. Ps. 107:12). This means that the feeble were made strong; and this was exactly the promise to the exiles, that they who were "feeble" in Babylonian exile would be strengthened so that they could leave Babylon and be restored to the land (s.w. Is. 35:3). The word for "feeble" is often translated "cast down" and is used of how Judah had been at the time of their exile into Babylon (Jer. 6:21; 8:12; 18:15; Lam. 1:14; Hos. 5:5 and often). But they would be led out of Babylon in a straight way and without stumbling / being feeble (s.w. Jer. 31:9); the "feeble" would be strengthened (Zech. 12:8 s.w.). Yet when they returned to the land, they were "feeble" (s.w. Neh. 4:10 "decayed"; Mal. 2:8 "stumbled"). The potential strengthening wasn't

used by them. It was a psychological strengthening that they were given; their heart had been brought down with labour and therefore they were "feeble" (Ps. 107:12 s.w.); but there was none "feeble" as they crossed the Red Sea. It speaks directly of the same spiritual strengthening given in the birth of the Spirit after having crossed the Red Sea [= water baptism].

Psa 105:38
Egypt was glad when they departed, for the fear of them had fallen on them-
"Glad" is a word nearly always used of rejoicing "before the Lord", of a spiritual nature; it has been used in :3 of God's people rejoicing in His Name. The word is used of rejoicing along with God's people in Ps. 106:5. The fear which fell upon Egypt may simply be a reference to that of Ex. 15:16. But fear falling upon people is the phrase used of what happened in Persia when the Jews were exalted (Esther 8:17; 9:2,3), with the result that many became Jews. So the idea may be that many in Egypt accepted the God of Israel after the Hebrews departed; and this was the envisaged outcome in Babylon too. But the potential was marred by the fact that Judah didn't give glory to God, remained for the most part in Persia / Babylon, and therefore the intended repentance of Babylon didn't happen.

Psa 105:39
He spread a cloud for a covering, fire to give light in the night-
The sensitivity of God is revealed here. The cloud kept the heat of the sun off them in the day time, and the fire kept them warm at night when the temperatures plunged in the desert. This same care was potentially available to the exiles (Ps. 121:6); but most didn't even want to make the journey, and remained in Babylon. These promises are therefore reapplied to the new Israel (Rev. 7:16), As Yahweh provided a pillar of fire to give light in the night to His people in the wilderness, so Israel were to arrange for a fire to be burning throughout the night in the tabernacle. They were to give light in response to God's giving light to them.

Psa 105:40

They asked, and He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of the sky-
We note here how God works. They weren't given the quails until they asked for meat. There is no mention here of how the fattest of them were struck down at this time (Ps. 78:31). The point is made that God made concessions to their weakness and went along with their requests because by all means He wanted His rescue operation to succeed; and so it could have been with the restoration of the exiles from Babylon. But most didn't even want to start the wonderful journey. As discussed on :28, the record of the people is very positive [Ps. 106 gives the other side]. They didn't ask for quails and get them; they bitterly complained against God and Moses, falsely accusing them of a plan

to slay them in the desert. And in response God gave them quails. This again is an example of righteousness being imputed to God's covenant people.

Psa 105:41

He opened the rock-
As the rock was "opened", so Babylon, the apparently invincible prison house, would be opened for the exiles (s.w. Is. 14:17; 45:1); the graves would be opened and the dry bones of the exiles would come forth to restore the Kingdom (s.w. Ez. 37:13).

And waters gushed out; they ran as a river in the dry places-
The language of Is. 41:18; 45:8 about what God would do for the returning exiles. In the restored Zion, a fountain would be "opened" (s.w. Zech. 13:1). But all this was precluded by the exiles refusing to rebuild Zion according to the specifications in Ez. 40-48.

Psa 105:42

For He remembered His holy word, and Abraham His servant-
The deliverance from Egypt was in fulfilment of the prophetic word to Abraham. And the prophetic word was likewise given to the exiles, that they too would be delivered and restored. The phrase "His holy word" is specifically used of the prophetic word to the exiles in Jer. 23:9.

Psa 105:43

He brought forth His people with joy, His chosen with singing-
See on :6. The allusion is to the songs of Moses and Miriam after the Red Sea deliverance. The song of Moses could have been sung again at the deliverance of the exiles. But it wasn't; and so the prophecy and the promise is recalculated and reapplied to the deliverance of the last days (Rev. 15:3).

Psa 105:44

He gave them the lands of the nations. They took the labour of the peoples in possession-
The scale of the potential for the exiles was huge. The tiny Jewish minority, one of many minorities within the Babylonian / Persian empires, could have not only had their own capital city restored, but also have received all the lands within the *eretz* promised to Abraham. Likewise the potentials offered in the Gospel of the Kingdom are enormous; but most prefer to be satisfied with the things of this life, as the exiles were with life in Babylon. As discussed on :28, the record of the people is very positive [Ps. 106 gives the

other side]. They were potentially given the lands of the Canaanite nations but they didn't drive them out. Instead they worshipped their gods, married their women and were time and again dominated by them. This again is an example of righteousness being imputed to God's covenant people.

Psa 105:45

that they might keep His statutes, and observe His laws. Praise Yah!-
This forms an inclusio with the opening invitation to the Gentile peoples to praise Yah in :1,2. This was what Israel were intended to do, and the Gentiles were being asked to join repentant Israel in a new multiethnic people of God.

It has been observed: "Psalm 105 celebrates what God has done and Psalm 106 highlights what the people have not done".

PSALMS CHAPTER 106

Psa 106:1

Praise Yahweh! Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever-
The previous Psalm 105 has asked God to restore the exiles, to come through for them, because this is what He has done for His people in the past. But there has been no acceptance of grace, of their sinfulness, or of the consequence for sin. This Psalm presents a different picture of Israel's history; it is of their sinfulness, and God's radical grace. And the Psalm asks God to continue that grace. There is still not the total confession of sin which we see in Daniel's prayer (Dan. 9) nor in Ezra's (Ezra 9). But there is an acceptance of their sinfulness and God's grace, and the final appeal for an "Amen" is asking the audience to accept this and to ask for it to continue. "His grace endures forever" is a way of effectively asking for that grace towards sinners to continue to the exiles. Ps. 105 goes through Israel's history as inspiration to believe what God can still do for His people. Ps. 106 will present seven cases of Israel's pathetic refusal to accept that grace: At the Red Sea (:7,9), in the desert (:14), in the camp (:16), at Horeb (:19), at Peor (:28), at Meribah (:32), and in Canaan (:38). It is a lament, but an appeal to repent.

Psa 106:2

Who can utter the mighty acts of Yahweh, or fully declare all His praise?-
The psalmist utters forth the mighty acts of God in this Psalm with the preface enquiring as to who can adequately do this. And then proceeds to do just that. He did so with a clear recognition of his own inadequacy. The Psalms of praise are full of this theme. The

mighty acts which will be listed are those of radical forgiveness. And God's forgiveness of human sin, especially His patient forgiveness of His people Israel, is beyond anyone to adequately praise. Who can fully declare it? Nobody, because we don't see all the implications of our sins and what God has done to deal with them, ultimately through the cross.

Psa 106:3

Blessed are those who keep justice. Blessed is the one who does what is right-
David so often parallels righteousness and justice / truth (Ps. 9:8; 33:5; 37:6; 72:2; 94:15; 99:7; 103:6; 106:3). Indeed, this parallel is so common in God's word. What it means is that the righteousness of God is a *just* righteousness. It's not fake, 'I'll turn a blind eye'. It is true, real, valid, and has integrity underpinned in the very essential justice of God Himself. Justice and righteousness may appear abstract ideas, mere theology. But the result is that the person who believes God's righteousness is imputed to him or her... will *feel* this, they will know it to be true, they can by grace, in faith, quietly hold their head up before God. And David after Bathsheba is our example. He believed and *felt* this imputed righteousness. It's not so much a case of 'forgiving ourselves' after God has forgiven us, but rather of being swamped by this very real and legitimate sense that truly, we have been counted righteous. And Paul in Romans holds up David after Bathsheba as the personal example to " every one who is Godly" in their time of spiritual need. See on Ps. 41:12.

At all times-
Consistency is most important in spiritual life rather than occasional flashes of devotion and obedience.

Psa 106:4

Remember me, Yahweh, with the grace that You show to Your people; visit me with Your salvation-
God's history of amazing grace to Israel is what encourages the writer that he too can experience that same grace. And that is why we have so much of Israel's history in the Bible; it is a testament to God's amazing grace. To be remembered by God and visited by Him with salvation came ultimately true in the gift of His Son. "Your salvation", Yah's salvation, is Yehoshua, Jesus. For in Him, "God has visited His people" and in Him gave "knowledge of salvation to His people in the remission of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, when the sunrise shall visit us" (Lk. 1:77,78). What David so wanted, we have experienced in the Lord Jesus. The psalm is a chiasm (see on :16); it begins and ends with an appeal for God's salvation (:4,47)- the salvation that Israel had

rejected, recorded at the centre of the chiasm in :24-27. And that in fact is the spirit of the Gospel of the Kingdom, rejected by Israel but accepted by others.

The psalmist, originally David but rewritten by someone else at the time of the exile (perhaps Jeremiah, Ezra or Daniel), confesses that he too on a personal level needs the grace which he is going to celebrate. And he looks personally for salvation from a Divine 'visitation'. Perhaps he perceived that salvation from Babylon in the restored Kingdom could have been eternal; potentially. But the preconditions weren't met. But that may well have been his legitimate hope.

Psa 106:5

that I may see the prosperity of Your chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of Your nation, that I may glory with Your inheritance-
David was clearly the "chosen one… My servant" (Ps. 89:3), but these very terms are applied to Israel as a whole (Ps. 105:6,43; 106:5) and to the "servant" of later Isaiah, who refers to both Israel and their Messiah as their embodiment (Is. 42:1; 45:4). David's path of sin, repentance and restoration was intended to be that of all God's people, as he himself recognizes in Ps. 32. But the exiles refused to repent and therefore their restoration was precluded. They were not therefore treated as His "chosen one". The Psalmist's desire for salvation wasn't merely because he or she wanted to live eternally. There was a desire to see all God's people glorying in salvation. Salvation is made possible in that God's people as a whole have been redeemed; there is such a thing as spiritual selfishness, desiring the Kingdom merely for what it means to us. But if we have the perspective of God's glory, we will desire the coming of salvation because all of us will be glorified. Hence Paul could say that the joy he would have in the Kingdom would be related to his joy that his brethren were also there (1 Thess. 2:19).

Why do I want to be in the Kingdom? What makes this the dominant desire which we will surely receive? David asked to be given "thy salvation… that I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation" (AV). Paul likewise says that to see the Thessalonians in the Kingdom would be his glory and joy in that day. Both those men had a perspective far bigger than merely themselves. If our sole desire to 'be there' is so that *I* will live for ever, *I* will have a nice level of existence… this, it seems to me, is not only essentially selfish, but our basic dysfunction and tendency to devaluing of ourselves just will not allow us to have the receipt of personal eternity as our dominant desire. We'll be interested in it, but it won't consistently be the thing we desire above all else. But if we see the wider picture, then we will pray for the Kingdom to come so that the things of God's Name may be glorified; because we want to see our dear brethren there in the Kingdom; because we will want to share our Lord's joy and their joy. These things are more than the primitive desire for self-preservation which we all have, and which we can articulate in terms of wanting to personally be in the Kingdom. Thus if our motives are right for wanting to be in the Kingdom, then this will become our dominant

desire; and we will be granted the desires of our heart. Really we will be. God's word promises this.

David saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). This is how we are to make sense of suffering- by understanding that it plays a role in the salvation of others, and is part of a wider nexus of Divine operation. We suffer so that we may be able to minister the comfort we receive to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Job likewise came to realize that his sufferings were not so much for his personal maturing, but for the teaching and salvation of the friends.

Psa 106:6

We have sinned with our fathers-
Continuing the thought of :5, the Psalmist felt that he personally was somehow involved in the sin of God's people ("*we* have sinned"); Ezra and Daniel prayed and felt likewise at the time of the exile. We aren't called to smug self righteousness, avoiding guilt by association; but rather the opposite. We are to feel a personal involvement in the failures and successes of God's people as a whole.

For Paul, his joy and crown would be to see his brethren accepted into God's Kingdom at judgment day. David had the same spirit when he wrote of how he longed to "see the prosperity of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance" (Ps. 106:5). His personal vision of God's Kingdom involved seeing others there; there's no hint of spiritual selfishness in David. And he goes straight on to comment: "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity... our fathers understood not..." (Ps. 106:6). David felt himself very much at one with the community of God's children, both in their failures and in their ultimate hope. Life with God simply can't be lived in isolation from the rest of His people. Our salvation in that sense has a collective aspect to it, and if we want 'out' with the community of believers in this life, then we're really voting ourselves out of their future glory.

We have committed iniquity- The word used by David about his sin (Ps. 38:6). David's repentance and restoration was to be their pattern.

We have done wickedly- This is s.w. Ps. 18:21, where earlier David had boasted that "I have not wickedly departed from my God". "Wickedly departed" is the word usually translated "condemn" (e.g. Ps. 37:33). Those who depart from God condemn themselves. This is a major Biblical theme; that the condemned are more self-condemned rather than condemned by God. "We make the answer now". But now later

David was to realize that he too had wickedly departed from God, and confession of that was vital for salvation.

Psa 106:7

Our fathers didn't understand Your wonders in Egypt. They didn't remember the multitude of Your graces, but were rebellious at the sea, even at the Red Sea-
The plagues on Egypt were God's grace to His people. Hence they are recited in Ps. 136 with the constant refrain that they showed His grace; not least "To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for His mercy / grace endures for ever" (Ps. 136:10). At the Red Sea they didn't want to go over; they wanted to return to Egypt. They took the idols of Egypt with them through it (Ez. 20), rather than abandoning them. So often, God's bringing Israel out of Egypt and almost dragging them through the Red Sea is presented as His amazing grace. And the Red Sea crossing represents our baptism. We were led there, and through it, almost against our will.

Even at the very moment of their salvation they were rebellious. God didn't save them because they had reached a certain level of righteousness, let alone "understanding", but because of His grace; see on :12. The Red Sea crossing represents our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2); God has saved us by His grace, not because of our righteousness.

Because of the high degree of God manifestation in Moses, he was so severely punished for not sanctifying Yahweh in the eyes of Israel in his sin of smiting the rock. Israel provoking his spirit to sin at this time is spoken of in the context of the way in which they provoked *God's* spirit (Ps. 106:7,29,33,43) - such was God's manifestation in Moses even while he was sinning. And so God is manifest in sinful men like us too. Moses knew this, he knew his closeness to God through manifestation, and yet he yearned to see God physically, he struggled with his distance from God (Ex. 33:18,20). The spirit of Christ in the Psalms is similar. And for us too.

Psa 106:8

Nevertheless He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make His mighty power known-
They had asked to be left in Egypt, and God could have taken them at their word and left them there: "Did we not say to you in Egypt, 'Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:12). But grace means not always leaving people where they ask to be left. Grace goes beyond such literalism, taking people at their word and quoting their own words back to them. If we deal with each other like that, no relationship can last let alone progress, let alone toward eternal salvation.

Salvation for His Name's sake is the same as saying that He saved them by grace (:1). Grace is the quintessence of the Yahweh Name. The "mighty power" that was made known was not so much His physical, material ability to divide waters- but His grace and salvation of the unworthy (:7).

Psa 106:9

He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through a desert-
As noted on :1, this is being cited in the context of exemplifying God's saving grace to the unworthy. He saved those who didn't "understand", who doubted right at the shores of the Red Sea (:7). But all the same He led them through the Red Sea, which was made as dry as the desert they would now be led through further. And God likewise can save even without full faith and "understanding" at the time of our baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2); if subsequently we believe in and cling to His saving program for us. "As through a desert" shows how very dry God made that seabed beneath their feet; indeed they were led through "on dry ground" (Ex. 14:22). God doesn't do miracles by halves.

Psa 106:10

He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy-
Saving and redeeming are the words brought together elsewhere only in the context of God's desire to be the "saviour and redeemer" of the exiles through His offer of restoration (Is. 49:26; 60:16; 63:9). The redemption of a misunderstanding and disbelieving people of God from Egypt could have been the pattern for the salvation and redemption of the exiles from Babylon. Deliverance from the hand of haters is an idea commonly used by David about his salvation from Saul (Ps. 18:17,40 and often). This early Psalm of David has been reworked, under Divine inspiration, to be relevant to the exiles.

Psa 106:11

The waters covered their adversaries, there was not one of them left-
The destruction of the Egyptians is cited here as an example of God's grace to Israel (see on Ps. 106:1), and it is likewise used in Ps. 136:15. One take on the situation is that God foreknew that if He had not killed those Egyptians, they would have killed the Israelites.

Psa 106:12

Then they believed His words, they sang His praise-
Ex. 14:31 says that "they believed in Yahweh, and in his servant Moses". They praised

Him in the Song of the Sea in Ex. 15. But three days later, they were without faith and wanting to return to Egypt because there was no water. This was faith that lasted just for a moment. But it was counted as faith and they are here praised for it- to show how positively God viewed any sign of faith.

All these examples from Israel's history are to exemplify God's absolute saving grace. They only "believed His words" *after* they had been saved through their Red Sea baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). And so it can be in the Christian experience. This also explains why the New Testament speaks of us being baptized, by God through the Spirit. Grammatically, baptism is something done to us (1 Cor. 12:13). This has its basis in how Israel were baptized into Moses by God (1 Cor. 10:1,2). This is not to say that we should not first believe and then be baptized. But nearly every honest Christian would surely accept that our understanding and faith was weak at that point, and we were led by God's Spirit (or "providence", if you prefer) to the waters of baptism. We were saved as were Israel, but it is for us to believe it afterwards. See on :7,22.

Psa 106:13

They soon forgot His works, they didn't wait for His word-
Literally, 'they rushed / hastened to forget', implying that this was a purposeful forgetting. Even if it was done subconsciously. They did the same in :7, "they didn't remember the multitude of Your graces, but were rebellious at the sea". Having witnessed the plagues and the death of the Egyptian firstborn, they quickly forgot that after a few days, when they arrived at the Red Sea. Likewise :21 "They forgot God their Saviour who had done great things in Egypt". They forgot His salvation, His Yahoshua, His Jesus. Deuteronomy likewise explains their failures as being because they didn't "remember" God's works- which were His salvation of them (Dt. 6:12; 8:11,14,19). And so often, God's people are accused of forgetting His salvation, and turning to other gods because of that forgetting (Jud. 3:7 "they forgot Yahweh their God, and served the Baals" ; Is. 65:11; Jer. 18:15 "My people have forgotten Me, they have burned incense to false gods"; Jer. 23:27 "their fathers forgot My name for Baal"; Ps. 44:20; Job 8:13 "So are the paths of all who forget God"). We too can forget our great salvation, which is why we regularly break bread to remember it. But we need to live in the constant awareness that we have been saved from this world to live eternally in God's Kingdom. When this is forgotten, short termist, fleshly behaviour sets in.

The context in :14,15 goes on to speak of their craving meat when God had already provided manna. What, then, was the word they didn't wait for? Possibly there had been a promise of quail at the time the manna was given. Or maybe there was no such promise, and we are to understand the "word" referred to as God's plan. We are to trust God has a plan for us and not jump the gun. In this sense we read in Ps. 105 that God's word tried Joseph whilst in prison. Not waiting for God's word seems to describe Israel's

rebellions in language relevant to Saul, as if he represented them (1 Sam. 13:8). This Psalm likely started as one of David's, but was rewritten under Divine inspiration as relevant to the exiles. The impression is of haste: "They made haste, they forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel" (LXX). God's word is not revealed to us all in one go; His will is revealed in response to our patient response to what we currently understand of His will. And Israel ought to have perceived that God by grace had saved them. But they forgot that grace, and panicked when things didn't appear to work out, and turned away from Him rather than remembering His grace. And that was the lesson for the exiles.

Psa 106:14

but gave in to their craving in the desert, and tested God in the wasteland-
God had provided them with manna; but they craved flesh, meat; the same term is used in Num. 11:4. This is the phrase only elsewhere used for Israel's coveting of meat in the wilderness (Num. 11:4), but it is used once more, in Prov. 21:26. This explains that the reason for their lust was because they were lazy (Prov. 21:25). They ought to have instead thought of what they could give, rather than lusting for what they could additionally get. This generous attitude is the antidote to lust.

Psa 106:15

He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul-
This is what happens in addiction and in all giving in to a desire for immediate gratification. They gave in to their craving (:14), and so God gave in to them, and gave them what they wanted immediately. He will confirm man in the way he wants to go. If we fulfil our fleshly craving, we will become internally and spiritually hungry. Giving in to our cravings isn't the way to happiness. But the way God gave them their request is cited here as an example of God's grace to Israel; for that is the theme of this Psalm. The idea is repeated with the same words in Is. 10:16: "Therefore shall the Lord… send among His fat ones leanness". Again we see the intended parallels between Israel in dispersion and Israel in the wilderness.

Psa 106:16

They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron, Yahweh's saint-
Aaron was a "saint" in that he was a chosen one, separated unto God's purpose. But the rebels were unprepared to accept God's choice of saviours; and yet His saving purpose still continued with them, despite punishing the rebels (:17). And this was the simple lesson for the exiles, and for us all as we despair of our own weakness.

We note that the order of Israel's sins here in Ps. 106 differs from that in Numbers. The rebellion of Dathan and Abiram (:17) is placed before their rejection of the promised land (:24-27), whereas Numbers has it the other way around. Likewise Ps. 106:28-31 has the worship of Baal Peor as before the incident at the waters of Meribah (:32,33), whereas Numbers has this the other way around. I suggest that this is because Psalm 106 is chiastic, presenting their sins as a chiasm. The centre of the chiasm is :24-27 where they reject the Kingdom, the promised land, and want to return to Egypt.

Psa 106:17

The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram-
We note that "Korah" isn't mentioned here, although the rebellion was by Korah, Dathan and Abiram. Perhaps this was because the "sons of Korah" survived and were zealous in the temple service. Num. 16:32; 26:10 stress that the "earth opened" (s.w.) and swallowed up *Korah* and his followers. The pointed omission of "Korah" here is perhaps to point out God's grace in working through Korah's descendants. And again, this was the message the exiles needed to grasp; their fathers had sinned, they were in captivity, but they needed to follow the pattern of the sons of Korah.

Psa 106:18

A fire was kindled in their company, the flame burned up the wicked-
The intention of this Psalm, as explained on :1, is to chronicle God's grace to a very sinful Israel. The "fire kindled" is the term used of the burning bush which was not consumed (Ex. 3:2), just as mount Sinai was kindled with fire but not consumed (especially stressed in Deuteronomy; Dt. 4:11; 5:23; 9;15). The idea is that although all Israel had sinned, only some of them were consumed, but the people as a whole were not consumed. The exiles would walk through kindled fire and not be consumed (s.w. Is. 43:2). God's purposes with His people would stand, even though the "fire was kindled" in the Babylon invasion (Jer. 4:4; Lam. 2:3 s.w.), but they would be saved out of condemnation and not be consumed as a nation.

Psa 106:19

They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped a molten image-
We have just read of the fire kindled in God's wrath against His people. But they kindled that fire themselves (Is. 9:18; Hos 7:6), and used it to produce a *molten* image. Israel were to make no images in worship, because the God they worshipped was real, existing in an actual material form in heaven. They were to make no image of Him because they were to believe He was for real, before their very eyes if they had

perceptive eyes of faith. And they were to realize that their own bodies were in His image.

Psa 106:20

Thus they exchanged their glory for an image of a bull that eats grass-
"Their glory" refers to God. It was unthinkable that a nation changed their gods; they only did so when conquered by other nations who forced them to do so. This was the awful sin of Israel, in exchanging Yahweh for idols (Jer. 2:11). They of course didn't see it as "exchange", but rather worshipping Yahweh through worshipping other idols; or worshipping Him as well as idols. This is the kind of temptation we face all the time; but here it is condemned as "exchanging" Yahweh for idols.

There is good reason to believe that Romans 1 is a description of Israel in the wilderness; notice the past tenses there. Rom. 1:23 charges them with changing "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like… to four-footed beasts, and creeping things", clearly alluding to Ps. 106:20 concerning how Israel in the wilderness "Changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eats grass" by making the golden calf. The effective atheism of Rom. 1 is matched by Ps. 106:21 "They forgot God their saviour". The long catalogue of Israel's wilderness sins in Ps. 106 is similar to that in Rom.1. "Full of envy" (Rom. 1:29) corresponds to them envying Moses (Ps. 106:16), "whisperers" (Rom. 1:29) to "murmurers" (Ps. 106:25), and "inventors of evil things" (Rom. 1:30) to God being angered with "their inventions" of false gods (Ps. 106:29). Because of this "God gave them up" to continue in their sexual perversion and bitterness with each other even to the extent of murder (Rom. 1:27,29). A rabble of about 2 million people living in moral anarchy with little law and order, driven on in their lust by the knowledge that God had rejected them is surely a frightening thing to imagine. The emphasis on sexual sin in Rom.1 is paralleled by 1 Cor. 10 stressing the frequent failure of Israel in the wilderness in this regard. Against such an evil and God forsaking background that young generation rebelled, to become one of the most faithful groups of Israelites in their history. As such they set a glorious example to the youth of today in rebelling against a world that mocks any form of true spirituality.

“Likeness” in Rom. 1:23 is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

Psa 106:21

They forgot God their Saviour who had done great things in Egypt-
As discussed on Ps. 71:19, the "great / wondrous things" performed by God were His forgiveness and salvation of a condemned sinner like David. This is described in Ps. 71:19 as God doing "great things", the phrase used of the great things worked in visible miracles in Egypt (Ps. 106:21) and at creation (Ps. 136:7). But the forgiveness of people like David is no less a great miracle. Such great things are done because of His mercy / grace (Ps. 136:4).

Psa 106:22

wondrous works in the land of Ham-
Mizraim or Egypt was the descendant of Ham (Gen. 10:6; Ps. 105:23,27; 106:22). There may be an allusion to Khem, one of the main Egyptian gods. For the purpose of all the plagues was to demonstrate that Yahweh was the only God, and the Egyptian gods had no real existence.

And awesome things by the Red Sea-
The awesome thing done "by" and not "in" the Red Sea was that there on the shores of the Sea, Israel's faith collapsed. They did not understand nor "believe His words" (:7,12). And yet God saved them by grace. That was the wonderful work and awesome thing done by God which should be praised and remembered by us.

Psa 106:23

Therefore He said that He would destroy them, had not Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn away His wrath, so that He wouldn't destroy them-
The metaphor is military, like a warrior standing in the breach of the city wall. Here again is God's extreme grace. His intention to destroy Israel and make a new nation from Moses was changed; indeed His intended destruction of Aaron and Israel was turned away by Moses more than once (Dt. 9:8,14,19,20,25). Such is His radical sensitivity, reflecting a love for His people which is beyond words to describe. The very "chosen" Moses whom the people had argued was not chosen (:16,17) was allowed to save those people who had rejected him. This clearly looks forward to the saving work of the Lord Jesus. Jeremiah likewise had stood before Yahweh "to turn away His wrath" (s.w. Jer. 18:20); but the sin of the exiles was apparently even worse than that of Israel. For the wrath came upon the people and they were sent to Babylon. But in another sense, Jeremiah's intercession was heard; for they were not 'destroyed' completely. They could be restored. Daniel likewise prayed for the turning away of God's wrath (s.w. Dan. 9:16); and the answer was in the seventy sevens prophecy. Ultimately, God would not destroy His people but restore them, although in His own way and in His own time. Which was not exactly as the exiles had hoped. The exiles had broken the covenant and were

therefore to be destroyed (s.w. Dt. 28:20,24). But God was again open to changing His stated purpose and saving them. It was all grace upon grace.

Psa 106:24

Yes, they despised the pleasant land. They didn't believe His word-
I suggested on :16 that the sins of Israel are not listed here chronologically but as a chiasm; and :24-27 is the centre of it. They rejected God's Kingdom and didn't believe His word of promise to give it to them. That is the essence of all sin. They thought slavery in Egypt was better than Canaan. The psalm begins and ends with an appeal for God's salvation (:4,47)- the salvation that Israel had rejected. And that in fact is the spirit of the Gospel of the Kingdom, rejected by Israel but accepted by others. "Despised" is also the word for 'rejected', the word used in Num. 14:31 for the land which they rejected, preferring Egypt- or at least, their imagination of Egypt. The rejected are those who choose rejection for themselves. The word they disbelieved was the word of grace to Moses, that He would not destroy them as He had earlier stated (see on :23). But God had promised that although Israel despised the offer of the land, a "pleasant land" in that it could have been God's Kingdom on earth, yet even in their exile in the Gentile lands they preferred to His land, He would not "despise" them (s.w. Lev. 26:44).

In the end, God gives us our dominant desire. Israel in the wilderness didn't really desire the land, so they didn't receive it. It was not "pleasant" to them, the 'land of desire' (AVmg.). Israel both despised the land, and they despised their God (Num. 14:11,23,31 RV). Our attitude as to whether or not we want to be in the Kingdom is essentially our attitude to God. This has far reaching implications. Ps. 107:30 likewise speaks of how the faithful are brought to the haven of their desire (RVmg.). All those who truly love the Lord's appearing- with all that implies in practical life and belief- will be accepted (2 Tim. 4:8). And yet Israel didn't have the dominant desire to be in the Kingdom, as Joshua and Caleb had. Why didn't they? It is vital that we understand the reasons for their failure – such an understanding will be a safeguard to help prevent us from making the same mistake (Rom.15:4).

Psa 106:25

but murmured in their tents, and didn't listen to Yahweh's voice-
In the face of God's amazing grace to them in not destroying them (see on :23), Israel muttered and murmured about the immediate problems of their lives. This obscured the wonderful voice of Yahweh assuring them of His saving grace. And so it is to this day. It was because of this that God swore to destroy them in the desert (:26). They murmured in their tents of their conspiracy theory that God hated them and therefore had brought them out of Egypt to kill them in the desert (Dt. 1:27 s.w.). But the Numbers record says

it was because they didn't want to enter Canaan, having believed the 10 spies. The essence was what they muttered under their breath at home, "in their tents". This is what God looks at.

Psa 106:26

Therefore He swore to them that He would overthrow them in the wilderness-
But He didn't, because Moses interceded. An almighty God who swears but doesn't carry it out... is a God of amazing grace.

Psa 106:27

that He would overthrow their seed among the nations, and scatter them in the gentile lands-
Ez. 20:23 says just the same. There were various options God considered- to slay them in the wilderness, to make of Moses a new nation, or, as here, to take them out of the desert and scatter them in the gentile lands. He didn't scatter them at the time, despite having raised His hand and sworn to do so (:26). This is the extent of His love and grace- that He doesn't do what He says He will do, because the pole of His saving grace is stronger than that of His judgment. This suggests that Israel's scattering in Gentile lands had been threatened at the time of the murmuring of :25; for the Psalm is chronologically going through Israel's history. This isn't recorded in the records; because by grace God changed from that purpose at the time, because of Moses' intercession. But Israel are now reminded that in fact their scattering amongst the Gentiles, which was then currently ongoing, had been a judgment pronounced right back in the wilderness; and had not been carried out because of the amazing patience of God.

Psa 106:28

They joined themselves also to Baal Peor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead-
To join oneself is the language of marriage. To eat sacrifice was a sign of fellowship with the god at whose table you were eating. And by doing these things they were effectively breaking their covenant relationship with Yahweh. But despite that, He still worked to save them and to preserve them nationally as His people. His grace is the more amazing, because He disregarded even their breaking of covenant with Him- because He was and is so passionate to save.

Psa 106:29

Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds. The plague broke in on them-
It could be argued that this too reflects God's grace. The threatened judgment was

complete destruction of the entire nation (:26), but in reality the judgment was a plague which destroyed a relatively small number of them.

Psa 106:30

Then Phinehas stood up, and executed judgment, so the plague was stopped-
The grace of this was in that the plague was stopped, as it was at the time of the earlier rebellion (Num. 16:48,50 cp. Num. 25:8); when it had been in God's intention to totally destroy the entire people (:26). But as Paul brings out in Rom. 1-8, that grace was all the same articulated through justice / judgment being done.

Psa 106:31

That was credited to him for righteousness, for all generations to come-
The grace of this was in that righteousness was counted to Phinehas. For none are righteous in their own strength; as Paul explains in Romans, it is credited to us by grace through faith. But how was it eternally credited to him? For descendants aren't counted righteous just because of their ancestors. The implication would therefore be that this imputed righteousness meant that he would therefore not die eternally; but he resurrected to life eternal. And this again is nothing but pure grace.

Psa 106:32

They angered Him also at the waters of Meribah, so that Moses was troubled for their sakes-
In Dt. 9:18 Moses says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded- and yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him for their sakes" (AV). So here again, even in sin and failure, was to be found grace in the way God used it. See on Ex. 32:32.

Psa 106:33

because they were rebellious against His spirit, he spoke rashly with his lips-
The sin was Moses' sin, but those who provoke others to sin are still guilty. They rebelled against God's Spirit, and so they vexed His Spirit (Is. 63:10)- His essential desire to save them. Moses was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation (Ex. 32:32). In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. *For their sakes* he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that *therefore* "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God by grace works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Thus Moses says that he must die "Because *ye* [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51). This all helps explain why the Lord Jesus Christ had to die, apart from the fact that He was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, He felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangs on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses is a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18).

Psa 106:34

They didn't destroy the peoples as Yahweh commanded them-
Moses 'prophesied' that Ephraim would "push the people [Gentile inhabitants of the land] together to the ends of the earth / land" (Dt. 33:17). And yet Hos. 7:8 cp. Ps. 106:34-36 criticize Ephraim for *failing* to push the people out of the land. Moses' prophecies about the tribes sound like predictions; but they were actually commands which those tribes had the freewill to obey or not. Despite the promise of the Kingdom, Israel didn't use that potential. And now at this point they were in exile amongst the Gentiles, because they had actually liked those peoples and chose their idols.

Psa 106:35

but mixed themselves with the nations, and learned their works-
And the exiles had done just the same, and even at the restoration they likewise "mingled" with the nations through intermarriage (s.w. Ezra 9:2). Israel simply refused to learn from their history. "Learned their works" refers to their eager learning the ways of idolatry (:36); these are the "works" of :39.

Psa 106:36

They served their idols, which became a snare to them-
In fulfilment of the warning of Ex. 23:33. Idolatry itself leads to further failure- as part of a downward spiral. The figure of a snare suggests they were led to the point of being caught and slain by the snare. The idea of riches being a snare (1 Tim. 6:9) connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry.

Psa 106:37

Yes, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons-
I noted on :36 that the figure of a snare suggests the idols killed them; and here we have this developed, in that they literally killed their children in the name of idols. Demons refer to idols (:36). Demons or idols have no real existence (1 Cor. 8:4; 10:20). Therefore when we read of demons being cast out in the Gospel records, this is the language of the day used for healing various illnesses rather than any evidence that demons actually exist.

Psa 106:38

They shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. The land was polluted with blood-
But they continued doing so, and it was for shedding innocent blood like this that they went into captivity (s.w. Jer. 2:34; 19:4). And the impenitent exiles did the same in their persecution and murder of the restoration prophets (Is. 59:7). Again the point is being made that despite hardening themselves against the voice of history, God still had a willingness to try to work with them towards repentance. God had condemned the Canaanites for doing this, and driven them out of the land because of it. His people entered the land and did what the Canaanites did. And God tolerated them for centuries- a parade example of His patient hope, effort and grace towards His people.

Psa 106:39

Thus were they defiled with their works, and prostituted themselves in their deeds-
The "works" are the idolatry of :35; the "works" of the Gentiles (:35) had become "their own works" (:39 AV). They had fully adopted the Gentile ways as their very own. They were thus unfaithful to Yahweh who was their husband; they were morally and sexually defiled and therefore liable to be stoned to death, burnt or at least divorced. These were the Mosaic law options for a husband whose wife was unfaithful or a prostitute. But the

grace of it all is that like Hosea with Gomer (representing God and Israel), they were not destroyed as a people. God as it were broke His own law by seeking to have them back even after the great divorce.

Psa 106:40

Therefore Yahweh burned with anger against His people-
This is the burning anger which arises from the abuse of love; it was their prostitution which made God so furious (:39). But truly "the wrath of God is the love of God", as Emil Brunner observed. The extent of His anger was a reflection of the extent of His love for them which had been so abused. The kindling of Yahweh's anger begins a series of allusions to the book of Judges, here to Jud. 2:14,20 etc.

He abhorred His inheritance-
There is a mutuality between God and man. God and His Kingdom are our inheritance (Ps. 78:55); but we are His inheritance. A man's inheritance was the essence of Himself, all He had in the world. And this is how we are to Him.

Psa 106:41

He gave them into the hand of the nations. Those who hated them ruled over them-
"Into the hand of..." is the term repeatedly used in the Judges record (Jud. 3:10,12,31; 4:2; 6:1; 10:7-18; 13:1). Even the restored exiles were still "ruled over" by the "nations" (s.w. Neh. 9:37). The restoration wasn't the degree of restoration of the Kingdom of God and His people which the restoration prophecies had presented as potentially possible.

Psa 106:42

Their enemies also oppressed them-
"Oppressed" is a common word in the record of the Judges (s.w. Jud. 1:34; 2:18; 4:3; 6:9; 10:12).

They were brought into subjection under their hand-
This again continues the allusion to the situation in the book of Judges (Jud. 4:3,6-11; 10:8). The grace of it all is that time and again they were saved by Yahweh's "saviours", the judges, who looked ahead to Yehoshua, 'Yah's salvation', in the Lord Jesus. But the raising up of these saviours was by grace alone.

Psa 106:43

Many times He delivered them-
The grace of it all was that each time, God said 'this is the last time', and Israel

responded later 'Yes, but please, just this once, have mercy on us just once more'. And this went on many times. Each time God showed them special grace.

But they were rebellious in their ways, and were brought low in their iniquity-
Flesh must be humbled- either we do it now, we humble ourselves that we may be exalted in due time; or it will have to be done to us through the terror of rejection. Time and again 'bringing low' or 'humiliation' is the result of condemnation (Dt. 28:43; 2 Chron. 28:19; Job 40:12; Ps. 106:43).

Psa 106:44

Nevertheless He regarded their distress, when He heard their cry-
See on :43. Their lack of penitence was overlooked because God was simply so sensitive to the distress of His wayward people. This was the grace of it all.

Psa 106:45

He remembered for them His covenant, and relented according to the multitude of His graces-
Israel kept their Passovers throughout the wilderness years, one would assume- but they never remembered the day that God brought them out of Egypt (Ps. 78:42)- although notice how although Israel didn't remember God, yet He remembered them in His grace (Ps. 106:7, 45). We can read of the cross, speak of it, memorialize it as Israel did the exodus through the Passover ritual; and yet totally fail to realize the powerful imperatives which abound in its' message. God's covenant is here demonstrated to be unilateral, from Him to man, by grace. The covenant in view is that with Abraham made in Gen. 15, which featured God making unilateral promises whilst Abraham was incapacitated and unable to do anything in response. Neither was there any clause added making it conditional upon his obedience. This is in sharp contrast with the law of Moses, the old covenant. Jeremiah, Zechariah and Ezekiel all make the point to the exiles that they had broken the old covenant, and therefore they could only be saved by reaffirming their part in the new covenant. For it was this covenant which is rightly paralleled here with the multitude of God's great grace, "graces" being an intensive plural for His great grace.

Psa 106:46

He made them also to be pitied by all those who carried them captive-
The book of Esther reveals the relative popularity and success of the Jews in Babylon / Persia. The descriptions of the exiles as captives groaning in a prison house must therefore be understood in spiritual terms. For the exiles were not under physical abuse.

But they failed to realize their awful spiritual environment, and therefore spurned the opportunity for deliverance from it; and that is the reason so many reject the message of God's Kingdom today. The exiles particularly were shown "pity" by the powers of their day, allowing them to return to Zion and rebuild it (s.w. Neh. 1:11 "mercy"). This "pity" or "mercy before them that lead you captive" was specifically predicated upon their repentance (s.w. 2 Chron. 30:9). But they didn't repent; and yet they were shown this mercy / pity. That was the grace of it all. This "pity" was the pity of God who would according to that pity / mercy regather them (s.w. Is. 54:7; Zech. 1:16). He showed them that pity despite their impenitence; and yet most of them preferred to spurn it by remaining in exile. Often God had threatened to destroy His people in captivity. But their captors showed amazing grace to them and finaly encouraged them to return to Judah and financed the rebuilding of the temple. This was grace.

Psa 106:47

Save us, Yahweh, our God, gather us from among the nations, to give thanks to Your holy name, to triumph in Your praise!-
These last two verses are quoting from David's Psalm of thanksgiving when the ark was brought to Zion (1 Chron. 16:35,36). But the inspired Psalmist in Ps. 106:47 makes a slight change because he was using this Psalm in the context of the exiles wanting to be restored: "Gather us together and deliver us from the nations" is changed to "Gather us from among the nations". The ark was lost; it was the Jews themselves who were to come to Zion. The exile brought them to realize that the box called "the ark" was mere religion; the essence of it was that the dwelling place of God was no longer a box of acacia wood, but God's own repentant people.

Psa 106:48

Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, from everlasting even to everlasting! Let all the people say, Amen. Praise Yah!-
Praise of Yahweh will continue from this *olam* to the next *olam*. As if our feelings of gratitude to Him now will carry over into the next eternal age. This psalm has been a prayer of confession of sin. The people are asked to say "Amen!" to it all, recognizing their sinfulness as a people and as individuals; and yet with the confession, to also praise God for His abiding grace to His people. As noted on :47, this is a slightly adapted quotation from David's Psalm of praise when the ark was brought to Zion. The people were asked to understand that *their* return to Zion was to be like the return of the ark after a period in Gentile captivity. The dwelling place of God was no longer to be over a box of acacia wood, but over God's own repentant people.

PSALMS CHAPTER 107

Psa 107:1

Book V-
Although this begins a new book, this Psalm appears to follow on from Ps. 106, which concludes with the exiled psalmist thanking God in the past tense for having delivered His people from exile. But we must understand that this doesn't mean that this is a Psalm of praise once the exiles had returned; for Ps. 106 is an appeal for God's grace to be shown in restoring the exiles. What is yet future is spoken of as having happened; it is a statement of faith in the deliverance which the faithful believe will happen. Ps. 107 is similar; it praises God in the past tense for the deliverance and reestablishment of His Kingdom in Judah which the [few] faithful exiles were praying and hoping for, in accordance with the restoration prophecies. And those prophecies are often alluded to in this Psalm.

Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever-
His eternal grace is the theme of Ps. 106:45. Psalm 107 continues the praise of this grace, and on that basis, expresses confidence that the restored Kingdom would indeed come about. People are invited to thank God for it as if it has happened- as an expression of faith in the final fulfilment of the restoration prophecies.

These words are from Jer. 33:11, which speaks of the situation in the restored Kingdom: "...the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, Give thanks to Yahweh of Armies, *for Yahweh is good, for His grace endures forever*; who bring thanksgiving into the house of Yahweh. For I will cause the captivity of the land to return as at the first, says Yahweh". The idea is that this is the praise intended to be sung at the restoration. But that didn't happen as was potentially possible. The redemption of God's people was reapplied to the Lord's work; and so the essence of this intended praise, although not the detail, is appropriate for all the "redeemed". Note the reference in :14 to captives having their bonds broken, brass gates of Babylon being broken open (:16), the people being gathered (:3), delivered from their graves (:20) as were Israel to be when they entered the new covenant in Ez. 37,

Psa 107:2

Let the redeemed by Yahweh say so-
The only other time we read of the redeemed of Yahweh is in the restoration prophecy of

Is. 62:12. This is appealing to the restoration prophecies about the exiles being redeemed from captivity and returning to Zion (Is. 62:12; 35:9,10; 51:10,11; 63:4).

Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary-
Just as God had historically redeemed His people from "trouble", so He would from the "adversary" of Babylon / Persia (s.w. :6). But the problem was that the exiles were comfortable in their exile, as the book of Esther demonstrates; and didn't perceive their environment as their "adversary".

Psa 107:3

and gathered out of the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south-
This was what had been prayed for in Ps. 106:47, and was according to the restoration prophecies (Is. 49:12; Jer. 32:37; Ez. 20:34 etc.). The tragedy was that the exiles didn't want to return. The ten tribes assimilated into the lands of their exile, and the peoples of Judah preferred to stay where they were, for the most part. Only a small percentage of the Jewish exiles returned. The regathering from all points of the compass also didn't really happen; these things have been reinterpreted and reapplied, so that they will come true in essence but not in literal detail. The clear fulfilment is in the gathering of willing Gentile converts from all points of the compass to the spiritual Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. Lk. 13:29 speaks of the points of the compass in the same order as we have here: "They shall come from the east and the west, and from the north and the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God".

"The South" is *yam*, usually translated "the sea" or "the west". Most versions assume there has been a corruption in the text, and so they read *yamin*, "south", instead of *yam*, "west" or "sea". The Hebrew text here is exactly that of Is. 49:12 "from the north and from the west". We may have here the idea of 'for three and even for four' (Prov. 30:18; Am. 2:6). As if the idea is 'From east, west, north… and even from the sea'. Which would explain the long section in :23-30 about the redemption of God's people from the sea.

Or we could read this as 'the southern sea', "from the north and from the sea" in Is. 49:12, as in Is. 11:11, referring to the islands and coasts of the Mediterranean. But the extensive records of the exile community in Elephantine, an island in the Nile, make no record of any such return. The potential didn't happen.

Psa 107:4

They wandered in the wilderness in a desert way, they found no city to live in-
Wandering in a desert implies they were lost, hence LXX "They wandered in the wilderness, in the desert; the way to a city of habitation they found not". The idea is that

they were travellers who had lost their way in the desert and were about to perish. They were no better than Hagar.

The idea is that as God's people were preserved through the wilderness journey, so would the exiles be. But most didn't even start the journey. And so these things have been reapplied and reinterpreted. Therefore the LXX of this phrase is quoted about the Christian believers in Heb. 13:14. We too are on a wilderness journey after our Red Sea baptism, and find no place we can call home in that journey. Our place of rest and settling down isn't in this life, but in the Kingdom which is to come at Christ's return. The implication could be that Israel wanted to settle in the wilderness. They didn't want to return to Egypt (although they did at times), they didn't really desire the unknown promised land... so, they wanted to just settle down there in the wilderness. And so it can be with us. We can be happy with the way to the Kingdom, it can be that the social aspect of the Christian life suites us... we are content with it, and yet it can be that for all that, we lack a real sense of direction towards the Kingdom. We are going some place. The Christian life is but a path leading towards an end, and the end destination is the Kingdom. If we believe surely that we will be there, we will live lives which reflect this sense of concrete direction and aim.

Perhaps we can infer from this that Israel in the wilderness initially wanted to return to Egypt, and yet it is also true that they sought for a city to live in whilst in the wilderness. They wanted to just stay there in the wilderness. They didn't want to return to Egypt, they didn't really desire the unknown promised land... so, they wanted to just settle there in the wilderness. And so it can be with us. We can be happy with the way to the Kingdom, it can be that the social aspect of the Christian life suites us... we are content with it, and yet it can be that for all that, we lack a real sense of direction towards the Kingdom. We are going some place. The Christian life is but a path leading towards an end, and the end destination is the Kingdom. If we believe surely that we will be there, we will live lives which reflect this sense of concrete direction and aim.

Psa 107:5

Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them-
Israel in the wilderness were made to suffer hunger so that they would come to realize that man doesn't live by bread alone, but by the words of God which went forth to create manna for them (Dt. 8:3). Their soul "fainted" in that they refused to perceive this. And so it was with the complaints of the exiles. Their experiences were intended to bring them to God.

Psa 107:6

Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble and He delivered them out of their distresses-
Just as God had historically redeemed His people from "trouble", so He would from the

"adversary" of Babylon / Persia (s.w. :2). But the problem was that the exiles were comfortable in their exile, as the book of Esther demonstrates; and didn't perceive their environment as their "adversary".

Psa 107:7

He led them also by a straight way, that they might go to a city to live in-

"Straight way" is literally 'the right way'. God's way is the right way, even if, as for Israel leaving Egypt, it isn't the easiest way, nor the quickest way, and even if it appears to deviate at random, it is the right way for us.

The same word as in :4; the "way" the Israelites were led through the desert after the exodus could have corresponded to how the exiles were led from Babylon back to Zion. But although God gave Israel a straight way, it took them 38 years of wandering. For they didn't use the potential He gave them. And so it was with the exiles, and with many attempted journeys towards God's Kingdom. Likewise Ezra prayed for a "straight way" from exile to Zion (s.w. Ezra 8:21). But although it was provided, few of the exiles wanted to even begin the way. Their journey from Babylon to Zion was "that they might go to a city to live in", as if Babylon was not in fact a city they could live in. But sadly, many of the exiles preferred it to Zion. "A straight way" is a phrase used more frequently of walking before God in a "right way" (1 Sam. 12:23 and very often). The "way" back to Zion was not just a physical journey, but a walking in God's ways. And the Biblical historians of the 'restoration' indicate that this was not the path which the returning exiles walked in. The intention was that the exiles would enter the new covenant and "be caused to walk in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble" (Jer. 31:9). But the exiles who returned did stumble (Mal. 2:8). The potential spiritual strength to keep them in the way was not used. Potentially, the cherubim which departed from Zion in Ezekiel's vision would have returned with "straight feet" (Ez. 1:7). The way back was plain and clear, with every blessing along it. But the exiles preferred Babylon. And so these things are reapplied to the new Israel, who are to walk in a straight way towards God's restored Kingdom (Heb. 12:13). See on :40.

Psa 107:8

Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works to the children of men!-
"The children of men" are not mankind generally, but the men of God's people who received His grace. This was the intended picture of the joy of the returned, restored exiles. But they didn't perceive their sinfulness nor His grace, and so their praise was not at all so ecstatic as envisaged here. "His grace", His unending forgiveness and patient desire to save, was to be perceived as His greatest "work". This ultimately came to full articulation in the death of His Son.

Psa 107:9

For He satisfies the longing soul, He fills the hungry soul with good-
Those who long for the Kingdom will be satisfied with it. "All them who love His appearing" shall be saved. "Satisfying... with good" quotes the restoration prophecy of Jer. 31:14 (s.w.). This Psalm is an expression of faith in the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies; but it was not yet fulfilled. Those "longing" for grace and true spiritual restoration (:8) would be given it. But finally this 'filling' was to be through the Lord Jesus. And therefore Mary quoted this verse about how she had been filled with good things (Lk. 1:53); but Zacharias quoted the next verse, :10, shortly afterwards (Lk. 1:79). Surely Mary had gotten him thinking in the same paths as she did. Our spirituality can influence others positively, consciously and unconsciously. This is why it's important to mix in spiritual company.

Psa 107:10

Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron-
This alludes to how Joseph in Egypt was bound in iron (Ps. 105:18 s.w.), and Israel in Egypt are similarly described. The situation of the exiles in Babylon was not so physically awful. But they were expected to perceive that the opulence of Babylon was in fact "darkness and the shadow of death" (s.w. Is. 9:2; Jer. 13:16). Because they didn't perceive that, the good news of exodus and deliverance from that wasn't so attractive to them. And so it is with people today. See on :14.

Psa 107:11

because they rebelled against the words of God, and condemned the counsel of the Most High-
This is one of a number of Biblical verses which suggest that we as it were stand in judgment upon God when we encounter His word. He overcomes every claim that His word is untrue and therefore He is condemned (Rom. 3:4). That we mere humans should judge God the judge of all is an arresting concept; but this is what we are in effect doing when we consider His claims, His promises of saving us which are throughout His word.

The "most high God" could suggest that they believed in many gods, but in their desperate moments, recognized Yahweh as the "most high" of them all. And this was why they ultimately rebelled against Yahweh's words, probably a reference specifically to the words of the covenant. Let us remember that Israel carried the tabernacle of their god Remphan through the desert as well as that of Yahweh.

Psa 107:12

Therefore He brought down their heart with labour, they fell down-
"Fell down" is the word translated "feeble": "There was not one feeble person among His tribes" (Ps. 105:37), but prior to this the Israelites had indeed been "feeble" before their Egyptian captors (s.w. Ps. 107:12). This means that the feeble were made strong; and this was exactly the promise to the exiles, that they who were "feeble" in Babylonian exile would be strengthened so that they could leave Babylon and be restored to the land (s.w. Is. 35:3). The word for "feeble" is often translated "cast down" and is used of how Judah had been at the time of their exile into Babylon (Jer. 6:21; 8:12; 18:15; Lam. 1:14; Hos. 5:5 and often). But they would be led out of Babylon in a straight way and without stumbling / being feeble (s.w. Jer. 31:9); the "feeble" would be strengthened (Zech. 12:8 s.w.). Yet when they returned to the land, they were "feeble" (s.w. Neh. 4:10 "decayed"; Mal. 2:8 "stumbled"). The potential strengthening wasn't used by them.

And there was none to help-
"None to help" is the phrase used in prophecy of the Lord's crucifixion in Ps. 22:11 "Don't be far from me, for trouble is near; for there is none else to help". The same words are used for how Israel and the exiles were under persecution with none to help apart from God (Lam. 1:7). The paradox was that God saved His people through the Lord Jesus exactly because they had "none to help" (Is. 63:5 s.w.). But He Himself had to go through that experience of having none to help (Ps. 22:11). Their salvation was achieved through His being their total representative.

Psa 107:13

Then they cried to Yahweh in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses-
Although the allusion may be to the Red Sea deliverance, the plural "distresses" suggests that this 'crying to Yahweh' occurred many times. And the identical phrase is a key phrase in the Judges record (Jud. 3:9,15; 6:6,7; 10:10). The Judges record has been alluded to in Ps. 106:40-42 as a parade example of God's saving grace to Israel. The grace of it all was that each time, God said 'this is the last time', and Israel responded later 'Yes, but please, just this once, have mercy on us just once more'. And this went on many times. Each time God showed them special grace. Time and again they were saved by Yahweh's "saviours", the judges, who looked ahead to Yehoshua, 'Yah's salvation', in the Lord Jesus. But the raising up of these saviours was by grace alone.

Psa 107:14

He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bonds in sunder-

The deliverance from Egypt could have been replicated in deliverance from Babylon. But the difference was that the Jews were not being abused in Babylon; rather were they being ensnared by the soft life. And they didn't want to perceive that they were in a spiritual prison, despite its opulence in secular terms. Most of the exiles spurned this great salvation. And yet it will be fulfilled for God's new Israel in their redemption from death and the grave. "The land of darkness and the shadow of death" refers so often to the grave (Job 10:21). Egypt and Babylon were figuratively the land of death; but the prophecies of the deliverance of God's people from them will come ultimately true in our redemption from death through the resurrection of the body to eternal life in the restored Kingdom of God on earth.

Psa 107:15

Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works to the children of men!-
The salvation of Israel historically was by grace alone; for when they cried to Him in desperation, their faith and repentance was hardly very deep because they immediately returned to their own ways once they were rescued. And yet given this pattern of grace, the psalmist can confidently exhort Judah and the exiles to again pray and throw themselves upon this grace; but they must perceive it as grace, and make it real and permanent. His "wonderful works" were not so much in His material saving of them, but in the amazing grace He showed to them.

Psa 107:16

For He has broken the gates of brass and cut through bars of iron-
This seems to allude to the famed gates and bars of Babylon, and is imagining the fulfilment of Is. 45:2. But Babylon didn't fall as potentially envisaged in the prophets; for Judah didn't repent, and Cyrus who was to break the gates didn't live up to his potential. Therefore the gates weren't broken or cut; a different scenario played out when the Medes took Babylon.

Psa 107:17

Fools are afflicted because of their disobedience and because of their iniquities-
This is as close as we get to an admission of sin; a confession of iniquity, disobedience and foolishness, and an acceptance of the consequences ['affliction']. The "afflictions" of David are presented as a pattern for those of the exiles (Ps. 132:1). They too denied their sin initially and struggled to accept its consequences; but David's path of repentance and restoration was to be theirs. But for the most part they refused to follow this. LXX "He helped them out of the way of their iniquity" hints at the psychological help

from the Holy Spirit which was available potentially, just as it is for the new Israel who wish to leave Babylon for Zion.

Psa 107:18

Their soul abhors every kind of food, they draw near to the gates of death-
This seems to be one of a number of allusions to Job (here to Job 33:20), whose book would have been one of the early scriptures available to David and the psalmist who has used David's earlier psalm here. Drawing near to the gates of death was how David felt (Ps. 9:13; 88:3).

Psa 107:19

Then they cry to Yahweh in their trouble, He saves them out of their distresses-
The cry to Yahweh is made at the point of death (:18). The exiles failed to perceive that they were facing spiritual death in Babylon. For they were popular and prosperous there, and were not at all at knife point as they had been in Egypt. And therefore they failed to cry to Yahweh for deliverance as they should have done.

Psa 107:20

He sends His word and heals them, and delivers them from their graves-
This repeats the promise of the revived dry bones in Ez. 37; the exiles were to be as it were resurrected from their graves. This was the potential degree of revival possible for the exiles. It was prefigured in the "word" sent to Hezekiah to heal him of his sickness (2 Kings 20:4; Is. 38:4).

Psa 107:21

Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works to the children of men!-
The exiles are bidden praise God ahead of time for His grace, as if it had already been experienced. This is the essence of faith, to see things from God's perspective, believing and feeling at the point of asking that we receive what we have requested (Mk. 11:24).

Psa 107:22

Let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with singing-
This Psalm may well have been used in the temple services, and at this point there was an invitation to the community to join in the singing. The exiles had no temple, priesthood or altar; they are being invited to understand that the essence of sacrifice is not the blood of animals, but the words and thoughts of God's people.

Psa 107:23

Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business in great waters-
The Psalm envisages God's prophetic word of restoration as coming gloriously true, and the thanksgiving offered was to be as sailors might thank their God after a deliverance from certain death in a storm. The allusion is to the restoration prophecy of Is. 42:10, which the psalmist praises as if it has been fulfilled. The "great" or "many waters" (AV) refer to the many nations, who for all their apparent power were to be stilled by God in a moment to prepare the way for His restored Kingdom.

The language of :23-30 is full of connection with the account of Jonah: "going down", "the sea", "ships", "wind", "storm", "the deep", "waters", "evil", "crying out", "stilling the waters", "calm" all use the same words as in Jonah. The exiles are being connected with Jonah, who was saved out of all the dramas being described. He repented through the process of getting him miraculously to his destination.

Psa 107:24

these see Yahweh's works, and His wonders in the deep-
Just as God did wonders in "the deep" of the Red Sea, so He in fact had done upon "many waters" (:23 AV). See on :23. "The deep" refers to the literal bottom of the sea. The waves of the surface water were imagined to be caused by monsters of evil who were in the "depths" of the sea. The sea was seen as mysterious and the abode of the forces of evil. These ideas are deconstructed here. God is all powerful; there is no 'Satan' being which is a source of radical evil, outside of God's control. Even if such things were believed in, Yahweh was able to do His wonders in the very lair of these supposed beings.

Psa 107:25

For He commands, and raises the stormy wind which lifts up its waves-
The storm waves arise not because of any monster of evil, but at God's command. The Hebrew words for "wind" and "spirit" are the same; and God makes His Angels winds / spirits (Ps. 104:4). The seas represent the nations, from whom the exiles had been saved. Their storm against God's people had been raised up at God's command, operationalized through the Angels.

Psa 107:26

They mount up to the sky; they go down again to the depths. Their soul melts away because of trouble-

The salvation of Jonah in a similar storm represented that of the exiles, if they were willing to perceive it. But the exiles didn't want to accept that the opulence of Babylon was in fact a storm amongst the seas of nations which was driving them to cry to Yahweh for deliverance (:27). The deliverance of the disciples from storms was clearly a fulfilment of this kind of language about danger at sea, desperate cries to God, and then sudden calm. But the significance of the connection is that the exiles had precluded the possibility of salvation from the "seas" of the Gentile world at their time; and so these things were reapplied to the Lord Jesus and His people.

Psa 107:27

They reel back and forth and stagger like a drunken man, all their wisdom disappears-
Salvation from the storm of the Gentile seas was not by human wisdom. There was no way out from death in the storm. They were driven to a point where they had to cry to Yahweh (:28). But the exiles were not materially driven to such a point. God in His kindness and mercy to them in exile didn't allow them to be maltreated. And yet the result was that the desperate cry for deliverance wasn't elicited from the majority.

Psa 107:28

Then they cry to Yahweh in their trouble and He brings them out of their distress-
See on :27. This phrase is a refrain throughout the Psalm (:6,13,19,28). God would have brought the exiles out of the spiritual distress of the captivity; but the majority preferred to remain, and the few who did return did so, it seems, motivated by what land and homes they could carve out for themselves. So this redemption from distress was spurned by the exiles, and is reapplied to the great salvation offered now in the Lord Jesus. The day of "distress" was that of their judgment for their sins by the Babylonian invasion (s.w. Zeph. 1:15). But God would bring them out of that consequence for sin. That was the psalmist's hope and confidence. But the tragedy was that the exiles didn't want to know.

Psa 107:29

He makes the storm a calm, so that its waves are still-
This may mean that the ideal intention was that the nations where God's people were exiled would repent and also accept Yahweh. They would then be still and at peace with Him. But this didn't happen at the time as envisaged. Therefore the image of still seas after storm is used of how things shall finally be at the last day (Rev. 15:2).

Psa 107:30

Then they are glad because it is calm, and so He brings them to their desired haven-
See on Ps. 106:24. The idea of God stilling a storm and getting terrified sailors immediately to their port clearly had fulfilment in how Christ stilled the storm on the lake of Galilee (Jn. 6:18-21). This doesn't mean that He is God Himself, but rather that Old Testament statements about God were fulfilled in His Son, who manifested the Father to perfection. But the significance of the connection is that the exiles had precluded the possibility of salvation from the "seas" of the Gentile world at their time; and so these things were reapplied to the Lord Jesus and His people.

Psa 107:31

Let them praise Yahweh for His grace, for His wonderful works for the children of men!-
This phrase is a refrain throughout the Psalm. See notes on :8,15,21,31.

Psa 107:32

Let them exalt Him also in the gathering of the people, and praise Him in the seat of the elders-
Note the parallel between elders and the assembly / gathering of the general congregation. All alike were to be awed by God's grace. Likewise Acts 15:22 parallels the elders and the whole congregation: "The apostles and elders *with the whole church*" agreed a solution. It wasn't a top down decision imposed upon the congregation. They all participated.

Psa 107:33

He turns rivers into a desert, water springs into a thirsty ground-
This continues the allusions to the restoration prophecies. The restored Kingdom of God could have come at the restoration, complete with a Messiah figure. But it was precluded by the failures of the various potential Messiahs like Zerubbabel, and by the impenitence of the exiles.

Psa 107:34

and a fruitful land into a salt waste because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it-
The envisaged restitution was to be a radical inversion of all things. It was Babylon which was to be turned into a salt waste. The prophecies of her fall speak of supernatural Divine judgment ruining the land surrounding Babylon, akin to the scale and nature of Sodom's destruction. But this didn't happen. Babylon didn't fall suddenly, as envisaged; the prophetic scenario was reapplied and recalculated to the fall of the latter day Babylon in Rev. 18, which alludes to all those prophecies of Babylon's fall which didn't come about as potentially possible at the time.

Ez. 47:11 likewise envisaged some places in the restored Zion as being still "a salt waste". But the exiles didn't rebuild Zion according to the commandments in Ez. 40-48 and so this didn't come about as it then could have done.

Psa 107:35

He turns a desert into a pool of water, and a dry land into water springs-
This kind of radical inversion of all things, socially and also in the natural creation, was to be the hallmark of the restored Kingdom of God. But the deserts weren't transformed when the exiles returned, and the restoration prophets record how they suffered terribly with drought, disease, pests, famine and poor harvests. What could have been just didn't come about- at that time. It has all been reinterpreted with reference to the restoration of the Kingdom of God at the return of the Lord Jesus.

Psa 107:36

There He makes the hungry live, that they may prepare a city to live in-
The picture of the returned exiles arriving hungry but preparing Zion their city, with the waste areas made miraculously fertile (:35), enjoying great harvests and mushrooming livestock (:37,38) just didn't happen. They returned in weak faith, seeking only their own personal advantage, and therefore they suffered terribly with drought, disease, pests, famine and poor harvests. And most didn't want to "prepare a city", to rebuild Zion; they were prepared to leave it broken down whilst they built their own houses and farmsteads, as Haggai laments. And so this potential was reapplied to Christian believers, who do prepare themselves as a city ["the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband", Rev. 21:2]; and for whom a city is prepared ["God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He has prepared for them a city", Heb. 11:16].

Psa 107:37

sow fields, plant vineyards, and reap the fruits of increase-
The psalmist was rejoicing in faith the restoration prophecies which spoke of these things (Is. 65:21; Jer. 31:5) would surely come true. But they didn't come true at the pathetically small 'restoration' which occurred. See on :36. The famine was so severe that the returned exiles had to mortgage their vineyards and fields just to get food to eat (Neh. 5:3-5).

Psa 107:38

He blesses them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; He doesn't allow their livestock to decrease-
The language of blessing and 'multiplying greatly' is all that of the promises to Abraham (Gen. 17:2,8). Those promises are the basis of the new covenant, which was offered to the exiles because they had broken the old covenant. But they refused the offer, and instead kept trying to keep parts of the old covenant. And so the exiles who returned didn't experience this great multiplication of blessing which was potentially possible. 'Multiplication' is repeatedly a theme of the restoration prophecies (Jer. 30:19; Ez. 36:11,29 etc.).

Psa 107:39

Again, they are diminished and bowed down through oppression, trouble, and sorrow-
"Bowed down" is the word used of how in repentance over Bathsheba, David was "bowed down greatly" (Ps. 38:6). The word can mean 'to humble'; and this is the required response to sin. David was representative of Israel in their sinfulness; they were intended to follow his path of penitence. If the exiles had done so, then they would have been restored as he was; but they didn't.

Psa 107:40

He pours contempt on princes, and causes them to wander in a trackless waste-
This is what could have happened to the leaders of Babylon. As it happened, the princes of Babylon were largely onside with the Medes when they took the city, and only Belshazzar was slain. They could have suffered the condemnation of Israel, wandering in the desert- in contrast to the way that the exiles potentially had been given a "straight" path back to Zion, and could have had a straight path through the wilderness to Canaan when they first left Egypt. See on :7. Condemnation is here pictured as wandering without a "way"; the condemnation of the wicked at the last day will likewise be a reflection of their aimless lives, for all their talk of career paths and milestones of achievement. "Trackless waste" is Heb. *tohu*, how the earth was originally "without form" (Gen. 1:2), as if all God's creative effort for these people was in vain.

Psa 107:41

Yet He lifts the needy out of their affliction, and increases their families like a flock-
AV "maketh him families". The Israelites were likewise set in families when they left Egypt (Ps. 68:6). The allusion is to how Israel in Egypt were saved through uniting in family units around the Passover lamb. Those without families were set together with families, and were delivered as families. And God was willing to repeat the Exodus deliverance for the captives in Babylon / Persia. But just as people effectively spurn

family life today, and dislike the discipline of life in a church family, so they will find the condemnation process to be so unbearably lonely.

Psa 107:42

The upright will see it, and be glad. All the wicked will shut their mouths-
"Will see it" could mean effectively 'Will experience this'. They will use the potential. The idiom of shutting the mouth could imply that they accept the rightness of God's ways and their wrongness. For the intention of the judgment upon Babylon was always ultimately that they should repent, and join with repentant Judah in forming a new multiethnic people of God in the land.

Psa 107:43

Whoever is wise will pay attention to these things; they will reflect upon the graces of Yahweh-
This may be an intensive plural, for the great singular grace of Yahweh. Although the psalmist speaks in the past tense for what he believes will be the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies, he accepts that the fulfilment will be conditional upon perceiving God's grace and accepting it in faith. For the most part, the exiles didn't do this, and so the invitation was given to a new people of God.

PSALMS CHAPTER 108

Psa 108:1 A Song. A Psalm by David- Psalm 108 is very similar to Psalm 60, which is a prayer at the time of the war with Edom. There were some reverses in that campaign, lamented in Ps. 44,60. But here we have the song of final praise for the victory, although remembering the reverses suffered. See on 2 Sam. 8:1 and Ps. 60. Much of Psalm 60 is repeated in Psalm 108 as a victory song. Likewise in Psalm 44. The war with Edom clearly had a far larger dimension than the simple note in 2 Samuel 8 that David defeated Edom. He did, but after a stunning defeat, and an amazing victory by God's grace alone, for which David gave ample thanks in at least three Psalms, 44,60 and 108. So we can say that Ps. 57:8-12 has been placed into Ps. 108:2-6; and Ps. 60:7-14 placed in Ps. 108:7-14. Ps. 57 referred to a time when David was on the run from Saul, and was "in the cave". Ps. 60 was David's reflection on how his campaign against Edom had initially met defeat, but then had a great victory. Like us, David recalled past situations in his life and how God had acted- and he wants to remember those two occasions and use them to encourage himself in his next trial. We can do likewise.

Those earlier psalms were put together and are now reappropriated and reinterpreted now in the context of the exiles- for Ps. 108 is in a series of psalms which speak of the restoration. Ps. 137 records how the exiles felt unable to sing and praise God in Babylon; the idea is that now they can do so, and this psalm of David was going to be used by them for this praise.

My heart is steadfast, God. I will sing and I will make music with my soul- AV "fixed", as in Ps. 112:7 "his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord". This mental focus and stability is the hallmark of the true believer; being "grounded and settled, not moved away from the hope of the Gospel" (Col. 1:23). And God will help us with this. There is a huge range of meaning in the Hebrew word translated "steadfast"- it is elsewhere translated confirmed, directed, fashioned, framed, prepared, made ready, made stable. All this God will do to the human heart- if we let His spirit work upon our spirit. We think of how the Lord Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to death in Jerusalem. Literally, 'made steadfast'. David had earlier understood that for the humble and righteous, God can "prepare their heart" (Ps. 10:17). This is evidence enough that God works directly upon the human heart and psychology, which He does today through the work of His Spirit upon the human spirit. For it is men who must prepare their heart in prayer and relationship toward God (s.w. 2 Chron. 12:14; Job 11:13; Ps. 7:9). But God can also do this for the humble. Hence David later asks God to create in him a 'prepared' heart (s.w. Ps. 51:10). And God heard; for the same phrase is used of how God 'prepared' or (AV) "fixed" / NEV 'made steadfast' his heart (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7). In allusion to this, Solomon was to later reflect that God can direct or 'prepare' (s.w.) the heart of man, even if he is thinking to direct his steps elsewhere (Prov. 16:9). Or we could render "ready" for "steadfast". He was ready and eager to praise God even before the sun arose (:2).

Psa 108:2 Wake up, harp and lyre! I will wake up the dawn- Or as AV "I myself will awake early". The Psalms continually stress the importance of starting each day with the Lord; David gives the impression his heart was bursting with praise as he awoke, and he instinctively wanted to grab his harp and play and sing praise. But we could take 'waking up the dawn' as the psalmist's desire to somehow make the dawn come; and in the context of the exiles, the dawn was the restoration. The call to awake the harp may connect with the lament of Ps. 137, that the exiles felt unable to play the harp and praise God in Babylon; they had hung up their harps. And for us all, "the sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his rays". The Lord's return is the dawn. And we are eager to hasten it, waiting to praise Him for His grace "among the peoples" (:3).

Psa 108:3 I will give thanks to You, Yahweh, among the nations, I will sing praises to You among the peoples- How did David achieve his aim of praising Yahweh to the

surrounding nations, as a means of witness to them of the God of Israel? Surely through his Psalms being distributed as popular music to them.

Psa 108:4 For Your grace is great above the heavens, Your faithfulness reaches to the skies- The Psalm is praising God for the victorious campaign against Edom. But as noted on :1 and on the related Ps. 60:9, there had at times been reverses in the campaign, because Israel hadn't been obedient to the covenant. And so David recognizes that the overall victory had been by Divine grace. Grace / mercy and truth / faithfulness often refer to the Abrahamic covenant. He recognizes that victory over enemies was because of God's covenant faithfulness; even though at times they had broken that covenant.

Psa 108:5 Be exalted, God, above the heavens! Let Your glory be over all the earth- The earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham was still largely in the hand of non-Israelites who were not in covenant with Yahweh. David's desire was that through his music ministry (see on :3), *all* the *eretz* would lift up Israel's God as exalted. There is surely nobody else recorded in the Old Testament who had such passion to witness to the Gentiles and convert them.

Psa 108:6 That Your beloved may be delivered, save with Your right hand, and answer us- The parallel is in Ps. 60:5, which has the same words, but concludes "and answer *us*" instead of "answer me". "The beloved of Yahweh" was Israel nationally (s.w. Dt. 33:12; Jer. 11:15; 12:7). But it was also David personally; a Psalm about David's personal deliverance is extended to all Israel. David saw himself as representative of God's people. It could be that Solomon is in view also; for his original name was Jedidiah (2 Sam. 12:25), 'the beloved of Yahweh', referred to in that way by David in Ps. 45:1. Perhaps Solomon was involved in the battle against the Edomites and David is asking for his son to be preserved. Whatever, it is not until :6 that we realize the Psalm is a request for help. David, the "beloved", needs help- but his first five verses are taken up with praise of God. A pattern for our perspective in prayer.

Psa 108:7 God has spoken from His sanctuary: In triumph I will divide Shechem, and measure out the valley of Succoth- Shechem and Succoth are both associated with Abraham and the patriarchs (Gen. 12:6; 33:17), as if this is the time when they shall receive the promised land- at the last day. Jacob halted first at Succoth and then at Shechem, when he returned to Canaan (Gen. 33:17-18); and his return was seen as that of the exiles, likewise from Mesopotamia. God's sanctuary was in ruins on earth, but He spoke from His heavenly sanctuary. Presumably there was a direct Divine communication from the sanctuary, perhaps through the mouth of Nathan, encouraging Israel to continue in the Edom campaign despite the reverses experienced (see on Ps.

44, 60). The idea of 'division' and 'measuring' is 'possession' and inheritance (as Josh. 18:10). The idea therefore is that Israel is God's, and He had given it to Israel for inheritance; therefore those seeking to take it from them would be defeated. Perhaps Succoth and Shechem are mentioned because of their connections with Jacob, mentioned together in Gen. 33:17,18. As He had been with Jacob, despite allowing him to experience many setbacks and near defeats, so He would be with the later seed of Israel.

Psa 108:8 Gilead is mine. Manasseh is mine. Ephraim also is my helmet. Judah is my sceptre- The emphasis is that the land belongs to God, it "is Mine"; therefore those seeking to take it from God's people. would be defeated. Gilead and Manasseh represent the territory east of the Jordan; and Ephraim and Judah refer to the tribes west of the Jordan. The territories east of the Jordan just as much were God's as those to the west of it; for the Edomites were seeking to take firstly the Israelite territory east of the Jordan. The northern ten tribe kingdom, Manasseh and Ephraim, is mentioned along with Judah. But under Ezra and Nehemiah, the northern tribes were excluded from their definition of "Israel". But they were all equally God's. Philistia (:9) was equally to be part of this restored Kingdom, as Zech. 9 also states. But the people of Ashdod were excluded from the restored Kingdom by Nehemiah.

Psa 108:9 Moab is my wash pot, I will toss my sandal on Edom, I will shout over Philistia- Casting a shoe was what one did to their servant, so he would lace it up and place it on your foot. They were to become subservient to Yahweh. And that could imply that the hope was that they would accept Him as their God. For that was what conquered peoples usually did. David had earlier shouted in triumph over the Philistines when he slew Goliath; and that was to prepare him for this later victory. Circumstances repeat in our lives because they are under God's control.

Psa 108:10 Who will bring me into the fortified city? Who has led me to Edom?- "Strong city" can mean the fortified, strengthened city under siege (2 Kings 25:2 s.w.). The reference may be to Sela or Petra, Edom's capital, which claimed to be fortified against any invader (Obadiah 3). Rashi translates this as meaning 'Who will bring me into the strong city? He who led me to Edom!', where God gave victory and 18,000 enemies were slain in the valley of Salt.

Psa 108:11 Haven't You rejected us, God? You don't go forth, God, with our armies- Possibly the idea is from :10 "Who can lead me into Edom?", with the answer 'Only God'. The God who had rejected them and not gone with their armies is asked to now help them (:12), and the psalmist is sure that He will (:13). So here we have a case of man

being rejected by God in this life, condemned by Him- but the verdict can be changed, as it was with Peter. And in fact as it is with all of us. In the context of the exiles, the idea is that as God temporarily withdrew help from David, so He had from Judah in exile; but this could change for them as it did for David.

The Psalm is clearly related to Ps. 44, which appears to be a comment upon a temporary set back and defeat during this campaign against Edom. But despite this, the Psalm glorifies how God had come through for His people, despite the temporary reverses. So this comment that God has rejected them would be looking back to how they once felt; for this Psalm is a victory song over Edom after defeating them as it is so similar to Ps. 60 (see on Ps. 60:1).

Psa 108:12 Give us help against the enemy, for the help of man is vain- Perhaps a reference to some attempt to hire mercenaries to help them in the campaign against Edom. "Help" is the word for 'salvation'. God's salvation is in Jesus, Yahoshua, Yah's salvation. Anything else is vain.

Psa 108:13 Through God we will do valiantly, for it is He who will tread down our enemies- David sees in the victory against Edom a guarantee that God will give them victory against future adversaries. This could be argued to be over interpretation; because as noted on Ps. 60:9, Divine blessing was related to whether Israel kept the covenant or not. And David seems to fail to emphasize this conditional element in God's help, just as he downplayed it in his enthusiasm to see Solomon as the fulfilment of the promised Messianic seed. And this led to Solomon's arrogance and spiritual collapse.

PSALMS CHAPTER 109

Psa 109:1

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David-
The Psalm was apparently initially written about his persecution by Saul, but then expanded and reapplied to his experiences with Shimei and Ahithophel at the time of Absalom's rebellion.

God of my praise, don't remain silent-
The apparent silence of God is the abiding struggle of every true believer. But David

juxtaposes this struggle with the statement that he will always praise God. Regardless of our difficulties with the problem of evil and the apparent silence of God, He is still to be the object of our praise. The problem of evil and God's silence is in fact built in to our human experience to test and develop our love and trust in God. When we think of "praise" we tend to think of joyful group singing. But the "praise" offered by man when God appears silent... is surely in the heart.

Psa 109:2

for they have opened the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of deceit against me. They have spoken to me with a lying tongue-
So many of the Psalms contain references to Saul's smear campaign against David (Ps. 27:12; 31:13 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind. It makes good homework to list all the lies Saul told David. But these words also apply to the lies told to David at the time of Absalom's rebellion, who for years prior to it had bad mouthed David to the men of Israel. Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

And yet the obvious initial application is to the cursing of Shimei, which is twice recorded as "cursing". David repeatedly considers as unjustified his sufferings as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. His repentance didn't last long, and appears to have been what Paul would call a 'repentance repented of'. We all know the problem. The passage of time leads us to reframe our behaviour, to justify it ourselves rather than trust God's justification of repentant sinners. We want the sin to disappear- and we can only do this by either justifying ourselves, or letting God justify us, based upon our genuine repentance.

Psa 109:3

They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause-
The continued emphasis in David's psalms upon "without cause" surely reflects a self righteousness (Ps. 35:19; 69:4; 109:3; 119:161). For David's righteousness was only

impressive relative to the wickedness of his enemies; before God, it was filthy rags. It was true that Saul persecuted David "without cause" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5), but the experience of "without cause" persecution can lead us to an inappropriate self-righteousness. This is what happened to Job, who also suffered "without cause" (s.w. Job 2:3), and had to be convicted of self-righteousness at the end of the story. And it seems this happened to David. David himself intended to shed blood "without cause" and was only saved from it by grace (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:31).

Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals that frequent and intense self-examination was a leading characteristic of David:, especially while on the run from Saul and Absalom; as if he began to pick up false guilt from how he was being treated, wondering if it was all in fact justified (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

Psa 109:4

In return for my love, they are my adversaries; but I am in prayer-
This clearly applies to David's love for Saul, refusing to kill him when he could have done, and lamenting over him as man mourns for his mother (Ps. 35:14). And likewise of his senseless love for Absalom. And yet again we could note that David speaks so much hatred for Saul in the Psalms; he is choosing to focus upon his own more positive side, rather than seeing that he too in the wider picture of human character and history had not always been so perfect. We recall his murder of his loyal friend Uriah.

"But I am in prayer" could mean that that despite their adversarial behaviour, David had prayed for them. He says the same in Ps. 35:13: "when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth, I afflicted my soul with fasting. My prayer returned into my own bosom".

Psa 109:5

They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love-
See on :4. Whilst David's lament is understandable, he shows himself out of step with the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who taught that we should love and do good to others without expecting "good" in return from them, and indeed accepting they may continue to do evil to us (Lk. 6:33,34). But David has the natural expectation that those we do good to ought to be loyal to us in return, and certainly not hate us.

Psa 109:6

Set a wicked man over him, let an adversary stand at his right hand-
The plural slanderers and adversaries now become focused upon a singular person. Possibly David is personifying them all as one person. Or if a specific individual is in view, it perhaps was in the first context Shimei as he cursed David as he fled from

Absalom. But verse 8 is quoted in the New Testament about Judas. This is not to say that everything about Shimei in this Psalm is true of Judas, indeed the bitter feelings of David as expressed here do not seem appropriate to the saving sorrow which the Lord felt for Judas.

The contrast is with how Yahweh stands at the right hand of the righteous (:31), i.e. as his guide. A satan at the right hand is a similar situation to the description of the court of Heaven which we meet in Zechariah 3. I suggest that all human situations on earth are reflected in the court of Heaven, and vice versa. David wished that an Angel adversarial to Shimei would be actively involved in his life, and that Angel [a righteous one] would be represented by the actions of a "wicked man" on earth leading Shimei [or Judas] to destruction. So perhaps it was a Satan-Angel that stood at Judas' right hand (i. e. to influence him), confirming him in the way he had chosen to go, as God hardened Pharaoh's already hard heart. The question is, who was this individual on earth in the life of Shimei, and perhaps also of Judas? Perhaps it was the High Priest in the case of Judas.

The book of Job is frequently alluded to by David (see on :24); it was likely about the only scripture he had access to apart from the Pentateuch. So it is unsurprising that he should apparently hold the same idea of a Satan-Angel, under God's control, which we find in Job. That Angel represented and was manifest through adversaries on earth, who may themselves have been evil. Perhaps David thought in terms of a wicked man on earth, controlled by the Satan-Angel in Heaven. It seems from Zech. 3:1 that it was customary for the accuser to stand on the right hand of the accused in the court.

We note that :6-19 all speak of an individual being cursed, whereas the rest of the Psalm is about David's plural adversaries. Possibly David is going through them and cursing them individually; or possibly, these are the curses *upon David* which were uttered by his adversaries. Perhaps he remembered every word of Shimei's curses; hence his inability to fully forgive him at the end of his life, endlessly playing the tape of these curses in his mind. It is stressed that Shimei cursed David: "cursed continually... cursed as he went, threw stones at him, and threw dust" (2 Sam. 16:5,13). This would then be the reference of :28 "They may curse, but You bless". And likewise what he had in mind in :2-4: "For wicked and deceitful mouths are opened against me, speaking against me with lying tongues. They encircle me with words of hate, and attack me without cause. In return for my love they accuse me". "Let an adversary stand at his right hand" was what they wished on David (:6); but his response is to trust that "[God] will stand at the right hand of the needy [a term David often uses of himself], to save him from those who judge his soul" (:31).

And yet :6-19 seem to equally apply to David's cursing of Shimei as they do to Shimei's cursing of David. The commentary bears that out. My suggestion is that David is quoting Shimei's cursings of him- but applying to Shimei. Having quoted the curses, David then

says: "This is the reward [or 'May this be the reward...'] of my adversaries from Yahweh, of those who speak evil against my soul" (:20)- as if to say, 'What my adversaries say about me is actually true of them'. GNB "LORD, punish my enemies in that way— those who say such evil things against me!". David wishes the curses upon him to be applied to the one who cursed him.

Psa 109:7

When he is judged, let him come forth guilty, let his prayer be turned into sin-
This is clearly wishing for the person in view to be condemned at the last day, and for God to consider this person's prayers as sin. David seems totally lacking in any desire for repentance and salvation for his enemies, but rather wishes their absolute condemnation from God. The idea is that the entrance of prayer before God is the entrance of the person; and the outcome of prayer is therefore a foretaste of the day of judgment. Hence answered prayer is a foretaste of our final acceptance. We come in prayer boldly before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16 "Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace"), just as we will come boldly before that same throne at the day of judgment: "We may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 Jn. 2:28). Our attitude in prayer now will be our attitude in the day of judgment. David wished this on Shimei and Shimei wished it on David (see on :6). There is no grace in either of them.

Psa 109:8

Let his days be few, let another take his office-
Although quoted about Judas, the initial application would have been to the likes of Saul, Ahithophel and Shimei. And on :19 I will suggest Joab may also be in view. Their "office" would have respectively been as king, chief adviser and head of Saul's herdsmen, and in Joab's case, head of the army. In the application to Saul, David's desire to see "another take his office" would have been a request for himself to be made king after Saul, as he had been promised.

If we take this as a curse upon David, this would reflect the common feeling that David should have resigned as king. He himself had taught that "he that rules over men must be of integrity" and he had demonstrated that he wasn't.

Psa 109:9

Let his children be fatherless and his wife a widow-
A quotation from Ex. 22:24, of God's especial condemnation of those who abuse the stranger, the poor and weak. David feels he is in that situation whilst persecuted by Saul, often describing himself as a stranger and "poor and needy" (:16).

If, as discussed on :6, these are the cursings of David, then the reference to his illegitimate children would be understandable in the context of his adultery.

Psa 109:10

may his children be wandering beggars, let them be sought from their ruins-
In the application to Saul, this would have included David's best friend Jonathan. He seems to have been far too quick in his wishing of the worst condemnation on his enemies. Perhaps he is using standard phrases of condemnation, without thinking of their implication. We can take a warning here; we can all use standard forms of cursing another, the implications of which we need to think through. David is wishing that his enemies become poor and needy- when this is how he presents himself before God in :22 "I am poor and needy", and asks for pity to be shown to him. This is a glaring error. If we beg for God's pity upon us in our poverty, then we are not to wish such poverty and lack of pity upon even our worst enemies.

Psa 109:11

Let the creditor seize all that he has, let strangers plunder the fruit of his labour-
The Mosaic law forbad the exercise of such usury (s.w. Ex. 22:25). But what is envisaged is a man in debt to Gentiles ("strangers", paralleled with "the creditor"). As noted on :10, this is perhaps a standard curse which David is appropriating perhaps without undue thought as to the implications (see on :10).

Psa 109:12

Let there be nobody to extend kindness to him, neither let there be anyone to have pity on his fatherless children-
It is God who 'extends kindness', for the phrase is alone used of Him (Ps. 36:10; Jer. 31:3). David wishes this person to be outside the realm of God's grace; and we reflect why ever David felt the need to say this about anybody. Perhaps his grief over the deaths of Saul and Absalom was partly because he realized he had cursed them too deeply in prayers like this.

Psa 109:13

Let his posterity be cut off, in the next generation may their name be blotted out-
As noted on :10, David is not thinking of the implications of this with regards to Saul. David does all he can to ensure that the name of Saul and Jonathan was not blotted out, showing extraordinary grace to their descendants. Perhaps he did this aware that such prayers as this had been going far too far.

If these are cursings of David (see on :6), then this is a request for the Divine promises to him to be reversed.

Psa 109:14

Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered by Yahweh, don't let the sin of his mother be blotted out-
"Blotted out" is the word David used when begging for his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah to be blotted out: "And blot out all of my iniquities" (Ps. 51:9). We note with concern that in this Psalm written apparently after this time concerning the time of Absalom's rebellion, David asks that the sins of his enemies *not* be blotted out. Again we wonder as to whether David maintained an awareness of the enormity of God's grace to him. David is asking that the full penalty for sins of ancestors be visited upon his enemies, in the spirit of Ex. 20:5. God had not exacted from David the full consequences of his sins, but he wishes this upon others. Any wish for 'full consequence' for our enemies must always be reduced by our continual awareness of our own past and present frailties before God.

If these are curses upon David (see on :6), then this may be a reference to how David's mother conceived him "in sin": "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5).

Psa 109:15

Let them be before Yahweh continually, that He may cut off their memory from the earth-
Again we note that there is not a word of desire for the repentance and salvation of the person, but rather verse after verse expressing a desire for their eternal condemnation. And indeed God did take the life of some of David's children in judgment for what he did.

Psa 109:16

because he didn't remember to show kindness, but persecuted the poor and needy man, the broken in heart, to kill them-
Shimei had in view Uriah as the "poor man" of 2 Sam. 12:1, whom David killed. David sees these words as relevant to himself as the "poor man" who was persecuted by Shimei and Absalom, who wished to kill him. He speaks of himself with just this phrase in :22: "I am poor and needy". David remembered those who showed kindness to him as he fled Absalom, e.g. "show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite... for so [i.e.

with kindness] they came to me when I fled from Absalom" (1 Kings 2:7). Shimei cursed David as he fled from Absalom.

David had seen himself as "poor and needy" and broken hearted, needing grace after his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:16,22), and also during his persecution by Saul. We noted on :9 that David felt himself to be the "poor and needy" who had been abused by Saul. He wished Solomon to likewise have pity on the "poor and needy" amongst the Gentiles, those who had likewise repented (Ps. 72:13). And David was especially desirous to himself see the "poor and needy" blessed and accepted as he had been (Ps. 82:3,4; 113:7). It is our personal experience of needing grace which leads us to have a heart for those like us, the poor and needy. Any other motivation will ultimately not abide. Solomon appears to glorify his mother Bathsheba for likewise pitying the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9,20). But we have to note that David had received grace when he was broken and needy, as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. But he doesn't want to reflect that to this adversary, who had likely been raised up by God (at least in the application to Ahithophel, Shimei and Absalom) as a consequence for his sin. We note too that Nathan had likened Uriah to a "poor man" abused by David (2 Sam. 12:1). But David here asks God to eternally condemn those who persecuted the "poor" (see on Ps. 109:9,16). And it seems Ps. 109 was used by David not only about his persecution at the time of Saul, but also of his sufferings at the time of Absalom's rebellion, after the time of his sin. So it seems David didn't maintain his sense of humility before Nathan.

In 2 Sam. 9:3 David enquired "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?". David's mercy to the "house" of his enemy reflects God's promised grace to David's "house" in 2 Sam. 7, just as we likewise should reflect our personal experience of God's grace to others. The same phrase is used by David of Saul when he says that Saul had not remembered to "show mercy / kindness" (Ps. 109:16). But all the same David shows grace to him. So David's response to God showing him grace was to show grace to those who didn't show grace. Our response should be likewise.

Psa 109:17

Yes, he loved cursing, and it came to him. He didn’t delight in blessing, and so it was far from him-

This points towards Shimei, whose cursing of David at the time of Absalom's rebellion clearly hurt David very deeply. At the time, David forgave him. But he didn't maintain that intensity of forgiveness, because on his deathbed he asks Solomon to ensure Shimei even as an old man is slain because of it. His statement here that the cursing "came to him" may be a 'future perfect', stating the future as if it has already happened, as a way of stating intention. And David expressed this intention to Solomon to ensure

Shimei was cursed with death for his cursing. We too struggle to maintain levels of forgiveness we grant to people, and we perceive how God's "frank" and permanent forgiveness (Lk. 7:42) is of an altogether higher quality and nature than our forgiveness.

Psa 109:18

He clothed himself also with cursing as with his garment; it came into his inward parts like water, like oil into his bones-
As noted on :17, David graciously overlooked Shimei's cursing, promising him that he would not die because of it (2 Sam. 16:10,11; 19:23). But he didn't keep up that level of grace to the end: he later asked Solomon to ensure that Shimei was killed for that incident (1 Kings 2:8,9). And one wonders whether it was Shimei's words which so broke David's heart that he later wrote these words. A curse entering the inward parts like water seems to allude to the ritual of Num. 5:11-31, which is in the context of sexual misbehaviour. This would confirm the suggestion on :6 that these curses are actually being made against David, rather than by him.

Psa 109:19

Let it be to him as the clothing with which he covers himself, like the belt that is always around him-
Whoever the individual is in view, he was known for always wearing the same belt. The only person in David's life whose belt is noted is Joab (2 Sam. 20:8; 1 Kings 2:5). See on :8. Perhaps this Psalm began with reference to Saul, but was reapplied to Ahithophel, Absalom, Shimei and then finally to Joab when Joab rose up against David. In the previous verses, David has himself wished cursing upon this person, but now he appears to try to justify it by saying that the person who has cursed him will simply receive his own curses.

Psa 109:20

This is the reward of my adversaries from Yahweh, of those who speak evil against my soul-
If the preceding :6-19 were curses upon David (see on :6), he is now wishing these curses upon them, arguing that 'This all sounds more true of you than me'. We could render 'May this be the reward of my adversaries'.

David had himself spoken evil against innocent people (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:17). But David was so sensitive to words spoken against *him* that he breathes out the deepest condemnation upon those who had spoken them. Again we get the impression that David is not adequately aware of the huge grace he himself had received. Otherwise

there would have been at least some desire for the repentance and salvation of his enemies. This is so markedly lacking in the Psalms of David. See on :21.

Psa 109:21

But deal with me, Yahweh the Lord, for Your name's sake; because Your grace is good, deliver me-
As noted on :20, David appears totally lacking in any grace toward his enemies; but he here and in :26 begs for grace to be shown to him, aware at least subconsciously of his own desperate need for deliverance / salvation by grace. He rightly perceives God's Name to be essentially "grace". The Name of Yahweh is essentially His characteristics (Ex. 34:5-7), and they are epitomized in "grace".

Psa 109:22

for I am poor and needy. My heart is wounded within me- See on :16, where David appeals to God's anger with those who abuse the "poor and needy" to condemn any who had not had pity upon him. He is acting just like Saul whom he condemns here, for he too breathed curses upon any who didn't feel sorry for him (1 Sam. 22:8).

Psa 109:23

I fade away like an evening shadow, I am shaken off like a locust-
David's feelings at this time are also appropriate to Hezekiah, whose feelings were responded to by God by making the shadow of the sundial reverse. The same words are used in 2 Kings 20:10. The locust was an unclean animal, and this is how David felt.

Psa 109:24

My knees are weak through fasting, my body is thin and lacks fat-
Here again is another indication that David has the book of Job in mind, for this is how Job describes himself. See on :6,25.

Psa 109:25

I have also become a reproach to them; when they see me, they shake their head-
Again the allusions to Job continue (see on :6,24); this time to Job 16:4; 19:5; 20:3. The situation here seems more appropriate at this point to the plans of Absalom, Ahithophel, Shimei and Joab. For Saul rarely "saw" David at the time of his persecution of him.

Psa 109:26

Help me, Yahweh, my God. Save me according to Your grace-
As noted on :20, David appears totally lacking in any grace toward his enemies; but he here and in :21 begs for grace to be shown to him, aware at least subconsciously of his own desperate need for deliverance / salvation by grace.

Psa 109:27

that they may know that this is Your hand; that You, Yahweh, have done it-
Although David seeks for personal salvation by grace (:26), his motivation for that salvation was still not totally pure. For here he states that he wants that salvation in order to demonstrate that his sufferings were the result of God's hand rather than his own sins. Even though his sufferings at the hands of the likes of Joab, Ahithophel and Shimei were all the consequence of his own sins. But he so struggled with a sense of wrongful shame, when he ought to have finally accepted that his shame was a consequence of his sins regarding Uriah and Bathsheba.

Psa 109:28

They may curse, but You bless. When they arise, they will be shamed, but Your servant shall rejoice- Frequently the rejected are threatened with both shame and anger / gnashing of teeth; shame and anger are going to be connected in that awful experience. They will "curse [in anger]... and be ashamed". The final shame of the rejected is going to be so great that "they shall be greatly ashamed... their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten" (Jer. 20:11). Seeing they will be long dead and gone, it is us, the accepted, who by God's grace will recall the terrible shame of the rejected throughout our eternity. "When they arise" would be a reference to resurrection. David clearly expected a future day of resurrection and judgment, when shame, cursing and blessing would all be ultimately and eternally articulated.

Psa 109:29

Let my adversaries be clothed with dishonour, may they cover themselves with their own shame as with a robe-
Although David has wished condemnation upon his enemies, he likes to imagine that actually their condemnation and shame is a direct result of their own actions in this life. And this is true enough. They had clothed themselves with cursing in this life (:18), as Shimei had; and David sees this as related to their clothing themselves with shame at the last day (:28). And yet David seems remarkably uncritical of himself; for he himself

is clothing himself with cursing against his enemies in this Psalm. And what if he were wrong? What if the likes of Joab are to be finally saved…?

Psa 109:30

I will give great thanks to Yahweh with my mouth, truly I will praise Him among the multitude-
This is the same idea as often in the Psalms; David imagines himself surrounded by the "multitude" of the righteous, praising God at the last day (:28 "when they arise"), when the wicked are destroyed and he is finally justified (Ps. 22:22,25; 35:18; 40:10). We too can look forward to eternal salvation not simply on a personal level; but seeing our eternal place amongst the true people of God. "With my mouth" suggests David personally imagined himself resurrected, with his own personality and "mouth". Salvation is indeed personal.

Psa 109:31

For He will stand at the right hand of the needy, to save him from those who judge his soul-
This is in contrast to how God can stand at the right hand of the wicked to condemn them; see on :6. David rightly perceives that there is a higher hand in human life, someone or something standing at our right hand. And he wishes this to be God's influence toward condemnation for his enemies, and God's influence toward salvation in his own case. This is the difference between the evil spirit from the Lord, and the Holy Spirit.

PSALMS CHAPTER 110

Psa 110:1

A Psalm by David-
There is a tendency amongst some personality types to turn every disagreement over interpretation of Scripture into a right : wrong, truth : error scenario. Matters relating to basic doctrine are capable of being dealt with like this. But to turn the interpretation of every Bible verse into a conflict area is a recipe for ecclesial disaster. So often the debate becomes personal, with a brother sure that *he* is right and the other wrong, and the other must be shown to be wrong. This leads inevitably to pride, and there is the possibility that the other party is degraded and feels abused by the other. We simply have to accept that much of Scripture is open to various levels of interpretation, which if placed side by side would appear to be contradictory. Consider, for example, how many different applications the NT gives to Psalms 2 and 110. Ps. 110 is quoted or alluded to

multiple times; to prove the Lord Jesus is greater than David (Lk. 20:41-44), in heaven at God's right hand (Mk 12:36; 14:62), waiting until all enemies are put under His feet at His return (1 Cor. 15:25), yet also applied to His ascension and exaltation (Acts 2:34-36 "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified"); it is used to prove the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, like that of the Levites, involved a call by God (Heb. 5:1-6); to prove the eternity of His priesthood (Heb. 6:20); and throughout Heb. 7 to prove that the priesthood of the Lord Jesus was greater than that of the Levites.

Yahweh says to my Lord, Sit at My right hand-
Biblically and historically, David's immediate 'Lord' was Saul, but it could also have reference to Solomon and even to himself. Psalm 72 is a similar Psalm, imagining Solomon as the promised Messiah with a Messianic Kingdom. So Ps. 110 was originally a revelation to David of the potential possible for Solomon or Saul, who was an anointed 'Messiah' figure, expressed as a coronation ode. But Solomon and Saul failed, and so the fulfillment of the prophecy was rescheduled and reapplied to the Lord Jesus. And so the Lord Jesus uses this passages about Himself in Lk. 20:40-44: "David therefore calls him Lord, so, how is he his son?". Judaism's concept of Messiah has always been vague and not commonly agreed, but there was and is the idea that the likes of Abraham, Moses and David are greater than Messiah. The Lord Jesus is pointing out that David considered Messiah to be his "Lord", just as Messiah was greater than Abraham (Jn. 8:58). The "how" doesn't imply that David's Lord is not his son, but rather is a rhetorical question. How is the Messianic son of David, David's "Lord", to be his son or descendant? Mk. 12:37 says the Lord reinforced the question by asking "*From whence* is He his son?". The answer had to be: 'Through a woman in David's direct line giving birth to Him'. And the questioners were fully aware that Jesus was in the direct line of David through Mary.

It seems that David became obsessed with the idea of Solomon being the Messiah, building a physical house for God, and being king over the eternal Messianic Kingdom. The words of Ps. 110:1 are applied by the NT to Jesus, but there is no reason to think that they were not primarily spoke by David with his eye on Solomon, whom he addresses as his Lord, such was his obsession: "The Lord saith unto my Lord…" (RV), and the rest of the Psalm goes on in the language of Ps. 72 to describe David's hopes for Solomon's Kingdom. 'Solomon' was actually called 'Jedidiah' by God through Nathan (2 Sam. 12:25). The 'beloved of God' was surely prophetic of God's beloved Son. When God said

“This is my beloved Son”, He was surely saying ‘Now *this* is the Jedidiah, whom I wanted Solomon to typify’. But David calls him Solomon, the man who would bring peace. I suggest that David was so eager to see in Solomon the actual Messiah, that he chose not to use the name which God wanted- which made Solomon a type of a future Son of God / Messiah. And this led to Solomon himself being obsessed with being a Messiah figure and losing sight of the future Messiah.

When he writes in Ps. 110 of how Yahweh said unto my Lord…he is quoting the very phrase used by Abigail years before, when they weren’t even married (1 Sam. 25:30). He was unconsciously alluding to the words of his wife before they were married, even years later. It is of course true that context plays a vital part in Biblical interpretation. But this can lead us to overlook the fact that many New Testament quotations of the Old Testament- many of those in the early chapters of Matthew, for example- are picking up words and phrases from one context and applying them to another.

"Said" is better 'pronounced'. Many of the gods were imagined as having a right hand man actually doing their work for them. This is the picture of God's relationship with the Lord Jesus. The scene here in Ps. 110 has so many connections with Psalm 2 which also clearly speaks of the Lord Jesus.

Until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet-
The Lord’s enemies stood around Him as He applied this Psalm to Himself. And yet being at the footstool of the Lord doesn't have to mean being dominated by Him in judgment. It can refer to the great paradox whereby the Lord's enemies become His loyalest and most humble citizens, at His feet in submission, and thereby also at the Father's right hand of acceptance.

This is quoted in 1 Cor. 15:25 "For he must reign until He has put all his enemies under his feet". Having things and persons 'under the feet' doesn't necessarily mean they were to be killed or destroyed. It can mean simply submission before the one enthroned. "All things", a phrase often used for all God's people, are to be placed under the feet of the Lord Jesus (Ps. 8:6; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8, which teach that it is the church who shall be under the Lord's feet. Rev. 12:8 may teach the same). I noted on Mt. 22:44 and Acts 2:35 that the making of the Lord's enemies His footstool means that they shall repentantly accept Him, rather than being destroyed by Him. "We were enemies" of God, but are now reconciled in grateful, humble submission (Rom. 5:10). This is the whole message of the preceding :24- that all things shall progressively be subjected under Christ's authority and Kingship, thereby becoming part of His Kingdom. To achieve this on a universal level, He shall have to come to earth and destroy those who refuse to submit. But the end in view is that the earth and all upon it shall be His Kingdom, under the dominion of His Kingship. And that process is to begin in the hearts of believers right now.

This is also quoted in Acts 2:35. The context is Peter's appeal for those who crucified the Lord to repent. They were His "enemies"; but once they became a footstool for His feet, then He would return. Therefore Peter appealed for their repentance, apparently understanding being 'a footstool for His feet' as meaning they would put themselves at His feet in obeisance. The Lord's footstool is the place where His worshippers come (Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Is. 66:1-3). The Father was willing to "make" His Son's enemies, those responsible for His death, into His worshippers. But they had to do their part, in repentance and acceptance of the activity of His Holy Spirit. Heb. 10:13 adds the detail that the Lord Jesus is eagerly looking for [AV "expecting"] His former enemies to become His footstool- and then He will return. This is why witness to Jewish people is so deeply significant in God's program.

Enemies becoming a footstool is perhaps based upon the idea of the victor putting his feet on the necks of subjugated kings as done by Joshua / Jesus in Josh. 10:24. There is an element of humiliation involved; and that is what it is to change from an enemy of the Lord to a willing footstool for His feet. We are the defeated, those who surrendered, the ashamed, who became the footstool as those placed at His feet. Just as Mary is presented as the ideal disciple, at the Lord's feet. Enemies being the footstool of the victor was an image of humiliation, and yet the whole earth is to be God's footstool, and the temple in particular was "a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, and for the footstool of our God" (1 Chron. 28:2; Lam. 2:1). Those at the footstool worship God and don't remain humiliated, as in Ps. 99:5 "Exalt Yahweh our God, worship at His footstool". To be put “under the feet of” someone means to be subject to that person, or to be under that person’s control (2 Sam. 22:39; 1 Kings 5:3; Ps. 8:6; 18:38; 47:3; Mal. 4:3; Mt. 22:44; Rom. 16:20; 1 Cor. 15:25,27; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8; Rev. 12:1). The Bible therefore uses 'being the footstool' in a positive way. Although we get there by the process of defeat, surrender and humiliation.

Psa 110:2

Yahweh will send forth the rod of your strength out of Zion-
The sceptre / rod of His strength or authority proceeding from Zion is perhaps the Gospel of the Kingdom, of His kingly dominion, which began to be preached from Zion. It goes out in the midst of His enemies but will eventually bring the world beneath it. Through baptism, men willingly change masters and accept Him and not the flesh as their King and Lord. Ultimately, all preaching or extension of that rod has to end in victory- those who resist will be crushed until all enemies have either submitted or been destroyed in the final judgment scenes which the Psalm concludes with. There is therefore never any lack of achievement in the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Clearly also in view is the final establishment of God's worldwide Kingdom based on Jerusalem, to which so many prophetic passages witness. But the essence of that starts now, with the proclamation of the Gospel of that Kingdom.

This perhaps alludes to Hannah's words of 1 Sam. 2:10, where she expected that Samuel would be both a ruler and a priest, although he was not strictly a Levite: "He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed". This all sets the scene for this new leader being presented as a king and non-Levitical priest (:4).

Rule in the midst of your enemies!-
This is the scenario of Ps. 2:6,9. Zion, the temple mount, was also to be the place of rulership. This sets up the expectation for a merger between king and priest, which comes to term in the declaration in :4 that this ruler would be after the order of Melchizedek, a king-priest. The language of ruling in the midst of enemies is that used of Solomon (s.w. 1 Kings 4:24; Ps. 72:8), which was the characteristic of Messiah (Num. 24:19). The "rod" suggests judgment (Is. 10:24,26).

On one hand, the Kingdom was established in prospect when the Gospel went forth from Zion in Acts 2, fulfilling Lk. 24:47: "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem". Hence Paul's reflection on his own ministry, that his preaching started in Jerusalem: "So that from Jerusalem and round about even to Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19). But the Lord's rulership is currently in the midst of His enemies. For all men are God's enemies outside of the Lord Jesus: "you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works" (Col. 1:21); "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5:21). And that includes Israel outside of Christ: "As touching the gospel, they are enemies for your sake, but as touching their calling, they are beloved for the fathers' sake" (Rom. 11:28; Lk. 19:27). I suggest that this language of enemies being reconciled to God all alludes to Ps. 110:1,2- the enemies becoming the footstool, conquered, surrendering to the Lord Jesus as in Josh. 10:24. This ruling in the midst of enemies finally comes to victory as Ps. 110 goes on to portray- the enemies are finally all destroyed.

Ruling in the midst of His enemies could refer to His rulership being sent forth through the Gospel of the Kingdom, in the midst of an "enemy" world. Or the idea may be that He sets up His power over them, and reigns in their midst. In the hearts of those who had been His enemies. The Hebrew for "midst" is elsewhere translated "heart" and "inward thought". It is the word used in Gen. 19:16 "Sarah laughed *within herself*"; "the children struggled within her", Gen. 25:22; the "inner parts" of a sacrificed animal, Ex. 29:13,17 and often. Significantly, the term is used within the Psalms almost exclusively of the inner heart: "Their inward part is full of wickedness", Ps. 5:9; "within my heart" (Ps. 36:1; 39:3); "their inward thought", Ps. 49:11; "a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51:10; 55:4); "they curse inwardly", Ps. 62:4; "their inward thought", Ps. 64:6; "your thoughts within

me", Ps. 94:19; "my heart is wounded within me", Ps. 109:22. This is the place where God's Spirit works. He "put His Holy Spirit *within* [s.w.] him" (Is. 63:11), the New Covenant would use the Spirit to write the law "within their inward parts [s.w.]" (Jer. 31:33), "I will put a new spirit *within* you" (Ez. 11:19), "a new spirit will I put *within* you" (Ez. 36:26,27). All this is why Peter understands Ps. 110 to be predicting the exaltation of the resurrected Jesus to God's right hand, and specifically about the gift of the Spirit in order to turn the enemies into a willing footstall for the Lord: "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’” Let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:32-36). Likewise Paul in Rom. 8:34-36 sees the Lord Jesus at God's right hand as the ultimate encouragement that we will be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us", and that sin in all its forms cannot now hinder our path- ultimately: “It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”. And again, on the basis of Ps. 110, 1 Cor. 15:23-27 sees the Lord as now reigning, progressively subduing His enemies right up until "the end" when He returns: "But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power [the allusion is to Ps. 110's description of His military triumphs]. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet”."

Stephen was given the vision of the exalted Lord Jesus at God's right hand, with all that implies for the ultimate success of His mission. He saw Ps. 110:1 and understood all that was implied. Despite suffering and death in the short term, the Lord's mission would ultimately succeed. Not only has all human opposition been ultimately placed beneath He who is now at God's right hand, but sin in all its forms, including our own sin; ultimately conquered too by the Spirit which was released by He who is at the right hand of God. And so we know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to that working of the strength of His might which He wrought in Christ, when He raised him from the dead and had him sit at His right hand in heaven, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. And He put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to us to be head over all things in the church" (Eph. 1:19-22). The "subjection" of the church is because the members of that church were also once enemies, but are now willingly subject as His footstool. And yet we are

not only His footstool, but "in Him" are also associated with Him there at God's right hand. And finally that is where we shall be, as Rev. 3:21 promises: “The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on His throne”.

The practical outcome of this is that our thinking is all about what is going on at "the right hand": "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God [as per Ps. 110:1]. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col. 3:1,2). The Lord Jesus now at the right hand of God is our inspiration, the One we are to continually think of in our battles- just as implied in Ps. 110: "looking to Jesus the author and completer of faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has been sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Think on him that endured such hostility from sinners against himself, so that you do not grow weary and lose heart.
In your striving against sin you have yet to resist to the point of shedding *your* blood", alluding to the Lord both in Gethsemane and on Calvary. He is no captain or general far removed from the experiences of the battlefront. He was there far worse than we are, and gloriously overcame. All apparent defeat, the missionary to Africa who falls sick and dies of fever in a foreign land, the Christian sister in a war zone felled by shrapnel, the old missionary dying alone and forgotten in a dementia unit, never visited by anyone… all this is "the magnificent defeat" and is only a step towards our final victory and the eternal glory of that victory. Contrary to what is often said at funerals, people don't much live on in the memories of others, and those others in turn shall fade and die. But like the Lord, we shall eternally live after resurrection. For precious in Yahweh's sight is the death of all His saints.

The book of Hebrews contains several quotations and many allusions to Ps. 110. This Psalm is referred to in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament passage. It was rightly seen as the epitomy of what it is to be a Christian. The reality of the Lord Jesus at God's right hand, eternally and constantly aware of us, actively mediating His Spirit, His forgiveness, His grace, His blessing upon our practical mission for Him in this world… Hebrews makes a strong connection between the Lord Jesus now having unlimited power at God's right hand (Ps. 110:1) and His being the ultimate priest (Ps. 110:4). He can do anything, and that includes within the scope of priestly mediation. He can totally forgive and save us from our sins; a major theme of Hebrews. All enemies, be they nations, bad individual actors or our own besetting sins and weaknesses, are all being progressively subdued by Him.

Psa 110:3

Your people offer themselves willingly in the day of your power, in holy attire-
The day of the Lord's power is now, in and His "power" is mentioned in the context of the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom worldwide: "All power has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Therefore [because of His "power"] go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them..." (Mt. 28:18,19). This may be the idea of Jn. 17:2: "As You gave him power over all flesh, so that he should give eternal life to all whom You have given him". Perhaps that is one of John's versions of the great commission. We recognize only the Lord Jesus as this world's rightful ruler, and the rightful ruler of every human heart. It is for us to take that claim, that good news of His Kingly dominion, His Kingdom, to the whole earth.

But "Your power" is literally 'your muster', the language of volunteers willingly joining an army. The battle is against the "enemies", to extend the rule of the Lord Jesus worldwide according to the great commission, taking the Gospel from Jerusalem to the whole planet. His people, us, offer themselves as freewill offerings (Ex. 35:29; 36:3. 1 Chron. 29:9,14,17 etc.), as an army of warrior priests. That's us in our mission for Him in this world. The volunteers who eagerly offer themselves, not conscripts. For the greatest and ultimate cause that will never disillusion. To be able to make a freewill offering is the ultimate indicator of our radical freedom before God. Enchained as we may be by life situations, we have the absolute freedom to give ourselves as freewill offerings- or to choose not to. What thrill we give God when we freely decide to do this for Him; not for material gain or acceptance before men or a human community, but deep in our hearts to offer ourselves to Him and the inevitably victorious fight for His cause. Freewill offering to any other cause always runs the risk of the cause failing, losing the war, gaining merely a pyrrhic victory; or realizing we fought for misplaced ideals and leaders with feet of clay.

People offering themselves willingly is the language of soldiers eager for battle in Jud. 5:2,9. But these willing soldiers are "in holy attire", they are priests. This again sets up the expectation that the leader as well as his followers are soldier-priests, priests who also have another function- as soldiers, in this case. See on :2,4.

We could render “In the splendid garments of holiness”, alluding to the splendid garments of the high priest; in that we do the work of the High Priest, the Lord Jesus. As if we His soldiers are dressed not merely as priests but as the High Priest. But "Holy attire" translates a word which with one letter change gives "on the holy mountains" (as in Ps. 87:1), i.e. the great mountain of Zion, where the army musters and begins the march. Dew on the mountains of Zion is an appropriate figure, reinforced by Ps. 133:3 speaking of dew coming down on the mountains of Zion.

Out of the womb of the morning, you have the dew of your youth-
The image of having the dew of youth may refer to how His people serve "in newness of life", with an ever fresh vigour even in this life. They appear suddenly as pristine as the

dew, in spiritual terms. All God's people were to have been as dew to the world around them: "And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from Yahweh" (Mic. 5:7). The image of dew may be of fast, immediate, sudden appearance. Hence 2 Sam. 17:12 speaks of an ambush as coming like dew appearing on the ground. Here again, dew is used in a military context.

In the figure, the morning is the mother of the dew. We could render "[as the dew] from the womb before the morning I have begotten you [a son]" as in Ps. 2:7. David imagines Solomon as being reborn as he is enthroned as the Messianic king. The dew of youth would refer to the waters of birth which come from the womb, also seen in a figurative sense at the dawn of this new Messianic morning.

Psa 110:4

Yahweh has sworn, and will not change His mind: You are a priest forever-
The idea of :3, that the Lord's people are priest-warriors, leads on to :4 describing their king as being Himself a king-warrior-priest, after the order of Melchizedek.

There was no 'change of the Divine mind' in the fact that Solomon didn't live up to his Messianic potential, as discussed throughout Ps. 72. The oath that would not be changed was made ultimately to the Lord Jesus. Here in Ps. 110, the coronation ode declares the king to be not only king, but also an eternal priest.

This is quoted in Heb. 5:6 "As also He said elsewhere: You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek". This spoken word of inauguration and appointment was likewise uttered in the "day" when the Lord was "begotten" in resurrection (Heb. 5:5). There is no evidence here for any personally pre-existent Christ. The Hebrew writer alludes to and subverts the defiant language of the Maccabees in repeatedly describing Christ as "priest for ever" (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:3,17,21)- when this was the term applied to Simon Maccabaeus in 1 Macc. 14:41. See on Lk. 20:25. The nature of the priesthood was to be eternal; so although there were similarities with the Aaronic priests, the priesthood of Messiah was not identical with it. It was after the order of Melchizedek.

Sin brings death, so the eternal priest appointed by the word of God's oath in Ps. 110:4 had to be not only eternal but also sinless. There could therefore be no other candidate for this priest than the Lord Jesus.

In the order of Melchizedek-
The idea of a king-priest is applied to the Messiah who could have appeared at the time of the restoration. He would be both a "prince" and the one who would "approach" and "draw near" to God- all priestly language (Jer. 30:21). Zech. 6:12,13 is clear that "the Branch" would sit as a priest upon a throne- but Zerubbabel and other such possibilities didn't live up to the potential. Ps. 110 could have come true in him at the restoration;

Yahweh's kingdom could have been re-established and His Messianic king-priest could have reigned in the midst of his enemies from a restored Jerusalem. But the Jews didn't restore Jerusalem nor rebuild the temple as commanded in Ez. 40-48, and the potential king-priests failed to live up their potentials. And so through these failures, the prophecy came to a far more glorious fulfilment in the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus is a King-priest after the order of Melchizedek (Heb. 6:13-18; Ps. 110:4); and through being in Him, we share this position. Through what He achieved for us on the cross, we have been made *now* king-priests, with the future hope of reigning on earth (Rev. 1:6; 5:10).

Hebrews 7 interprets this statement at great length; I have discussed it in more detail on Heb. 7, but here is a reduced version:

Hebrews 7:1 *For this Melchizedek, king of Jerusalem, priest of God Most High, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him*- There is no hint that Abraham and Melchizedek were personally acquainted before this meeting, although they both were servants of the true God. We might wonder why God didn't connect them earlier. In His wisdom He doesn't always force believers to regularly fellowship with each other, indeed He made Abraham travel all around Canaan rather than telling him to settle near Melchizedek and form some kind of ecclesia or community of believers. And clearly the implication is that Abraham maintained a legitimate relationship with God without needing to use a human priest, even one as good and exalted as Melchizedek. For more on Melchizedek, see on 5:10.

Hebrews 7:2 *To whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all. He was first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also, King of Jerusalem, which is, King of peace*- "King of righteousness" connects with Paul's appeal for the Hebrews to accept the word or Gospel of imputed righteousness in Christ; see on Heb. 5:13, remembering that here in chapter 7 Paul is picking up from Heb. 5:13 after the parenthesis of chapter 6. The connection between righteousness and peace is a feature of Messiah- in Him, they kiss each other (Ps. 85:10), and are the mainstay of the Messianic Kingdom on earth (Ps. 72:3; Is. 32:17; Rom. 14:17). Righteousness is emphasized before peace- "then also... king of peace". "The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Is. 32:17). But in Paul's theology, it is the righteousness of King Jesus which is imputed to us and thereby creates peace with God. This is the much laboured message of Romans 1-8. So we can understand his enthusiastic perception that Melchizedek, a type of Messiah, was king of righteousness "and then also... king of peace".

Hebrews 7:3 *He was without recorded father or mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life but presented as being like the Son of God, abiding a priest continually*- Without doubt God frames the Biblical record in order to highlight certain facts. Thus there is a marked lack of information concerning the father

and mother of Melchizedek in Genesis. God is providing us with an interpretation of how He worded the account in Genesis, making the point that Melchizedek typified Christ. But although we are not to read Hebrews 7:3 at face value, there is no explicit indication to this effect. The objection that the New Testament does not warn us against reading the 'casting out of demons' language literally is therefore not valid. Hebrews 7:3 is one of many examples of where it is imperative to understand the way in which God is using language if we are to correctly understand His word, but there is no explicit warning about this in Hebrews 7:3!

Jesus has a Father (God) and a mother (Mary) and a genealogy (see Mt. 1, Lk. 3 and cp. Jn. 7:27). 'Melchizedek' therefore cannot refer to Him personally. Besides, Melchizedek was "made *like* unto the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3); he was not Jesus himself, but had certain similarities with Him which are being used by the writer for teaching purposes. "After the similitude of Melchizedek there arises another priest", Jesus (Heb. 7:15), who was ordained a priest "after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 5:5,6). The language of Hebrews about Melchizedek just cannot be taken literally. If Melchizedek literally had no father or mother, then the only person he could have been was God Himself; He is the only person with no beginning (1 Tim. 6:16; Ps. 90:2). But this is vetoed by Heb. 7:4: "Consider how great *this man* was", and also by the fact that he was seen by men (which God cannot be) and offered sacrifices to God. If he is called a man, then he must have had literal parents. His being "without father, without mother, without descent" must therefore refer to the fact that his pedigree and parents are not recorded. Queen Esther's parents are not recorded, and so her background is described in a similar way. Mordecai "brought up... Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother... whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter" (Esther 2:7). The author of Hebrews was clearly writing as a Jew to Jews, and as such he uses the Rabbinic way of reasoning and writing at times. There was a Rabbinic principle that "what is not in the text, is not" (See James Dunn, *Christology In The Making* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980) p. 276 note 59)- and it seems that this is the principle of exposition being used to arrive at the statement that Melchizedek was "without father". Seeing no father is mentioned in the Genesis text, therefore he was "without father"- but this doesn't mean he actually didn't have a father. It's not recorded, and therefore, according to that Rabbinic principle, he effectively didn't have one.

The book of Genesis usually goes to great lengths to introduce the family backgrounds of all the characters which it presents to us. But Melchizedek appears on the scene unannounced, with no record of his parents, and vanishes from the account with equal abruptness. Yet there can be no doubt that he was worthy of very great respect; even great Abraham paid tithes to him, and was blessed by him, clearly showing Melchizedek's superiority over Abraham (Heb. 7:2,7). The writer is not just doing mental gymnastics with Scripture. There was a very real problem in the first century which the

Melchizedek argument could solve. The Jews were reasoning: ‘You Christians tell us that this Jesus can now be our high priest, offering our prayers and works to God. But a priest has to have a known genealogy, proving he is from the tribe of Levi. And anyway, you yourselves admit Jesus was from the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Sorry, to us Abraham is our supreme leader and example (Jn. 8:33,39), and we won’t respect this Jesus’. To which the reply is: ‘But remember Melchizedek. The Genesis record is framed to show that such a great priest did not have any genealogy; and Messiah is to be both a king and a priest, whose priesthood is after the pattern of Melchizedek (Heb. 5:6 cp. Ps. 110:4). Abraham was inferior to Melchizedek, so you should switch your emphasis from Abraham to Jesus, and stop trying to make the question of genealogies so important (see 1 Tim. 1:4). If you meditate on how much Melchizedek is a type of Jesus (i.e. the details of his life pointed forward to him), then you would have a greater understanding of the work of Christ’.

Hebrews 7:4 *Now consider how great this man was, to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the spoils*- Melchizedek was a man, not a pre-existent God. The argument is that tithes are given to someone greater. Hence Jacob offers to give tithes to his father's God if He will preserve him (Gen. 28:22).

Hebrews 7:5 *And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office*- Paul doesn't call them Aaronites because he wants to make the point that the tribal head, Levi, was not the ancestor of Melchizedek; and as one of the patriarchs, he as it were paid tithes in Abraham to Melchizedek.

Have the commandment according to the law to take tithes from the people, that is, of their brothers; even though they are also descendants of Abraham- Levi's sons could take tithes of their brothers, but this did not make them 'greater' than their brothers. They were 'brothers' on the same level as those who tithed to them. But payment of tithes to an unrelated person was a more impressive evidence of the greatness of that person over the tithe payers.

Hebrews 7:6 *Melchizedek was not descended from Levi by genealogy*- There is no evidence that he was even from within the Abraham family; he was effectively a Gentile, the king-priest of Jerusalem. But the fact he was not a Levite is emphasized because this was a reason some were giving for not accepting the priesthood of the Lord Jesus.

But he took tithes of Abraham and blessed him that had received the promises- The blessing was given from Melchizedek to Abraham in response to tithes. Yet Abraham is the one who was to be a blessing in the land, according to "the promises" received. But actually, the blesser had himself first to be blessed. This definitely places Melchizedek on the level of manifesting God to Abraham.

Hebrews 7:7 *But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better*- To suggest anyone was "better" than Abraham was radical for Hebrews, who considered Abraham the father of their race. And to rub the point in by saying that he was "less" was to suggest that the entire metanarrative of descent from Abraham being so important was being overwritten- and had in fact been overwritten by any sensitive to the brief details given about Melchizedek. That the ministry of the Lord Jesus was "better" than that of the Mosaic law is stressed in Hebrews (1:4; 7:19,22; 8:6; 9:23; 12:24).

Hebrews 7:8 *And here mortal men receive tithes; but there one received them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives*- The argument here might appear somewhat forced, but it was all legitimate within the style of Rabbinic midrash. Melchizedek "lives" in that there is no record of his death; we noted on :3 the Rabbinic principle that "what is not in the text, is not". And Paul goes on to reason that the priesthood of Melchizedek continues still, in that Messiah was to have this priesthood eternally. "That he lives" can also be understood as meaning that Melchizedek had a lifelong priesthood, that was not replaced by others because he had reached a certain age. McKnight observes that the Greek verb *zē* here is not in the present, but the imperfect of the indicative, and he translates "that he lives" as " lived, a priest all his life, in contradistinction from those who ceased to be priests at a certain age".

Hebrews 7:9 *And, so to say*, *when Abraham paid the tithe, Levi, whose descendants receive the tithe, also paid a tithe*- Abraham is seen as representing his descendant Levi. The Levitical priests did indeed pay a tithe of their tithes- to God. But Paul argues here that Levi, in Abraham, paid a tithe to Melchizedek, thus making him a manifestation of God.

Hebrews 7:10 *For Levi was yet in the loins of his ancestor Abraham when Melchizedek met Abraham*- This kind of argument may appear forced, but it was quite legitimate within the milieu of Jewish midrash.

Hebrews 7:11 *Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?*- The argument is that the whole mention of Messiah having a priesthood after the order of Melchizedek would have been unnecessary if the Levitical priesthood and legal system could bring "perfection". Paul forces through the logic of his position by reasoning that the "need" for the Melchizedek priesthood meant that this new priest must actually not be "after the order of Aaron" and therefore must not be a descendant of Aaron. I have previously noted that this kind of apparently forced argumentation would have been acceptable to those used to this kind of reasoning in the rabbinical interpretations of the Old Testament. But it is all the same logically forced, although from our Christian perspective it all makes good sense. I suggested on expounding Paul's obsession with the Jerusalem Poor Fund in 2 Corinthians that he had an obsessive streak within him,

whereby he marshaled all possible evidence to support his positions and at points his logic and reasoning bears the hallmark of the obsessive. It could well be that we have a case of that here.

Hebrews 7:12 *For the priesthood being changed requires also a change of the law*- This verse is a stubborn problem for those who consider that the Mosaic law has not been changed nor abrogated. The reasoning here is logically sound, but it depends upon the assumption that the Melchizedek priest has in fact come; and only in that case could it be reasoned that the priesthood had been changed from the Aaronic to that of Melchizedek, this requiring a change of the law. The argument only had [and has] force for those who accept Jesus as the Jewish Messiah. It is therefore highly relevant to the Hebrew Christian audience but would lack logical power with Hebrew non-Christians.

The whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was "the covenant of an everlasting priesthood" (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but "the priesthood being changed (by Christ's work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). There was an "everlasting covenant" between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This "everlasting covenant" evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase "everlasting covenant" is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David's throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated "eternal", "perpetual", "everlasting" in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning "the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity". It was God's purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn't grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of "practically eternity". For all of us, the specter of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God's eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

Hebrews 7:13 *For he of whom these things are said belongs to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar*- The "He" refers to the Melchizedek priest who was to be Messiah. "Has ever" makes the point that a new priesthood is now in view. The Lord Jesus serves at *the* altar; this is the altar at which the Levitical priests have no right to

eat / fellowship, but we Christians do (Heb. 13:10), suggesting that we in Christ are likewise there, serving at and eating at the heavenly altar which features so strongly in Revelation, as part of the Heavenly sanctuary which the tabernacle was a dim reflection of. The Lord Jesus is actively 'serving' there; He is not passive in Heaven, just waiting to return to earth.

Hebrews 7:14 *For it is evident that our Lord originated from the tribe of Judah. Regarding this tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood*- The Lord being descended from Judah was "evident" or obvious- presumably from the genealogies which connected Mary to the tribe of Judah. But again as noted on Hebrews 7:11, Paul's enthusiasm seems to be carrying him away, for it was far from obvious that Jesus of Nazareth was from Judah. However he may have meant instead that Messiah had to come from Judah; this much was indeed "evident" from the Old Testament and undisputed.

Hebrews 7:15 *And what we say is even more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there arises another priest*- The abundantly obvious argument was that the Melchizedek priest had to be eternal (see Hebrews 7:16,17); and the only candidate was Jesus, whom Christians believed had been resurrected and given eternal life. He was the only person who had then been immortalized. But this argument again was logically powerful only to a Hebrew Christian, and not to a Hebrew non-Christian. The 'arising' of this 'other priest' may be a hint at His resurrection to immortality.

Hebrews 7:16 *Who has been appointed, not on the basis of a law about physical descent, but according to the power of an endless life*- The Levitical priests became priests by reason of their age and descent, whereas the Melchizedek Messiah priest had to be "appointed". The basis of the Lord's appointment was His immortality- because the priest had to have an eternal ministry, so it was necessary that he was immortal. And the only immortalized human was Jesus of Nazareth.

Hebrews 7:17 *For it is witnessed: You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*- "For ever" is being interpreted as meaning that the priest would be immortal, making the resurrected, immortalized Jesus the only possible candidate. The 'witnessing' by God in Ps. 110:4 is understood as the priest being "appointed" (Hebrews 7:16).

Hebrews 7:18 *On the other hand, there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness*- This new priesthood required a new law; a changed priesthood meant a changed law (Hebrews 7:12). And this required an "annulling" of that law, and that was because it was weak and unprofitable. Such language appears to deprecate the law, although Paul elsewhere says that the law was "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12); it was weak and not profitable because it was unable to bring salvation or perfection to those under it. The strong language used here about the law of Moses must be given its full weight by those who argue that it should still be kept today.

Hebrews 7:19 *(For the law made nothing perfect)*- Likewise Hebrews 7:11 has argued that the Levitical priesthood had to be changed because it could not bring "perfection". The law convicted men of sin and offered some mechanism of patching up the broken relationship caused by it. But it did not enable moral perfection. By being in Christ, we can be counted as Him, the only perfect human. Faith in Christ could therefore make perfect in that the Lord Jesus was 'made perfect' by His sufferings, particularly on the cross (Hebrews 5:7-9).

And a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw near to God- By being counted as in Christ, having His perfection as ours due to our status in Him, we have the sure hope of future salvation. The *elpis* or hope in view is a solid expectation regarding the future, not a mere hoping for the best. And it is by having this hope that we find strength against materialism and "draw near to God". The Hebrew readership would have understood this as meaning 'drawing near in priestly service' (cp. Ex. 19:22). The Hope we have compels us to God's service.

Hebrews 7:20 *And the Melchizedek priesthood was not without the taking of an oath*- The oath taken was by God (Ps. 110:4), vowing by Himself to honour the eternally powerful priesthood of Messiah. Such Divine underwriting was not given to the Levitical priesthood.

Hebrews 7:21 *The Levitical priests were made priests without an oath, but he with an oath: The Lord swore and will not change His mind; you are a priest for ever*- The eternal nature of the Lord's Melchizedek priesthood is at the basis of the certainty of our hope for future salvation (Hebrews 7:19). God Almighty guarantees that the Lord Jesus will be our eternal priest. Our standing before Him is therefore eternal; we have such a priest who is not simply a mediator between God and men, a conduit allowing us to offer to Him and approach Him, but a priest who on His own agenda eternally secures our salvation.

Hebrews 7:22 *By this also has Jesus become the surety of a better covenant*- The sure hope of Hebrews 7:19 is underpinned by the way the Lord is the surety or guarantor of the better covenant. The Greek for "surety" occurs only here in the NT and LXX. The idea is of a guarantor who promises his self sacrifice in the case that the party to the covenant is unfaithful. It literally means 'the pledge of a limb'. The "surety" could offer his own limbs, or himself into bondage as a slave, if the person being guaranteed somehow failed. The Lord's death confirmed God's promises as being for real. But did God's side of the covenant need such a surety? Perhaps we are better to think of the Lord's being a surety as being a guarantee for our faithfulness to the covenant. But we have not been faithful to it; and so He died, gave His all, His limbs, and became the preeminent servant of Yahweh on the cross. This was to the end that the new covenant between God and us might still stand, despite our infraction of it.

Hebrews 7:23 *And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing*- The eternal priesthood required for the Messianic Melchizedek priest could not be attained by mortal priests.

Hebrews 7:24 *But he, because he abides for ever, has his priesthood unchangeable*- The eternal priesthood of the Melchizedek priest meant that His priesthood can never be changed. He has obtained eternal redemption for us, and that can never be liable to any renegotiation. Our hope for eternity is therefore sure (Hebrews 7:19) because the One who obtained it is immortal, and His work for us is in this sense eternal.

Psa 110:5

The Lord is at your right hand-
The Lord now sits at the Father's right hand. But Ps. 110 describes God as being at Christ's right hand. The confusion of the idioms surely demonstrates the mutuality between them. And the relationship between Father and Son is openly offered to us in John 17.

He will crush kings-
This is the word used of the crushing of the kings in the *eretz* promised to Abraham which will happen at the hands of Messiah in the last day (Num. 24:8,17; Dt. 33:11). I noted on :3 the allusions to the destruction of the nations within the *eretz* at the tie of Deborah and Barak. And in line with that, we find the same word for "crush" used in Jud. 5:26 of how Jael crushed or pierced the head of Sisera. Hence :6 uses the same word of how the heads of all Yahweh's enemies would likewise be pierced or crushed. This was what Yahweh did to those in Canaan at the time when Israel first entered the land as a nation (Hab. 3:13). See on :7. These things will come to full term in the final "day of His wrath" at the return of the Lord Jesus.

Having just alluded to Melchizedek, we can suspect the allusion here is to how Abraham in Gen. 14:1-16 smote four kings, and filled the pits with the dead bodies of their troops.

In the day of His wrath-
The day of Yahweh's wrath is the last day, against the apostate in Israel (Dt. 31:17; Is. 13:9,13; Ez. 38:18 s.w.) as well as against the "kings" in the *eretz* promised to Abraham who were to be subsumed beneath the one Messianic king in Zion.

All men are the enemies of God. We are the enemies who surrender and becomes His footstool. The rest of His enemies will be dramatically destroyed at the last day. That is the simple message. He will then be "all in all".

Psa 110:6

He will judge among the nations, He will heap up dead bodies-
We note that this destruction of kings and heaping up dead bodies is in the context of a new king-priest being announced. The allusion may be to the victory and coronation rituals common at the time, and well attested in Babylon and Egypt. The old king was displayed as dead and humiliated, and the new king is enthroned.

This is the judgment of the latter day of His wrath (:5). "The nations" in view are specifically those within the *eretz* promised to Abraham. The heaping up of dead bodies is the latter day scenario of Ez. 39, and we have noted allusions to Ez. 38 in this Psalm.

He will crush the ruler of the whole earth-
"Crush" is the word just used in :5 of how Jael pierced or crushed the head of Sisera, an image used for how all the kings in the land promised to Abraham were to be crushed by the Messianic ruler in the final "day of His wrath" (:5; see notes there). The implication is that there will be a singular "ruler of the whole earth", the *eretz* promised to Abraham; this is the antichrist figure which occurs in so many prophecies. He is the "man of sin" of 2 Thess. 2, the individual known as Gog who will be the head or *rosh* of the confederacy which overruns Israel (Ez. 38:2). I noted on :5 that the phrase "day of His wrath" is also used in Ez. 38:18. Here, "ruler" likewise translates *rosh*.

This 'crushing' is another link with Psalm 2. But the scenario here is avoidable, if the peoples repent: "You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall crush them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Now therefore be wise, you kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. Serve Yahweh with respect and rejoice with trembling. Give sincere homage to the Son...".

Psa 110:7

He will drink of the brook in the way; therefore He will lift up His head-
The simple idea may be that the victorious but exhausted victor drinks from the brook, and lifts up his head in triumph. But we have seen on :3,5 the allusions to the victory of Jael, so Jael smiting off Sisera's head may be the basis of these words about lifting up or off the head. "Brook" translates the same word used of the "river" Kishon in the context of Deborah and Jael's victory (Jud. 4:7,13; 5:21). It also connects with David cutting off Goliath's head in an encounter full of echoes of the latter-day conflict between Christ and the surrounding nations. And again the word for "brook" is used in the context of that conflict (1 Sam. 17:40). Quite possibly David added this verse with reference to himself, alluding to his coronation at the Gihon Spring; he speaks of how his head had been lifted up in victory (Ps. 3:3; 27:6), or he may have his lifting up the head of Goliath in view. So far, the subject has been Yahweh and His victories through His Son. But David perhaps liked to see himself as that son, despite beginning by talking of "my lord", his future Lord Jesus.

The verse may be a simple victory flourish, alluding to how victors ceremonially drunk or ate something after the victory- it would not therefore be a reference to refreshment during the course of the battle. That surely would not have been placed at this final point in the Psalm. David's desire for something to drink from the well of Bethlehem may possibly be in that context (2 Sam. 23:15-19). We think of Samson's desire to drink after his victory with the ox goad, although he seems to have predominantly been literally thirsty. Drinking after victory may point ahead to how the Lord finally will sit down with us at His table and drink with us, as He promised at the last supper. This 'drinking' at the end of a victorious campaign is surely in the context of celebrating the victory.

PSALMS CHAPTER 111

Psa 111:1

Praise Yah!-
Here we have another example of Psalms being paired, this time with Ps. 112. Both are alphabetic Psalms; both begin with "Hallelujah" and have twenty lines, divided into ten verses. It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalms 113-118. The acrostic effect is achieved not only through the one letter at the beginning of the verse [there are two Hebrew verses in each of the English verses], but also through that same letter appearing exactly in the middle of each verse.

We could say that what is said of God in Ps. 111 is then repeated of man in Ps. 112. We are to manifest Him, not simply believe He exists.

I will give thanks to Yahweh with my whole heart, in the council of the upright, and in the congregation-
David was very much involved in Israel his people. He saw himself as their representative. When he sung Psalms, he invited them to come and sing along with him (Ps. 105:2; 107:22; 111:1). There is a parallel between the Divine council of Heaven, and the congregation of earth. We have the same in Job 1 where the sons of God on earth are reflected in the Angelic sons of God above.

Psa 111:2

Yahweh's works are great, pondered by all those who delight in them-
We are to ponder / study not only God's words in the Bible, but His works- in our lives, and in history and creation. The "works" of God are multiple times stated as being the salvation of His people from Egypt (Ps. 145:9; Ex. 34:10; Dt. 3:24; 11:7; Dan. 9:14); indeed we could read "works" as an intensive plural, referring to His one great work, which was and is salvation, ultimately in Yahoshua, Jesus, the salvation of Yah. As noted

on :1, this is a Psalm used at the time of Passover, which was all about reflection upon Yahweh's saving works to His people in the past. But the "works" to be reflected upon are not so much the miraculous, physical nature of His work; but His righteousness (:3), grace (:4), faithfulness to His covenant (:5), justice (:7) and salvation of His wayward people (:9). These are all the characteristics of the Yahweh Name declared to Moses in Ex. 34:5-7. His Name is His "works" in history, which are to be repeated in the experience of all His people and supremely at the last day. See on :9; Ps. 112:4.

Psa 111:3

His work is honour and majesty, His righteousness endures forever-
As noted on :2, the "work" in view is God's saving characteristics. His redemption (:9) of His wayward people was achieved by grace and mercy (:4) which were achieved all the same in justice and righteousness; and not by turning a blind eye to the sins of His people. Paul exults in this throughout Rom. 1-8; God's salvation of sinners by grace is achieved by the imputation of His eternal righteousness, and His righteousness and justice is not thereby minimized or bypassed, but rather exalted. "His righteousness endures forever" is alluded to in 2 Cor. 9:9- in the context of arguing that God's "righteousness" is shown in His generosity to others, which we should follow. This is His majestic work; see on :5.

Psa 111:4

He has caused His wonderful works to be remembered; Yahweh is gracious and merciful-
Literally, 'made a memorial for His wonderful works'. In response, His people were to 'remember' Him and His works, as Deuteronomy so often says. To remember the Manna they were to "take a container… and place it… for safe keeping so that it will be a memorial". And the Passover was a memorial not only of the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn, but of how they had been wretched slaves in Egypt (Dt. 5:15)- something the wilderness generation forgot, with their pining to return to Egypt. God's works make a Name for Himself (Neh. 9:10; Ex. 14:4,17). Supremely, His Name was made and declared in the cross, and one memorial of it is in the memorial meal. As noted on :2, such grace and mercy are an integral part of the Yahweh Name. His works are memorialized, just as His Name is likewise for a memorial or remembrance. See on Ps. 112:6, where the righteous are eternally remembered- because they are identified with the Name of Yahweh, showing His characteristics.

Psa 111:5

He has given food to those who fear Him-
As noted on :3, this passage is alluded to in 2 Cor. 9:9,10. God's gift of food is a reflection of His covenant relationship with His people to whom He gives food. This forms part of His eternal righteousness (:3); and Paul is telling the Corinthians that they ought to likewise be generous to those in the covenant who were lacking food. The immediate reference is to God's provision of food to the people in the wilderness, who were to then receive the promised land (:6); appropriate for a Passover Psalm (see on :1). And this is likewise used by Paul in the same section in appealing for generosity to those who lack the ability to go out and gather the manna (2 Cor. 8:15).

He is ever mindful of His covenant-
The covenant in view is that to Abraham, which promised eternal inheritance of the land. God is constantly thinking of that covenant and its implications; and so should we be. He will never be unmindful of it (Ps. 105:8-10 "He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, His oath to Isaac, and confirmed the same to Jacob for a statute; to Israel for an everlasting covenant").

Psa 111:6

He has shown His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations-
This Passover Psalm (:1) was going to reflect appropriately on the way that after the Passover deliverance, God gave the people the lands of the nations, in Canaan. But this gift of God's Kingdom was by "His works" and not their own. Ps. 44:3 makes the same point, that the land was given to them not by their sword but by God's grace .

Psa 111:7

The works of His hands are truth and justice; all His precepts are sure-
The Divine "works" in view are the gift of the Kingdom to His wayward people (:6). But this was done in absolute truth and justice. As noted on :3, Paul exults in this throughout Rom. 1-8; God's salvation of sinners by grace is achieved by the imputation of His eternal righteousness, and His righteousness and justice is not thereby minimized or bypassed, but rather exalted. And we are to respond to His justice to us by being just and truthful; just as His grace and mercy (:4) are to be reflected in us (Ps. 112:4,5).

Psa 111:8

they are established forever and ever. They are done in truth and uprightness-
The "precepts" in view which are eternal are those of the covenant with Abraham (see

on :5), not the Mosaic law. As explained on :3,7, the gift of the Kingdom to the wayward Israelites was achieved with absolute justice, and without God acting immorally or lacking in integrity.

Psa 111:9

He has sent redemption to His people, He has ordained His covenant forever. His name is holy and awesome!-
As explained on :8, the eternal covenant in view is that with Abraham (Gen. 17:13), which promised eternal inheritance of the land. That redemption from Egypt (Ex. 6:6) and gift of the Kingdom to Israel was all an articulation of God's characteristics as memorialized in his Name; see on :2. The redemption promised and implied in the covenant with Abraham is ongoing to God's people of all generations (s.w. Ps. 130:7).

Psa 111:10

The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom-
This statement has a context, and it is of the great salvation spoken of in the previous verses. Craven fear is not therefore in view. But a sense of awe, and a desire to respond to that great salvation. And that is the beginning of wisdom. Ps. 112:1 carries straight on from here- the one who is blessed with this great salvation will "fear Yahweh". Whether we take "fear" as 'reverence', 'awe' or actual fear, it all the same refers to a felt response in the emotions, a being taken aback by the wonder of our salvation. And this will elicit the way of wisdom from us in practice, going forward from that conviction. A sense of eternity, of the certainty of it for me, cannot last emotionally for very long. But it is the springboard for the way of "wisdom".

Solomon repeats his father David's conclusion that wisdom begins with the fear of Yahweh (Ps. 111:10 = Prov. 1:7; 9:10). This statement is in sharp contrast with the accepted view of the times, that wisdom was held by the sages, and was accessible only by sitting at their feet. But this idea (and it is common enough today too) is subverted by this idea that wisdom begins in each individual heart being in fear of Yahweh- so that wisdom from Him can be personally experienced, taught directly through relationship with Him rather than sitting at the feet of a human sage. "Wisdom" is parallel with getting "a good understanding" by 'doing His work' or obeying His commandments (Ps. 111:10b). The work we are to do for God in obeying His ways is not simply a test of our obedience; it is designed to give us wisdom. Wisdom therefore comes from experience of obedience and relationship with God, rather than from picking up nuggets of 'truth' from human sages. The fear of God is therefore not so much referring to a fear of the consequence of our sins; but the fear or revereance expressed through keeping His commandments (see on Ps. 112:1).

All those who do His work have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!-
This Psalm has stressed that salvation and the gift of the Kingdom to God's people is the result of *God's* work and not our own (see on :2,3,4,6,7). But the Psalm concludes with an invitation for us to participate in that work, to not to our own works towards salvation, but rather to "do *His* work".

"Good understanding" is the reward for obedience. Insight into God's word and ways can never be achieved by academic theology. The Lord likewise taught that whoever does God's will in practice "shall know of the doctrine" (Jn. 7:17). It is all part of the upward spiral of the spiritual life.

PSALMS CHAPTER 112

Psa 112:1

Praise Yah!-
Here we have another example of Psalms being paired, this time with Ps. 111. Both are alphabetic Psalms; both begin with "Hallelujah" and have twenty lines, divided into ten verses. It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalms 113-118. The praise of Yah follows right on from the closing verses of Ps. 111, which describe the great salvation of His people. The response to that is to fear Yahweh and begin the life of wisdom, spoken of here as delighting in His commandments. This is not a craven fear, but an awe at the reality of salvation, that leads to practical response.

Blessed is the man who fears Yahweh, who delights greatly in His commandments-
This appears to follow on from the conclusion of Ps. 111:10, speaking of the person obedient to Yahweh's commands. That Psalm has stressed God's faithfulness to His covenant, and I suggested the reference was to that with Abraham, the new covenant. Those promises speak of blessing, but that blessing was to come upon the person who fears Yahweh by delighting in His commandments. For they are the true seed of Abraham. The fear of God is therefore not so much referring to a fear of the consequence of our sins; but the fear or reverence expressed through keeping His commandments (see on Ps. 112:1). And surely there is also a sense of fear when we 'get it' that in fact we really will be saved by grace: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear” (Heb. 12:28).

Ps. 111 and 112 are both acrostic psalms; what God does in Ps. 111 is matched by man's response in Ps. 112. Ps. 111:1 asks: What should God's saved people do? The answer is they should praise God for the work done for them in saving them. Ps 112:1

enquires how should they praise Him? And the answer is that they should reflect His characteristics and saving work for them in their lives.

Psa 112:2

His seed will be mighty in the land, the generation of the upright will be blessed-
This continues the allusion to the promises to Abraham; his seed would eternally inherit the land, which was the blessing promised to Abraham. The "mighty in the land" or *eretz* promised to Abraham had been the likes of the "giants" of Gen. 6:4; Nimrod / Assyria (Gen. 10:8); Babylon (Gen. 46:12) and indeed all the Gentile nations of the *eretz* (Ez. 32:27); but the hope of the promises to Abraham was and is that "*his* seed will be mighty in the land" (Ps. 112:2). There is to be a radical inversion of all things upon the earth.

Psa 112:3

Wealth and riches are in His house; His righteousness endures forever-
There is a purposeful ambiguity here, as to whether "his house... his righteousness" refers to God or to the seed of Abraham which is the immediate context in :2. This is because God's righteousness and generous distribution of His wealth is to be reflected in that of His children, the seed of Abraham. See on :9. What is spoken of God's righteousness enduring forever (Ps. 111:3) is now said of the righteousness of every Godly man. Truly, "only what's done for Christ will last". Our righteous acts and characteristics developed will last eternally, just as will God's righteousness. All His righteous acts progressively contribute to His eternal Name. And so it will be for us.

Psa 112:4

Light dawns in the darkness for the upright, gracious, merciful, and righteous-
The rest of the Psalm appears to refer to the final judgment of the generous and gracious as opposed to the wicked. The light that dawns in darkness would therefore refer to the final day of resurrection, when the promises to Abraham's seed are finally and eternally fulfilled (:2). "Upright, gracious and merciful" are the characteristics of the Yahweh Name as proclaimed to Moses in Ex. 34:5-7. The righteous are therefore those who have manifested that Name in their own characters. The parallel Ps. 111:2-5,7,9 speak of these characteristics as being those of the Yahweh Name; but here they are applied to God's true people. In this lies the significance of our baptism into the Name; that righteousness is counted to us, and we are to live according to the status we have been given by grace through faith. Light arising in the darkness is the language of creation (Gen. 1:4 etc.); the resurrection will be the new creation without sin or the possibility of falling. Death is a departure from light to darkness (Job 18:18). Here we have the opposite, from darkness to light, implying resurrection at the last day (cp. Mic. 7:8).

There is a clear connection with the word to the exiles in Is. 58:10: "If you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul: then your light shall rise in darkness, and your obscurity be as the noonday". The rising of that light was to be at the arising of Zion's light in Messiah's coming to Zion. That ultimately is when light arises for the upright, who have been gracious and generous in the days of darkness, without any visible recompense. Truly "light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart" (Ps. 97:11). That hope of eternal light is "sown", and will come to full birth at the Lord's return. Our darkness shall not last for ever. Heb. "He shone a light in the darkness", referring ultimately to the Lord Jesus, in whom Ps. 27:1 came true: “The Lord is my light and my salvation”.

The righteous are "Gracious, merciful", connecting with how we read in Ps. 111:4 that Yahweh is gracious and merciful in saving His people. Our practical response to that is to be gracious and merciful in practice- e.g. by lending and gifting (:5,9). This is the grand theme of God manifestation. Thus Hos. 4:1,2 blames the absence of “faithfulness and steadfast love” on the lack of “knowledge of God”. The Gospel achieves a gradual transformation of man toward the image of God (Col. 3:10; 2 Cor. 3:18).

Psa 112:5

It is well with the man who deals graciously and lends; he will maintain his cause in judgment-
The need to be generous as God is generous and gracious is brought to a climax in :9. See on :2. As noted on :4, what is in view is the last judgment. Those who have been gracious will have their case upheld; what solely matters is that God's people have believed in His grace. But faith in that grace will naturally elicit a life of graciousness to others. This is not the same as teaching salvation by works. The Lord's parables likewise make it apparent that the judgment will consider how we have treated others. It is never presented as a theological examination. It is how we have articulated grace to others which is and shall ever be the all important issue.

The "He" who maintain's the generous man's cause is surely God. We will have His as our legal defence as well as our judge. Or we can read this as saying that the righteous man will show justice, just as God does, showing justice in all His works (Ps. 111:7).

Psa 112:6

For he will never be shaken-
"He will never be shaken" is spoken in Ps. 112:6 in the context of the outcome of the final judgment. Being unmoved or never shaken is a major theme of the Psalms of David. Human beings naturally seek for stability, but look for it in the wrong places, imagining that their idols shall never be shaken (s.w. Is. 40:20; 41:7). It is only the receipt

of eternal salvation at the last day which means we shall never be moved; that is the only ultimate stability (Ps. 62:2,6 s.w.). Their stability will be associated with that of God's eternal Kingdom to be centered upon Zion (s.w. Ps. 125:1). For in secular life under the sun, the righteous do suffer and their lives are "shaken". Solomon's statements that the righteous shall never be shaken / moved (Prov. 10:30; 12:3) are only ultimately true in this sense; but whether he spoke them with that understanding is debatable.

The righteous will be remembered forever-
Again, we clearly have the last judgment in view, when the righteous will be immortalized and remembered forever. The idea of remembrance or memorialization is appropriate to the Yahweh Name. In the parallel Ps. 111:4, it is the Name and works of Yahweh which are eternally remembered ["He has caused His wonderful works to be remembered"]; here the righteous are eternally remembered- because they are identified with the Name of Yahweh, showing His characteristics. Which supremely are summarized in "grace"; see on :5.

Psa 112:7

He will not be afraid of evil news; his heart is steadfast, trusting in Yahweh-
Nothing need faze us, nothing at all, if we have the stabilized heart which comes from being secure in Christ, in God's saving purpose. The stability of knowing that we shall be saved eternally means that we likewise can respond to "evil news" with a steadfast heart. The phrase "evil news" is only used elsewhere in Jer. 49:23 about the news of Divine condemnation and judgment. The fact some will be condemned at the last day will not shake our heart, because we trust in Yahweh's grace.

David had earlier understood that for the humble and righteous, God can "prepare their heart" (Ps. 10:17). This is evidence enough that God works directly upon the human heart and psychology, which He does today through the work of His Spirit upon the human spirit. For it is men who must prepare their heart in prayer and relationship toward God (s.w. 2 Chron. 12:14; Job 11:13; Ps. 7:9). But God can also do this for the humble. Hence David later asks God to create in him a 'prepared' heart (s.w. Ps. 51:10). And God heard; for the same phrase is used of how God 'prepared' or (AV) "fixed" / NEV 'made steadfast' his heart (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7). In allusion to this, Solomon was to later reflect that God can direct or 'prepare' (s.w.) the heart of man, even if he is thinking to direct his steps elsewhere (Prov. 16:9).

Psa 112:8

His heart is established; he will not be afraid in the end when he sees his adversaries-
"The end" is the day of judgment. This stability of mind is a big theme in the Psalms. We

will have the same mental attitude now as we will in the last day, when we meet our enemies at judgment day. Just as we come with "boldness" before the throne of grace in our prayers now, and will do so likewise at the last day. This mental focus and stability is the hallmark of the true believer; being "grounded and settled, not moved away from the hope of the Gospel" (Col. 1:23). "For it is good that the heart be established by grace" (Heb. 13:9). And God will help us with this. There is a huge range of meaning in the Hebrew word translated "established"- it is elsewhere translated confirmed, directed, fashioned, framed, prepared, made ready, made stable. All this God will do to the human heart- if we let His spirit work upon our spirit. We think of how the Lord Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to death in Jerusalem. "The end" in view is the day of resurrection and judgment. In that day, the righteous such as David will not need to fear their adversaries like Saul when they meet them again. The idea of the heart of the righteous being established or stable at the day of judgment is alluded to in several New Testament passages (2 Thess. 2:17; 3:3; Heb. 13:9; 1 Pet. 5:10).

Psa 112:9

He has dispersed, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever-
God's generosity is a pattern to us. Thus the words "He has dispersed abroad; he has given to the poor" are used in 2 Cor. 9:9,10 about God; and in Ps. 112:9 about the generosity of the believer. There is a purposeful ambiguity here, as to whether "he has dispersed... his righteousness" refers to God or to the righteous, which is the immediate context in :8. This is because God's righteousness and generous distribution of His wealth is to be reflected in that of His children, the seed of Abraham. See on :3.

This passage is the equivalent of Ps. 111:3,5, which is a parallel Psalm. Ps. 111:5 defines God's 'dispersal to the poor' as being in terms of food and basic sustenance. God's gift of food is a reflection of His covenant relationship with His people to whom He gives food. This forms part of His eternal righteousness (Ps. 111:3); and Paul is telling the Corinthians that they ought to likewise be generous to those in the covenant who were lacking food. The immediate reference is to God's provision of food to the people in the wilderness, who were to then receive the promised land (Ps. 111:6); appropriate for a Passover Psalm (see on :1). And this is likewise used by Paul in the same section in appealing for generosity to those who lack the ability to go out and gather the manna (2 Cor. 8:15).

"His righteousness endures forever" is alluded to in 2 Cor. 9:9- in the context of arguing that God's "righteousness" is shown in His generosity to others, which we should follow. This is His majestic work; see on Ps. 111:5.

His horn will be exalted with honour-
The glorification / honour of the gracious / generous is not seen in this life. But it will

occur at the time of :10- when the wicked will be resurrected to see it, and will gnash their teeth, which is the language of the last judgment.

Psa 112:10

The wicked will see it, and be grieved. He shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away. The desire of the wicked will perish- There is a sense in which the wicked will see the rewarding of the righteous; for the day of judgment will in a sense be public. It is for the education of all present. Those who have harshly judged others will see the result of their harshness, and how in fact they condemned the righteous. They will see how “the desire of the righteous is granted” (Prov. 10:24), whilst their desires come to nothing. Gnashing of teeth is the language of condemnation at the last day (Mt. 8:12 etc.). But those thus condemned will have gnashed their teeth at their brethren in this life (Ps. 35:16; 37:12). By doing so, they are living out their own condemnation. The rejected 'melting away' from the throne of the Lord Jesus is a repeated Biblical picture. 1 Jn. 2:28 speaks of them as being "ashamed from before him at his coming", the Greek suggesting the idea of slinking away in shame. Another foretaste of this was in the way the condemned world of Noah’s time [the flood was a clear type of the final judgment] were to ‘pine away / languish’ (Gen. 6:17; 7:21- AV “die”). The wicked will melt away from the Lord's presence (Ps. 68:2). Rejected Israel are described as being "ashamed away" (Joel 1:12)- the same idea. This is the idea behind Heb. 12:15 RVmg: "...man that falleth back from the grace of God". Note that Jesus Himself will be likewise ashamed of His unworthy followers (Lk. 9:26); there will be a mutuality in the natural distancing between the two parties. This is the scene of Rev. 16:15- the rejected being made naked in shame. This slinking back in shame will fulfil the prophecies of Is. 1:24,29 and Jer. 2:35,36, which speak of the rejected being made ashamed, becoming ashamed, of their idols They will be made ashamed by the judgment process. Thus we have the picture of them initially arguing with Jesus, growing less and less forcible, giving way to a pleading with tears for a change of mind, finally followed by a silent slinking away in shame. There seems a certain similarity between this and how the combined Gospel records imply that men initially mocked Jesus on the cross, and then eventually slipped away in silence (Heb. 6:6). Adam attempted to hide from God's presence, the Hebrew implying 'to drawn oneself back'. Judas went away (Gk. he retired away) to try to hang himself, once he knew his condemnation (Mt. 27:3-5). Speechlessness is a characteristic of the rejected (Mt. 22:12); the brothers slunk away from Joseph's physical presence (Gen. 45:4), as the rejected will.

PSALMS CHAPTER 113

Psa 113:1

Praise Yah! Praise, you servants of Yahweh, praise the name of Yahweh-
This is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalm 113-118. This opening verse is an invitation to the Levites or priests as Yahweh's servants to begin the praise at a feast, used also in Ps. 135:1. In Jewish tradition, Psalms 113 and 114 are recited before the Passover meal and Psalms 115–118 after the Passover meal. Even though Psalms 114 and 115 have no break between them in the earliest manuscripts.

Psa 113:2

Blessed be the name of Yahweh, from this time forth and forever-
The first verse has called men to Praise Yahweh's Name, and now we read the response. "May the name of Yahweh be blessed" is a quotation from Job 1:21, where Job responds like this having lost everything.

The idea may be that we will eternally be praising the name of Yahweh; in the sense of appreciating and praising His characteristics. For the declaration of His Name to Moses involved the listing of His characteristics which combine to make up His personality. We can begin living the eternal life now, in that we can now act as we shall eternally. We shall be eternally appreciating, trusting, loving and praising God's Name- and we can begin that now. This is an Old Testament form (also in Ps. 113:2; 115:18; 121:8; 125:2; 131:3) of the Lord's teaching as recorded in John's Gospel, that we can have and live the eternal life right now. We have that life not in the sense that we shall never die, but in that we can begin living and being now as we shall eternally live and be.

Psa 113:3

From the rising of the sun to the going down of it, Yahweh's name is to be praised-
This could mean from the east to the west, but equally from the dawn to dusk, every day. The vision here is of Gentiles coming to Yahweh and praising His Name. Usually, nations changed their gods only because they had been subjugated by other nations by force, and made to worship the gods of their conquerors. But Yahweh isn't like that. The appeals of the Psalms are constantly for people to decide themselves to come to Him, attracted by His grace to His people, who are to be the parade, showcase examples of what covenant relationship with Yahweh means.

Psa 113:4

Yahweh is high above all nations, His glory above the heavens-
This could be part of the vision of :3, of "all nations" lifting Yahweh up as high above them. As His glory was over the ark and the blood covered mercy seat in particular, so now the Gentiles are envisaged as being there on the ark, just as Israel were intended to

be. But the idea may also be that Yahweh is above all nations, His glory is there above them all- but they are to seek after Him and find Him. Perhaps the connection is with Ez. 1, where Yahweh's glory is above the heavens and will be seen there at the restoration. The restoration was intended to be the time when His glory would seen from east to west (:3), as prophesied in Is. 45:6,7.

Psa 113:5

Who is like Yahweh our God, who has His seat on high-
As explained on :3, this is an invitation from Israel to the nations to accept Yahweh *our* God. This Psalm has clear connections with the restoration prophecies (here to Is. 40:18,25). The idea was that the exiles would repent, and along with repentant Gentiles, return to form a multiethnic people of God in the restored Kingdom of God in Israel.

Psa 113:6

who stoops down to view both heaven and earth?-
Ps. 113:6,7 speaks of how the God who humbles Himself to behold the things in Heaven and earth, is the same God who "raises up the poor out of the dust". His grace at a cosmic level is reflected in the way that on earth He choses to work with the poor rather than the mighty. As we reflect on the 'Wow!' factor in God's calling of us, we need to learn this deeply- that we are the nobodies whom God has called and chosen. That Yahweh has the feature of humility was something totally and radically different to all conceptions of deities amongst the nations; their gods claimed to be proud and invincible, with none of the sensitivity to the lowly which is a part of humility.

The more we begin to even faintly grasp the height of Yahweh's holiness and spirituality, the more we will be awed by His humility in dealing with us. It requires humility from Him to even behold the Angels (perhaps referred to by "heaven"). And yet He lets them discuss His will and come up with their own schemes for executing it, many of which he rejects as somehow inappropriate (2 Chron. 18:17-20).

Psa 113:7

He raises up the poor out of the dust and lifts up the needy from the ash heap-
David had seen himself as "poor and needy", needing grace after his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:16,22). He wished Solomon to likewise have pity on the "poor and needy" amongst the Gentiles, those who had likewise repented (Ps. 72:13). And David was especially desirous to himself see the "poor and needy" blessed and accepted as he had been (Ps. 82:3,4; 113:7). It is our personal experience of needing grace which leads us to have a heart for those like us, the poor

and needy. Any other motivation will ultimately not abide. Solomon appears to glorify his mother Bathsheba for likewise pitying the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9,20).

These are the words of Hannah in 1 Sam. 2:8, and Hannah's song is alluded to throughout Ps. 113:7-9. She is presented here as representative of Israel, particularly the exiles in Babylon. Her hope was that Samuel would be not only a priest [although he was not strictly a Levite] but also a prince / king. This is all similar to the idea of Ps. 110:4, where the Messiah was to be a king-priest, not a Levite, but a priest "after the order of Melchizedek".

Another historical context for the psalm may be the time of Judah's invasion by the Assyrians at the time of Hezekiah. There is almost an exact quotation here from a letter by an exorcist called Urad-Gula, who says that although he was “a pauper, son of a pauper, a dead dog”, King Sennacherib “lifted me from the dung heap”. What the world claims to be able to do for you, to exalt you, give you a great life… can in fact only be done by the one true God of Israel. And in far more eternal and deeper terms than the world could ever achieve.

Psa 113:8

that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people-
The implication could be that the lowly person lifted up is a Gentile, or at least not from the ruling tribe of Judah, who is lifted up to be a prince amongst the princes of Israel God's people. As noted on :7, this is what Hannah had in mind for her son Samuel (1 Sam. 2:8). The language of the man exalted from the dunghill (:7 AV) is also that of Job, who was himself a Gentile. The exaltation of the lowly to be with princes recalls Joseph with Pharaoh, Daniel with Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus, Mordecai with Ahasuerus. The latter two were relevant to the exiles, for whom this Psalm appears to have been rewritten.

He settles the barren woman in her home, as a joyful mother of children. Praise Yah!-
The allusion to Hannah continues; but she was representative to the "barren woman" of Israel in exile (Is. 54:1), who was to be blessed with many children (Is. 49:12,18,20; 54:2,3; 60:5; Gal. 4:27). So many of God's significant women were barren, the ultimate sign of human failure and social stigma: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, Rachel, Hannah, the mother of Samson, Elizabeth. And He uses such people today. Following through the imagery of Zion as a woman in Isaiah, she had been reduced to a drunken, naked woman lying on the dusty ground, whom men walked over; a woman who had lost her husband and her children. We note the reference to being raised up from the dust in :7.

PSALMS CHAPTER 114

Psa 114:1

When Israel went forth out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign language-

In Jewish tradition, Psalms 113 and 114 are recited before the Passover meal and Psalms 115–118 after the Passover meal. Even though Psalms 114 and 115 have no break between them in the earliest manuscripts. This Psalm hardly ever mentions God, and is not addressed specifically to God. It is a reflection on Israel, and yet our reflections can equally be seen as prayer to God. It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalm 113-118. Fittingly, therefore, "it divides into four stanzas of four lines each, very evenly balanced, and perfect in its metrical arrangement".

This Psalm appears to be encouraging the exiles to perceive that just as Israel had been delivered from Egypt and brought to Canaan, so they could be from Babylon, and led to the restored Kingdom of God in Israel.

Psa 114:2

Judah became His sanctuary, Israel His kingdom-
The exiles had no physical sanctuary, as the temple was in ruins. But this reminds them that Israelites who left Egypt likewise had no temple; they as people were the essence of God's sanctuary. They as a people were "His Kingdom" (Ex. 19:5), the dominion of the King. Their lack of a human king and national territory didn't at all mean that they were not "His Kingdom", or that God was without "His sanctuary".

The people were God's sanctuary, not a physical building, tent nor location. The parallel between Judah and Israel was to remind them that God's people were redeemed in one body. God called His singular son out of Egypt. He was their God from the land of Egypt (Hos. 12:10; 13:4), as if their baptism in the Red Sea was their birth water- an idea developed in Paul's teaching that the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Christ. There is a collective aspect to salvation, just as we are redeemed through the death and resurrection of the one body of Christ, "reconciled unto God… in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16). So quite possibly this Psalm has a subtext. Under Ezra and Nehemiah, there was a movement to redefine "Israel" as the golah Jews who had returned from Babylon, and to exclude all other Israelites from a new definition of "Israel". Possibly we see this reflected here, as "Judah" is made parallel with "Israel", especially if we translate "Judah became His holy one, Israel, His dominion". Likewise there is in this Psalm the idea that "Israel" was created by the Exodus. The restoration from Babylon was seen as a second

Exodus, and so the subtext was that the exodus from Babylon of the golah Jews had created a new "Israel"- comprised exclusively of those golah Jews.

Psa 114:3

The sea saw it, and fled. The Jordan was driven back-
The seas and waters symbolically refer to nations; just as the Red Sea and Jordan had literally fled, so would the nations before tiny Judah. The sea is personified as people fleeing because of this intended connection between the seas and nations; the same word is used of the Egyptians fleeing from the returning Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27). We are here invited to play "Bible television", to use a phrase of Harry Whittaker; standing on the banks and watching the waters fleeing back. This is exactly the encouragement to the exiles given in Is. 51:10; the seas would be dried up to make "a way for the ransomed to pass over". This becomes the more powerful when we become aware of how waters and the sea were understood as the powers of chaos, where sea monsters lived who were far greater than man. All that was easily swept away in order to save God's people. The rhetorical question of course is "why?" did the seas flee (:5)? The answer is that Yahweh is so far more powerful than the powers of chaos, that effectively they do not exist. As with the language of demons in the New Testament, there is no specific statement that sea monsters and powers of chaos don't exist; the huge superior power of God is such that their existence or non-existence is in fact no real issue.

Psa 114:4

The mountains skipped like rams, the little hills like lambs-
The reference is to the earthquakes which were associated with the division of the Red Sea. But the mountains are personified as people skipping with joy; just as the waters represent peoples in :3. Mountains and hills represent nation and kingdoms. The hope was that the exiles would repent, and along with joyful, repentant Gentiles, return to form a multiethnic people of God in the restored Kingdom of God in Israel.

Psa 114:5

What was it, you sea, that you fled? You Jordan, that you turned back?-
The idea may be 'What do these things mean?'. And the answer is in :7- that the peoples of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham to tremble at Yahweh's presence- in repentance and acceptance of Him. Perhaps we can read "turned back" as referring to repentance. The parting of the Red Sea and of the Jordan is paralleled here. Our birth through water baptism sets up the ultimate birth of the Spirit when we leave the wilderness and enter God's Kingdom. Each turning back of the waters is equally

miraculous. This is another hint at a two-stage salvation process. Just as the blind man was healed in two stages, firstly seeing men as trees walking.

Psa 114:6

You mountains, that you skipped like rams; you little hills, like lambs?-
See on :4,5. There is a similar idea in Ps. 29:6 "He also makes them to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox", GNB "He makes the mountains of Lebanon jump like calves and makes Mount Hermon leap like a young bull". There is the idea that Lebanon and Hermon, from where the cedars came from, would join in response to God's word. For David ever had the hope of Gentile response to Israel's God.

Whilst symbolic language is clearly being used, the overall impression of the Psalm is that nature somehow came alive and was responsive to God's presence. This has to be the case even moreso at the Lord's return. The changes will bring about the Kingdom of God on earth, but may also set up a situation in which the natural creation is also in some sense alive for God. This spiritual potential in the natural creation is surely hinted at in how Paul speaks of creation groaning as it awaits our full manifestation as God's sons, and will itself somehow share in our liberation: "For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of Him who subjected it in hope; the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as children and the redemption of our bodies" (Rom. 8:20-23).

Psa 114:7

Tremble, you earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob-
The idea is that as the earth had trembled at the exodus, so it could do again at the restoration from Babylon. But the imperative to "tremble" is a suggestion that we are to read this as an appeal to the peoples of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham to tremble at Yahweh's presence- in repentance and acceptance of Him.

Psa 114:8

who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a spring of waters-
Just as God had provided for His people on their journey to Canaan after delivering them from Egypt, so He would for the exiles from Babylon. Tragically, most preferred to remain in Babylonian exile. The hardest flint (Dt. 8:15 "water out of the rock of flint") can be transformed by God with ease. The face set like a flint (Is. 50:7 s.w.) can be turned into a

spring of water for others; just as monolithic mountains, lumps of rock, can be made to skip for joy by the Lord's presence.

PSALMS CHAPTER 115

Psa 115:1

Not to us, Yahweh, not to us, but to Your name give glory, for Your the sake of Your grace and truth-
In Jewish tradition, Psalms 113 and 114 are recited before the Passover meal and Psalms 115–118 after the Passover meal. Even though Psalms 114 and 115 have no break between them in the earliest manuscripts. It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalm 113-118. As with Ps. 114, the context appears to be an encouragement to the exiles to not lose heart, even though they couldn't keep the feasts as strictly required. This opening request is for God to glorify the Yahweh Name in order to fulfil His "grace and truth", a phrase often used of the promises to Abraham. The Psalm is asking God to fulfil those promises, which would glorify His Name, in the restoration of the exiles to Zion. Perhaps the request not to glorify the exiles may have in view how popular the exiles became in exile, as witnessed by the end of the book of Esther.

In the context of the restoration, no glory was given to Judah because the restoration was not done for their sakes; but because of God's Name (Ez. 36:22). The psalmist is aware of this, and so he volunteers the request for no glory to be given to God's people. But he asks that God glorify His Name- in delivering His people from their enemies who are mocking them. This first verse is therefore an appeal for Divine action. The Lord's prayer opens the same way: "Glorify Your Name / Hallwed be Thy Name". The articulation of God's Name, His characteristics and principles, is what we ask for. No glory to our name, no quick fix of whatever is on our immediate agenda- but His Name being glorified. Even when we do ask for specific things, we must always preface this by a desire to see His Name being glorified in the longer term and on the higher level. Requests for forgiveness can likewise be made on the basis that this will glorify God's Name: "Aid us, our rescuing God, for the honor of Your name, and save us and wipe out our sins for the sake of Your name" (Ps. 79:9).

"Your grace and truth" is a reference to the promises to Abraham that comprised the covenant. They were all of grace, and the "truth" refers to the way God will surely fulfil them. Hence in Gen. 24:27: "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His grace and His truth toward my master". And Mic. 7:20 likewise: "You will give truth to Jacob, and grace to Abraham, as you have sworn to our fathers from the days of old". Being in new covenant relationship with God, which is based on the promises to Abraham, means that He will come through for us- in the end.

Psa 115:2

Why should the nations say, Where is their God now?-
The way Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy Israel for the sake of what the surrounding nations would say is indeed inspirational to us all. It surely inspired the psalmist here to pray likewise. The request would be appropriate to the Jewish exiles in Babylon / Persia, mocked for having been forsaken by their God, and the prophecies of restoration apparently not coming true (Ps. 137:3).

Another historical reference is clearly to the Assyrians mocking the Jews outside the walls of Jerusalem, claiming Yahweh couldn't save them. The Rabshakeh uses the same phrase when he asks, “Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim?” (Is. 36:19). Psalm 115 taunts the Assyrian idols just as the Rabshakeh taunts Yahweh as a powerless god. The Assyrian idols are mocked as “the work of men’s hands, wood and stone” (Is. 37:19), which is just the phrase used here in Ps. 115:4. This would then make sense of the mocking of the Assyrian idols in :4-6; the appeal for faith in :9 is that made by Isaiah at that time; and the reference to the dead who don't praise Yahweh in :17 would refer to the slain Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem. The appeal to "trust in Yahweh!" in :9, and the four repeated calls to "trust" Him in :9-12, is all the response to the Rabshakeh's "Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in Yahweh!” (Is. 36:15). Hezekiah prepared for the Assyrian invasion by making shields (2 Chron. 32:5); but the triple appeal of the psalmist is to trust that Yahweh would be Judah's shield at this time (Ps. 15:9-11). The Psalm stresses that Yahweh is indeed enthroned in Heaven, and therefore has total power upon earth; and that is the spirit of Hezekiah's prayer in Is. 37:16: "Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, who is enthroned among the cherubim, You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth".

Psa 115:3

But our God is in the heavens. He does whatever He pleases-
Although God was not coming through for them as apparently promised (:1), the psalmist has no doubt that God is still "our" God, He really exists, and does His will / pleasure- even if it is not what we are expecting or hoping for. The contrast is with the dead idols, who don't do their own will / pleasure because they are dead.

The implication may be that this was the answer of the faithful exiles to the mocking observation of the Gentiles that their God was apparently inactive because He was invisible. His visibility however is not related to His activity; and that is the huge difference between the true God and all idols. There may also be the admission that God is active according to His will / pleasure, and as He is omnipotent, that is often

going to be above what we can explain to others. There is no shame in our making the same response to those who demand to 'see' our God in more visible action.

Psa 115:4

Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands-
This is grammatically not addressed to those who mocked the exiles in :2. Rather is this comfort to the exiles, that the idols of Babylon / Persia were indeed dumb. And yet according to Ezekiel and the implications of the book of Esther, idolatry was rife amongst the exiles. So this may have been also an appeal to the exiles to see the idols for what they were.

Psa 115:5

they have mouths, but they don't speak, they have eyes, but they don't see-
The implication is that Yahweh has all these faculties. This implies that Yahweh is a personal God, and we are made in His image physically, although not morally.

Psa 115:6

They have ears, but they don't hear, they have noses, but they don't smell-
See on :5. This mockery of idolatry is similar of that addressed to the exiles in Is. 44:9-20; and the context is the same. The exiles are being recalled from idolatry (see on :4). So often the prophets mock idolatry, and we likewise should see the idols of this world for what they are. Our God is real and personal, He can speak (Is. 1:20), see (Ps. 113:6), hear (Ps. 6:8) and smell (Gen. 8:21). Paganism made little distinction between the symbol, and the thing symbolized. We see the same in the way people tend to see e.g. a crucifix as if it is actually the crucified Jesus. God is real, in Heaven, a personal being. Man is made in His image. Man is not to be worshipped, no glory is to be given to him, but only to God the creator of His own image (:1).

Psa 115:7

They have hands, but they don't feel; they have feet, but they don't walk, neither do they speak through their throat-
The implication is that the God of Israel doesn't just have a dead semblance of human form, but actually is real and living, in human form; for we are made in His image. His word is spoken through His throat, and elsewhere He is presented as speaking through lips (Job 23:12). All the other things in the preceding verses are what God does, in contrast with the dead idols. Speaking through the throat is the final example. Hence

the wonder of the fact that Israel heard the actual voice of God at Sinai. No other nation, Moses reflects, had ever heard the actual voice of their god.

Psa 115:8

Those who make them will be like them; yes, everyone who trusts in them-
This is an abiding principle. We become like that which we worship and trust in. The process of trusting Yahweh will make us like Him. The requirement for faith and worship is therefore for our benefit. The idols have been portrayed as only appearing human; effectively they are dead, with eyes etc. which don't function. And those who worship them become likewise- not really alive as intended, not sensing reality as they are intended. Those who worship vanities become vain (Jer. 2:5). This was exactly the message to the exiles (Is. 44:9). Those who make dead idols are themselves dead, not fully as humans living in the image of the living God. They lose their consciousness, life and existence. All they think of is their dream vacation, holiday home or whatever. It is perhaps this kind of "dead" people who are referenced in :18. They do not praise God after their death just as they didn't in their lives. We who are alive to God are in fact walking amongst dead people, we are the sighted people walking amongst the blind, who grope in darkness even at noonday. Idols are called "vanities", and Is. 44:9-11 teaches that those who make them are alike "vain", and will have the terrible disappointment at the end of their lives and at judgment day: "Everyone who makes an engraved image is vain. The things that they delight in will not profit. Their own witnesses don't see nor know, that they may be disappointed. Who has fashioned a god or moulds an image that is profitable for nothing? Behold, all his fellows will be disappointed; and the workmen are mere men".

Psa 115:9

Israel, trust in Yahweh! He is their help and their shield-
As discussed above, this was an appeal for Israel to quit idolatry and trust in Yahweh alone. Thereby they would show themselves to be the true seed of Abraham, for whom Yahweh was His shield (Gen. 15:1), and of David likewise (Ps. 28:7).

Psa 115:10

House of Aaron, trust in Yahweh! He is their help and their shield-
This can be read as an appeal to the house of Aaron separately to Israel (:9). But often "Israel" are paralleled with the house of Aaron / Levi. And this seems an example of that. Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord… praise ye the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of

priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to all discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should all teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11).

Psa 115:11

You who fear Yahweh, trust in Yahweh! He is their help and their shield-

Verses 9-11 speak of three groups: Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who feared Yahweh. These three groups are found in Ps. 114:9-11 and Ps. 118:2-4. They refer to the common people of Israel, to the priests, and the 'fearers of Yahweh' would refer to Gentile proselytes. The restoration prophets saw all three groups as being welded together into a new people of God, with equal access to the sanctuary. The psalmist speaks throughout the psalm of "we" and "us" (:12). He includes all three groups within the "we" of God's people who are keeping Passover (see on :1). Sadly this inclusive spirit was totally denied by Ezra and Nehemiah, and in practice, the returned exiles failed to achieve this unity. The ideal was that this multiethnic community would increase in number (:14 "you and your children"). But Ezra and Nehemiah excluded those Jews who married Gentiles, forcing them to divorce and leave those children fatherless.

Israel professed to "fear Yahweh", to respect Him as their God; but that's not necessarily the same as trusting in Him as help and shield. They are appealed to here, as we are, to go far beyond mere religion, in name only making a religious profession. As discussed on :4 and above, the exiles were veering towards idolatry, whilst claiming to still have Yahweh as their God.

Psa 115:12

Yahweh remembers us; He will bless us, He will bless the house of Israel, He will bless the house of Aaron-

The exiles were comforted against their impression that Yahweh had forgotten them- a woman cannot forget her newborn child (Is. 49:14,15). This psalmist believed that. The

exiles had not in fact been forgotten, as they feared; they could experience the blessing of restoration when they received the blessing of forgiveness from Yahweh. But that required repentance. The allusion is perhaps to the blessing of Num. 6:24; but this Psalm was used at the feasts (:1), which were to remember / commemorate God's blessing of His people (Dt. 16:15). Yahweh would "remember" His people after punishing them in exile (Lev. 26:45 s.w.), and the psalmist asks for that moment to now come.

Psa 115:13

He will bless those who fear Yahweh, both small and great-
The "small" perhaps especially thought that they were too insignificant to experience Yahweh's blessings. But the nature of Yahweh's covenant is that He doesn't respect the persons of all who are within it. The blessing of those who fear Yahweh would specifically be at the time when Zion was restored (Ps. 128:4,5), and that is what is here in view, in the context of the exiles. Both "small and great" were to be blessed if they accepted the new covenant offered to the exiles (Jer. 31:34).

Psa 115:14

May Yahweh increase you more and more, you and your children-
This alludes to the blessings promised to Abraham, to multiply his seed or children; and Yahweh would "increase more" His people after their exile (s.w. Is. 26:15). The exiles had broke the old covenant, and the prophets had invited them to accept a "new covenant", based upon the promises to Abraham rather than the law of Moses.

Psa 115:15

Blessed are you by Yahweh, who made heaven and earth-
The God powerful enough to create all things can easily focus that power to the blessing of His people. The fact God is creator is so often used as an appeal for His people to trust Him. As we are blessed by Him, so we are to bless / praise Him (:18). This is why the Hebrew for "bless" means both to bless and to praise.

Psa 115:16

The heavens are the heavens of Yahweh; but the earth has He given to the children of men-
Possibly there is specific reference to "the heaven of heavens", the actual location of God. The God who created that (:15), His own dwelling place, also created this tiny

planet earth and is easily able to control things here. The reference may be specifically to the *eretz* promised to Abraham; it had been promised to Israel, "the children of men".

Psa 115:17

The dead don't praise Yah, neither any who go down into silence-
This may be a request to restore the Kingdom in the lifetime of the exiles, or the psalmist in exile; so that they could praise Yahweh for it now, rather than die without seeing it. But all the same the point is established that death is not a conscious state; for even the righteous cannot praise Yahweh in death, which is a place of "silence". The fact the dead don't praise God means that we who are alive must praise Him. And quite possibly, the more we are aware of our mortality, the deeper is our praise and gratitude to God. For this life, and for the eternal life ahead which is referenced in the next verse. "The dead" may specifically refer to those portrayed in :8- those who make dead idols and are like them, dead, not fully human even in their lives.

Psa 115:18

but we will bless Yah, from this time forth and forevermore. Praise Yah!-

The "we" are in contradistinction to the dead of :17. It refers to those now alive; and "we", the psalmist's generation, would praise God then and forever. He may have in view the final resurrection at the last day; but he may also have hoped as we do, that they were the final generation who would never die if the Kingdom was established in their lifetime.

The idea may be that we will eternally be praising the name of Yahweh; in the sense of appreciating and praising His characteristics. For the declaration of His Name to Moses involved the listing of His characteristics which combine to make up His personality. We can begin living the eternal life now, in that we can now act as we shall eternally. We shall be eternally appreciating, trusting, loving and praising God's Name- and we can begin that now. This is an Old Testament form (also in Ps. 113:2; 115:18; 121:8; 125:2; 131:3) of the Lord's teaching as recorded in John's Gospel, that we can have and live the eternal life right now. We have that life not in the sense that we shall never die, but in that we can begin living and being now as we shall eternally live and be.

PSALMS CHAPTER 116

Psa 116:1

I love Yahweh, because He listens to my voice and my cries for mercy-
It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover,

Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalm 113-118. It sounds very much like a Psalm of David, thanking God for delivering him; but it is here appropriated in hope to the restoration of the exiles. But the reality was that as we see implied in Ezekiel's words to the exiles, and in the book of Esther, the exiles for the most part weren't begging God for restoration and mercy in the spirit of David.

The Hebrew grammar here is peculiar; the verb "to love" has no expressed object. 1 Jn. 4:19 may allude here: “We love, because He first loved us". This is one of the few simple statements that "I love God"; see on :16 for the significance. The Psalm describes the psalmist deeply grateful for having been saved, and then taking the cup of salvation [a term later used in Judaism for one of the cups at Passover] amongst all the rest of God's people. He did what everyone else did- take a cup of wine. Just as we do at the communion service. But these are his internal thoughts leading up to that action. As such, this is a wonderful challenge to all of us at the breaking of bread meeting. All take the cup, we do it at the same time, in the same location. But we are to do so with all this deep sense of personal gratitude and love for God, leading us to ask ourselves "What can I do in response?". And knowing that actually we can do nothing- except take this cup.

Psa 116:2

Because He has turned His ear to me, therefore I will call on Him as long as I live-
"As long as I live" is the term used by Hezekiah after his healing (Is. 39:8), but he doesn't offer to continue calling upon Yahweh in gratitude. We too can so easily forget the wonder of answered prayer, failing to realize that the experience commits us to a lifetime of calling upon Him.

Psa 116:3

The cords of death surrounded me, the pains of Sheol got a hold on me, I found trouble and sorrow-
David felt as if he had been a sacrifice bound to an altar, and therefore about to be pulled into the grave (Ps. 18:5,6; 116:3; 140:5). The allusion is to Isaac and his miraculous deliverance from such cords, thanks to the ram in the thicket whom David is later to understand as representative of the future Messianic saviour; for the Lord quotes David's "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1) as the Aramaic *sabachthani*, "entangled", the word used of the ram entangled in the thicket.

This means that the Psalm also represents the thoughts or spirit of the then future Lord Jesus. These pains and sorrows can be understood as birth pangs. Out of the grave there was to be resurrection; the psalmist specifically says he has been saved out of death (:3,8,15), making the Psalm a thanksgiving for his resurrection. The language speaks of being moved from *sheol* , from death in the place of death, to life in the land

of the living. This all means 'resurrection', to an environment where God Himself is present: "I will walk before Yahweh in the land of the living" (:9), or being in "Yahweh's house" (:19). What is in view is resurrection to eternal life in God's Kingdom in His personal presence. The whole Psalm could be an insight into the Lord's feelings of gratitude for His resurrection. He longs to take the cup of salvation in gratitude... and yet He says that He will not do this until He does it with us at His return. We will take that cup with Him, having these same feelings, having been also resurrected to eternal life. What a wonderful day.

Connections between Ps. 116 and other scriptures confirm the suggestion that it is in fact the thoughts of the Lord regarding His own resurrection. "Cords of death" is a phrase picked up by Peter in Acts 2:24 and applied to how God loosed them for the Lord Jesus. We note that the words of :3 and :4 are used by Jonah in his prayer of gratitude for salvation from the *sheol* of the fish's belly: "The cords of death surrounded me, the pains of Sheol got a hold on me.. Then I called on the name of Yahweh". There is another connection with Jonah noted on :17. We know that Jonah's experience looked forward to the Lord's death and resurrection, confirming our discussion on :3 of how the Psalm on one level is the gratitude of the Lord Jesus for His resurrection from *sheol*, which Jonah too entered in the belly of the fish. Ps. 116:10 speaks of the "affliction" of the Psalmist, using the same word twice used in the Messianic Is. 53:4,7 of how the suffering servant, the Lord Jesus on the cross, was "afflicted". Ps. 116:14,18 speak of the Psalmist rendering praise in the presence of all God's people, and this is exactly how Psalm 22 and Psalm 69 conclude- Psalms clearly foretelling the experience of the Lord Jesus on the cross. Ps. 22:25 is pretty much quoted in Ps. 116:14,18: "My praise shall be of You in the great congregation; I will pay my vows before them that fear Him".

Psa 116:4

Then I called on the name of Yahweh: Yahweh, I beg You, deliver my soul-
To call on Yahweh meant to sacrifice and worship, and yet David rightly understood that prayer is the essence of such sacrifice and worship, rather than the offering of literal animals. Commonly enough, the New Testament speaks of baptism as a calling upon the Name of the Lord. This must be understood against its Hebrew background- *qara' beshem Yahweh*, which originally referred to approaching God in sacrifice (Gen. 12:7,8; Ps. 116:4,17). God placed His Name upon places in order to make them suitable places for sacrifice to be offered to Him (Dt. 12:4-7,21; Jer. 7:12). Baptism was thus seen as a sacrificial commitment to Yahweh in solemn covenant.

Psa 116:5

Yahweh is gracious and righteous; yes, our God is merciful-
Mercy and grace indicate that David is recognizing that the answer to his prayer

(perhaps at some point after the sin with Bathsheba) was an expression of moral grace and forgiveness to him. And the exiles were to realize this too. But as we see implied in Ezekiel's words to them, their problem was that they considered themselves as good people, and their ancestors as the sinners. "Merciful" is the word for "compassion". But the basis for that compassion was to be Israel's repentance (s.w. Dt. 30:13 etc.). But God remembers that we are dust, and He does have compassion for reasons other than that His people have repented (s.w. 2 Kings 13:23). His compassion is therefore on the basis of His mercy and grace, rather than a proportionate response to steel willed human repentance and self reformation. His compassion is actually always there for His children, even when they are in exiled punishment from Him (s.w. Jer. 31:20; 33:26). Solomon failed to perceive this grace, instead focusing solely upon the aspect of God showing compassion to those who are repentant (s.w. Prov. 28:13).

Psa 116:6

Yahweh preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me-
David likens himself to the simple who was made wise by God's word (Ps. 19:7; 119:130), and was therefore preserved (Ps. 116:6). To be taught by God's word we have to become "simple", unlearning and placing to one side all our perceived knowledge and understandings. Solomon repeats David's theme by saying that wisdom makes wise the simple (Prov. 1:4; 8:5; 9:4). But he is equating "wisdom" with the words of God, although for Solomon, "wisdom" seems to be what he is saying and teaching. Solomon doesn't direct his listeners back to God's word, as David did, but rather towards loyalty to his teaching. Inspired as it was, his lack of extended reference to God's law places his own teaching of "wisdom" above that law. This is in sharp contrast to David's attitude in Ps. 119. "Simple" is LXX "babes" and for sure the Lord is referring here when He thanks the Father for not revealing His truth to the humanly wise but to "babes" (Mt. 11:25).

Psa 116:7

Return to your rest, my soul, for Yahweh has dealt bountifully with you-
Again we have an insight into David's self talk, which should be a pattern for ours. He was not at peace, but he talks to himself, reminding himself of how God had saved his life earlier, and he was thereby obligated to a lifetime of trust in Him, with the associated peace which comes from that. See on :8.

Psa 116:8

For You have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, and my feet from falling-
See on :7. God's past deliverance of his soul from death meant that now, he should dry his eyes from tears regarding his latest crisis. This is a quote from Ps. 56:13 which is a

psalm of David, leading us to conclude that this Psalm too had its first origins in the experiences of David.

Psa 116:9

I will walk before Yahweh in the land of the living-
LXX "I shall be well-pleasing before the Lord in the land of the living", an undertaking in response to salvation. This is the language of Hezekiah (Is. 38:11), although unlike David he failed to remember his salvation from death (see on :3,4) and live the rest of his life in trust and praise. The relevance to the exiles is that they hoped they would in their lifetimes come to return to a restored Kingdom of God in Israel, where they would walk in God's presence, truly "in the land of the living". As noted throughout this Psalm, there are hints that the "life" and day of thanksgiving in view is at the last day. "The land of life" would then refer to eternal life being enjoyed in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Psa 116:10

I believed, therefore I said, I was greatly afflicted-
"I believed, and *therefore* have I spoken" (Ps. 116:10 LXX) is quoted in 2 Cor. 4:13 concerning the attitude of the preacher; *because* we have believed, *therefore* we preach, after Paul's pattern. We naturally have a debt to preach to all men, as we have a debt to love all our brethren- because of what has been done for us (Rom. 1:14). But the quotation appears to be taking a phrase out of context. David is recalling how he had felt he "was greatly afflicted" and surrounded by liars (:11), and yet had been saved out of that part of his life (:12). But the New Testament doesn't always quote the Old Testament in context; it uses the style of Jewish midrash, in justifying a thought by taking a Biblical phrase out of context. "Context" can be overworked within the task of Biblical interpretation. The GNB in 2 Cor. 4:13 gets the point: "The scripture says, "I spoke because I believed." In the same spirit of faith we also speak because we believe". But it could be that Paul perceived that David here was speaking in the spirit of Christ, whom he typified. And so Paul quotes the Messianic Ps. 116:10 about *our* witness, which is to be a living out of the spirit which Jesus had in His death and present life and being in Heaven.

I discussed on :3 how this Psalm can be seen as the thanksgiving of the Lord Jesus for His resurrection, and His desire to show that by taking "the cup of salvation" in Jerusalem at the last day, along with all those who have also experienced resurrection. It seems to me that Paul's quotation of Ps. 116:10 is precisely in this context; this is how Paul, under Divine inspiration, understood the Psalm. In the context of his quotation of it, Paul is reasoning that the suffering, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus is experienced by himself and all who are "in Christ". In the midst of that argument, he as it

were bolsters it by quoting Ps. 116:10 and applying it to each of us. We need to review the entire context of the quotation to appreciate this: "Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always being delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh… But having the same spirit of faith [as Jesus had], according to what is written, I believed, and therefore did I speak [quoting Ps. 116:10]; we also believe and on this basis we also speak. Knowing that He that raised up the Lord Jesus, shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you" (2 Cor. 4:10-14).

Psa 116:11

I said in my haste, All men are liars-
There is such a thing as feeling lonely when we needn't. Elijah is an example of this; he felt that he was "left alone" faithful in Israel- even though there were another 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (Rom. 11:3). The Hebrew in 1 Kings is hard to translate. It could mean that God reserved 7,000 of Elijah's brothers and sisters who potentially would not bow the knee to Baal. Yet Elijah didn't want to see the potential of his brethren. He set himself in a league above them, like the Psalmist, saying in his haste that all men are liars.

But surely these words are to be connected with David's feelings in Ps. 31:12: "'I said in my haste, I am cut off from before Your eyes". Now more positively he says that in his haste, perhaps in his fleeing and crisis, his trepidation, he instead now says that all men are liars or false / fake. As if his rejection of human strength is in fact a reflection of his faith in God. "All humankind is delusive" might be the sense. Rom. 3:4 quotes approvingly from other Psalms which say that all men are liars. So we could read this as an expression of faith in God, considering all men or all human help as false or fake.

Psa 116:12

What will I give to Yahweh for all His benefits toward me?-
This is a rhetorical question; what can be given back to God for all His giving toward us? The answer is, nothing; but we can praise God and take the cup of salvation at the appointed feast (:13). Our motivation for taking the cup of remembrance (:13) should be the same.

Psa 116:13

I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of Yahweh-
"Salvation" is *Yeshua,* 'Jesus'. As noted on :1, this Psalm was specifically used at the feasts, and may refer to the associated drink offering (Num. 28:7), similar to the "cup of

blessing" at Passover (Mt. 26:27). The salvation commemorated was the "help" (s.w.) of :6. Initially, the reference is to a drink offering offered along with a voluntary thanksgiving offering (see on :17). But in the context of the feasts, it was attached to the Passover, which was the great feast of thanksgiving for deliverance from death. The Jews traditionally sing Psalm 116 after the Passover meal, and the third of the four cups drunk then is called "the cup of salvation". But to take a cup doesn't have to mean to drink it, but rather to accept what had been given from God (Ps. 16:5; 23:5). So the idea may be that by being open to receiving yet more grace, we thereby render thanks for the grace so far received.

I discussed on :3 how the Psalm is really a thanksgiving for resurrection. To take a cup meant to celebrate; it is a celebration of salvation, and in the context of this Psalm, specifically for salvation from *sheol*. This will come to ultimate term when we along with the Lord do so at the Messianic banquet of the last day. But we enter into the essence of that when we do it at the communion service.

Psa 116:14

I will pay my vows to Yahweh, yes, in the presence of all His people-
This is appropriate to the celebration of a feast, which is when the Psalm was used (see on :1). David had vowed to serve God in response to his salvation from death (:3,4) and he wanted to do this in the presence of God's people, at a feast. David's faith was absolutely public, he was no secret believer. These things have application to the Lord Jesus (:16). His keeping of the last supper was in fact a celebration of the deliverance which He believed was so certain to come that it was as if He had already received it. For that is the essence of faith.

It is twice emphasized, here and in :16, that the psalmist will take the cup of salvation and thus pay his vows "in the presence of all His people". We can see this as looking forward to the last day, when all God's people shall be resurrected and all will individually desire to take the cup of salvation in gratitude to their saviour. "All His people" would then literally refer to all God's people down the ages, now resurrected (as in Heb. 11:39,40).

Psa 116:15

Precious in the sight of Yahweh is the death of His saints-
The idea may be that David had faced death (:3,4), but his life had been precious in Yahweh's sight. The exiles likewise were precious in the sight of Yahweh (s.w. Is. 43:4), and He would preserve the national life of Israel. The death and life of Saul had been precious in David's eyes (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:21), and so David's life was precious in Yahweh's eyes. Again we are taught that God's attitude to our salvation and our life is directly related to our attitude to the life and salvation of others; and this is why we are

to perceive the value, the preciousness, of human life and salvation. It is why making others stumble from the path to eternal life is so serious to God. The supremely precious death of all was that of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 1:19; 2:4,6,7), and this Psalm clearly looks forward to Him (see on :13,14,16). In the day of taking the cup of salvation, rejoicing in resurrection and eternal life, we will then reflect that our death was as or more painful to God than it was to us at the time. JPS gives: "The death of his faithful ones is grievous in the Lord's sight". It was difficult or costly, as the Hebrew is translated in Ps. 49:9. Our lives were valuable, precious to God and our deaths were painful to Him- we shall only then realize to what huge extent.

Psa 116:16

Yahweh, truly I am Your servant, I am Your servant, the son of Your handmaid. You have freed me from my chains-
This Psalm refers to David and later to the exiles, who were potentially freed from the chains of captivity and are declared as Yahweh's servant throughout later Isaiah. But as noted on :15, it clearly comes to ultimate term in the Lord Jesus. For Mary was the supreme handmaid of Yahweh, and she appears to appropriate this verse to herself (Lk. 1:38). Or we can read this as the Psalmist saying that he feels as if he is a servant because he is the son of one of God's servants, born into slavery, born among the household servants. Servants 'born in the house' (Gen. 14:14) were considered the most trusted and loyal. We note the juxtaposition of ideas- he had been freed from servitude, freed from his chains, but therefore offered himself as God's slave. This is the theme of Romans 6, the classic baptism chapter. We are made free from servitude to sin, and become the servants of God in response. Quite possibly the allusion is therefore to the case of the servant who, in the year of jubilee or being made free was entitled to his personal freedom, but because he loved his master (see on :1) refused to leave his master's house; and had his ear bored to the door-post, as a proof that by his own consent he agreed to continue as a slave in his master's house for ever.

Psa 116:17

I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call on the name of Yahweh-
As discussed earlier in this Psalm, thanksgiving for deliverance from death committed the psalmist and the audience to calling on Yahweh's Name for the rest of their lives. The next verse (:18) repeats :14, and therefore this verse (:17) reflects :13 "I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of Yahweh". The cup of salvation therefore refers to a thanksgiving offering. Although the Mosaic law didn't require a drink offering for a thanksgiving offering, David was eager to serve God to the maximum, and so offered one too.

Verses 17 and 18 are used by Jonah in Jon. 2:10, speaking of his thanksgiving for preservation from death. We know that Jonah's experience looked forward to the Lord's death and resurrection, confirming our discussion on :3 of how the Psalm on one level is the gratitude of the Lord Jesus for His resurrection from *sheol*, which Jonah too entered in the belly of the fish.

Psa 116:18

I will pay my vows to Yahweh, yes, in the presence of all His people-
See on :14.

Psa 116:19

in the courts of Yahweh's house, in the midst of you, Jerusalem. Praise Yah!-
If the Psalm originated with David, then he is looking forward to the time when a temple would be built in Zion, and he would be there. He would have said this in faith in a resurrection of the body and literal restoration of Zion. The Psalm also has relevance to the exiles. Their temple was then in ruins, but they looked forward to its restoration. The tragedy was that they didn't rebuild it according to the commands of Ez. 40-48, and so these things became reapplied and rescheduled to the things of God's Kingdom to be established at the return of the Lord Jesus.

PSALMS CHAPTER 117

Psa 117:1

Praise Yahweh, all you nations! Extol Him, all you peoples!- The invitation is to the Gentile nations to praise God because of His grace toward "us", Israel (:2). This is after the pattern of how David proclaimed to the Gentile world his experience of grace, and thereby urged them to also accept Yahweh as the God of all grace. His pattern was to be that of all Israel. It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalm 113-118.

This verse is quoted in Rom. 15:11 as evidence that Gentiles also have a part in God's purpose. This was a radical idea at the time of the Old Testament. Quite possibly there is a protest here at the way Ezra and Nehemiah had tried to re-define "Israel" as solely the golah Jews who had returned from Persian and Babylonian captivity.

Psa 117:2

For His grace is great toward us, Yahweh's faithfulness endures forever. Praise Yah!-
The same word used for how David's sins "overwhelmed me" (Ps. 65:3) is used of how

overwhelming or "great" is God's grace (Ps. 103:11; 117:2). David felt overwhelmed firstly by his sin and then by God's grace. This explains his fragile emotional and nervous state, as often reflected in the Psalms. But his path is to be that of all God's true Israel.

PSALMS CHAPTER 118

Psa 118:1

Give thanks to Yahweh for He is good, for His grace endures forever-
In Jewish tradition, Psalms 113 and 114 are recited before the Passover meal and Psalms 115–118 after the Passover meal. Even though Psalms 114 and 115 have no break between them in the earliest manuscripts. It is part of the "Hallel Psalms" (Ps. 111-118), chants sung at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, which consist of Psalms 113-118. The Psalm began with David thanking God for delivering him from the various crises of his life, but has been developed into a Psalm of hope for the exiles, thanking God in advance for the restoration of the temple which they looked forward to. The restoration didn't happen as was potentially possible, but these things are reapplied to the things of the Lord Jesus. Therefore some of the phrases in the Psalm are specifically applied to Him in the New Testament.

These words are from Jer. 33:11, which speaks of the situation in the restored Kingdom: "...the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, Give thanks to Yahweh of Armies, *for Yahweh is good, for His loving kindness endures forever*; who bring thanksgiving into the house of Yahweh. For I will cause the captivity of the land to return as at the first, says Yahweh". The idea is that this is the praise intended to be sung at the restoration. But that didn't happen as was potentially possible. The redemption of God's people was reapplied to the Lord's work; and so the essence of this intended praise, although not the detail, is appropriate for all the "redeemed". This is why Psalm 118 is so frequently quoted in the New Testament: Ps. 118:6 = Heb. 13:6; Ps. 118:22 = Lk. 20:17; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7; Ps. 118: 22,23 = Mt. 21:42; Mk. 12:10–11; Ps. 118:25 = Mt. 23:39; Lk. 13:35, 19:38; Ps. 118:25,26 = Mt. 21:9; Mk. 11:9,10; Jn. 12:13.

Psa 118:2

Let Israel now say that His grace endures forever-
This appeal to Israel to recognize God's eternal grace was pertinent to the exiles; for Ezekiel presents them as having lost faith in His grace, assuming it had somehow ended at the destruction of the temple. We too need to remember that the wonder of Divine grace isn't just historical, but abides for us too.

Psa 118:3

Let the house of Aaron now say that His grace endures forever-
This can be read as an appeal to the house of Aaron separately to Israel (:2). But often "Israel" are paralleled with the house of Aaron / Levi. And this seems an example of that. Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: “Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord… praise ye the Lord”. All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

As it was God’s intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to all discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should all teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: “Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High” (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11).

Psa 118:4

Now let those who fear Yahweh say that His grace endures forever-
These "who fear Yahweh" could just be parallel with "Israel" (:2) and the "house of Aaron" (:3). Or it could refer to the Gentile proselytes, who became known in Judaism as the God fearers. David is ever eager for the conversion of the Gentiles.

Verses 2-4 speak of three groups: Israel, the house of Aaron, and those who feared Yahweh. These three groups are found in Ps. 114:9-11. They refer to the common people of Israel, to the priests, and the fearers of Yahweh would refer to Gentile proselytes. The restoration prophets saw all three groups as being welded together into a new people of God, with equal access to the sanctuary.

Jer. 33:11 prophesied that at the time of the restoration, the restored exiles would say these words: "there shall be heard… a voice saying, "Thank Yahweh of Hosts for good is Yahweh, for His grace is forever”, as they bring the thank offering to the temple of Yahweh. For I will restore the fortunes of the land". These words were to be said or sung as the thanksgiving offering was made, and this Psalm is therefore the intended liturgy for the redeemed exiles. The restoration didn't happen as planned, and so these things all have an application to we the redeemed (see on :1).

Psa 118:5

Out of my distress, I called on Yah; Yah answered me with freedom-
David appeals in :1-4 for Israel and the Gentiles to praise God for His grace. But this was on the basis of how God had shown him grace in answering David's cry at the time of his distress. The intention was that the exiles would likewise cry to Yahweh and be restored, and the Gentiles (:3) would convert to Yahweh because of His grace to them. And ultimately these things come to apply to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus to eternal life, overcoming the "distress" of death itself. And the whole world is bidden believe in this and praise God for it.

Psa 118:6

Yahweh is on my side, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?-
Whilst this is true as it stands, we note David's tendency to divide people along the lines of whoever is on his side [who will be saved and blessed by God], and those who aren't [who will be cursed eternally by God]. This is a very human tendency. But we must beware of it. The people in David's life were largely amongst God's people; and we are not to judge in the sense of condemning. It's not always so that those not on our side aren't on the Lord's side. Paul lamented that all in Asia turned against him (2 Tim. 1:15), and yet it is clear from the Lord's letters of Rev. 2,3 that there were at least some in Asia who were on His side. And even at the times of persecution by Saul and Absalom, there were some like Jonathan who were on David's side whilst apparently on the side of his persecutors.

Psa 118:7

Yahweh is on my side among those who help me. Therefore I will look in triumph at those who hate me-
See on :6. The day when David would look at his haters in triumph was perhaps not in this life; but rather at the last day. In this case, David clearly understood the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and the last judgment. And yet he seems to see that final judgment as his vindication against his enemies in this life, rejoicing at the thought of their presence at that time. Surely in spiritual terms there are far greater things to look forward to in eternity than seeing our enemies of this life condemned at the day of judgment at the start of that eternity. See on :13. Looking in triumph at his haters suggests that at the day of judgment, the process will be very public. We will all see the judgment process and outcomes of every other person. The rejected will say, too late, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord". Those who persecuted others will bow before them, before being punished with death.

Psa 118:8

It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to put confidence in man-
This is a picture of Hezekiah in his better years (s.w. 2 Kings 18:5,18,19,20,21,22,30; 19:10), trusting in God when surrounded by his enemies in Jerusalem (:10).

Psa 118:9

It is better to take refuge in Yahweh than to put confidence in princes-
This repeats :8, but with "princes" replacing the more generic "man". The parallel between princes and men is found in Ps. 146:3. Princes are but men, no more than men, and nothing compared to Yahweh. I noted on :8 the application to Hezekiah. Yet he failed in putting confidence in princes, turning to Egypt for help. Yet he repented and was rewarded for his sole faith in Yahweh alone. And yet afterwards, he put his confidence in the princes of Babylon. His intensity of faith was not maintained.

Psa 118:10

All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of Yahweh, I cut them off-
This continues the Hezekiah connections (see on :8). The theme of being surrounded continues over the next verses, and this was exactly what happened when Jerusalem was surrounded and miraculously delivered at the time of the Assyrian invasion. But being surrounded by far superior odds is a theme in the lives of God's servants. We think of Samson in a foreign city "compassed in" by his enemies, Paul (Acts 9:24), David (1 Sam. 23:26), the spies in Jericho, the returned exiles (Neh. 6:16) etc.

Psa 118:11

They surrounded me, yes, they surrounded me. In the name of Yahweh I indeed cut them off-
This could initially refer to David's experience in 1 Sam. 23:26. It is the language of Ps. 2 of the surrounding of Messiah, which is applied in the New Testament both to His death and also to the time of His return to earth. We can read "cut them off" as meaning 'besieged'; as if to say that the enemies surrounded me, but I then surrounded them in Yahweh's Name.

Psa 118:12

They surrounded me like bees but they are quenched like the burning thorns. In the name of Yahweh I cut them off-
The idea is that swarms of bees can look like smoke. Faithless Israel had been surrounded by their enemies like bees (Dt. 1:44), and thus driven out from inheriting the

land. The faithful exiles were intended to have faith that this would not be the case again- if they believed, and stopped acting like historical Israel.

Psa 118:13

You pushed me back hard to make me fall, but Yahweh helped me-
The "you" may refer to David's enemies. It is hard to think it also applies to the "Yahweh" of whom David speaks in the same sentence. This reflects how David seems obsessed with his enemies and opponents, imagining them ever before him, thinking that he was talking to them, and longing to see them again at judgment day and be vindicated by God before them. See on :7.

Psa 118:14

Yah is my strength and song, He has become my salvation-
This is the language of Israel's exaltation after the Red Sea deliverance (Ex. 15:2), which became programmatic for the future deliverances of all God's people.

Psa 118:15

The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous: The right hand of Yahweh does valiantly-
As noted on :6,7, David sees the righteous as those who took his side against his enemies. He expects them to all rise up in ecstatic praise when he is vindicated. But David was not always right, and his enemies were raised up and used by God. Not all of them were evil, and some of them were it seems just used as tools in God's hand. He seems to over personalize everything, because of his oversensitivity to words and opposition.

Psa 118:16

The right hand of Yahweh is exalted! The right hand of Yahweh does valiantly!-
This continues the allusion to the triumphant rejoicing at the deliverance from the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 15:6). The Psalm speaks in faith of the future possibilities as if they had happened, hence the past tenses.

Psa 118:17

I will not die, but live, and declare Yah's works-
As noted on :16, the psalmist is not stating that he has been delivered; he speaks in the past tense of that yet future and hoped for. He has the absolute confidence of faith

(:21). The intention of deliverance was that Yahweh's saving works and grace would be declared; and that is what David is doing through this Psalm. And that is the intention for each of us in our experience of answered prayer.

Psa 118:18

Yah has punished me severely, but He has not given me over to death- "Punished" is better "chastened me" (as AV). The allusion is clearly to Job, who was chastened but his life was not taken from him. This is how we should all respond to trial- by seeking Biblical precedent for our experiences. The Hebrew has the sense of 'strike' but also 'instruct', because of the assumption that corporal punishment in education resulted in the child learning.

Psa 118:19

Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will enter into them. I will give thanks to Yah- This may allude to a ritual of pilgrims arriving finally at Jerusalem, and asking for the gates to be opened to them. Is. 26:2 has the response of the gatekeepers: "Open the gates. Let a righteous nation enter; a nation that keeps faith". Sinners were not to enter Zion (Is. 33:14), and so there are allusions to the ritual of ensuring all who enter are ritually clean (Ps. 5:5-8,15; 24:3-6). As discussed on :26, the ultimately righteous man is Messiah, the Lord Jesus, and the repentant Jews within the gates will recognize this and warmly welcome Him in. It is hard to exactly reconstruct how the Psalms were used in musical arrangement, but I suggest that this is a solo sung by one singer, who has as it were come to the end of the journey to Zion; and then another soloist answers in the words of :20. "The gates of righteousness" are the temple gates; the gates to be entered by the righteous. Or the allusion could be to Dt. 16:18 (s.w.), that there was to be righteous judgment in all the gates of the restored Kingdom of God on earth. There is great emphasis upon the gates of the restored Zion (Is. 54:12; 60:11,18), being entered by the restored exiles (Is. 62:10). But this would be if Judah accepted the new covenant (Jer. 31:38,40), and built the restored temple as commanded in Ez. 40-48. They didn't do these things, and so they are reapplied to the restored Zion of the last days; for the gates of the new Jerusalem are stressed in the final chapters of Revelation. See on :22.

Psa 118:20

This is the gate of Yahweh; the righteous will enter into it-
As suggested on :19, this is another soloist, replying or perhaps chanting as it were from the temple gate, in response to the solo of :19. The restored exiles were to be counted righteous, by grace through faith in imputed righteousness, as the latter part of Isaiah emphasizes. But they did not repent nor grasp the offer, as noted on :19.

Psa 118:21

I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation-
As noted on :16, the psalmist is not stating that he has been delivered, for he has not yet experienced it (:17); he speaks in the past tense of that yet future and hoped for. He has the absolute confidence of faith.

Psa 118:22

The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner-
The context is of a request by the righteous to enter the gates of Zion. We can assume that his entry was refused, which is what happened, effectively, by Zion's refusal of the Lord's triumphant entry.

This is clearly quoted in the New Testament with reference to Christ's exaltation (Mt. 21:42). But in the context, these words are part of a personal prayer of praise from David for God's healing of him and rescuing him from persecution. The temple could have been rebuilt by the exiles with Zerubbabel as the head stone (s.w. Zech. 4:7). But he failed to be the Messianic figure he could have been, and so the prophecy was reapplied and reinterpreted in relation to the Lord Jesus, the stone (Gen. 49:24; Is. 8:14; 28:16; Rom. 9:23; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:8). There may be the hint that the intended rebuilders of Zion would not build as required by the commandments of Ez. 40-48 (see on :19). But God's restoration plan would not ultimately fail; for the rejected stone would as it were arise [in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus] and become the cornerstone of a new kind of temple; that spoken of in the New Testament, comprised of living stones of believers.

We can understand that the rejected stone, cast aside on the building site, was used as the capstone of the corner edifice. The [Jewish] builders would re-think the value of that stone, through their repentance. Or if we insist that it means a foundation stone, this would require and imply the tearing down of the existing building, so that a new foundation stone could be laid. Both paths of thought are appropriate to the work and usage of the Lord Jesus. If the builders rejected the stone- who then re-used it and placed it again, either as a capstone or a foundation stone? The implication, surely, is "God"- and by extension, ourselves, who are presented by Paul as the builders of the new temple.

Psa 118:23

This is Yahweh's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes-
The faithful would perceive the wonder of the ultimate restoration of the temple through the reapplication of the prophecies to the Lord Jesus; see on :19,22. It's tempting to

assume that it's the natural creation which alone provokes wonder. But Biblically, it's more often God's actions in history, His saving of His Israel, His grace, His undeserved helping of us in practical situations (e.g. Jer. 21:2) which are what should provoke wonder. Otherwise the blind would have no sense of wonder at God. God's whole plan in Christ "is wonderful in our eyes" (Ps. 118:23). It is a "marvellous work and a wonder" (Is. 29:14; Acts 13:41). Wonder doesn't mean we cease to analyze God's word; it's a sense of touching reality, not a fuzzy feeling of vague speculation.

Psa 118:24

This is the day that Yahweh has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it!-
The day created by Yahweh is that of the restoration of the Kingdom of God in Israel; see on :27. The day of Yahweh's making is the term used for the creation (Gen. 2:4), but the arising of the rejected stone, the Lord Jesus (:22), would lead to a new creation; the day Yahweh makes is finally to be in the last day of the return of the Lord Jesus to reestablish God's Kingdom on earth (s.w. Joel 2:22). And the faithful would perceive this and rejoice in it. We could translate: "This is the day [or, 'It is today that'] Yahweh has acted; we will rejoice and be glad on it". The reference may initially have been to Passover [hence "on it", on that day], but the ultimate day of God's action was on the cross and in the Lord's resurrection, memorialized by us in the breaking of bread. We think of Ps. 2:7, "You are My son; today I have given birth to you".

Psa 118:25

Save us now, we beg You, Yahweh! Yahweh, we beg You, send prosperity now-
This is the cry of the faithful for the promised restoration of the Kingdom to come immediately, in their lifetimes. This was the passion of the faithful exiles, and also of David. "Save now" is the equivalent of "Hosanna", and was the desire of the people of Jerusalem at the Lord's triumphal entry. But He deconstructed those desires for an immediate restoration of the Kingdom. He came to die, and to usher in the kind of Kingdom He taught about in His message about the Kingship and Kingly dominion of God in Christian life. Only in the longer term was there to be the literal establishment of such a Kingdom on earth, at the last day, when those principles will finally be physically and eternally articulated in this earth. The exiles wanted the "prosperity" of the Kingdom immediately; but this prosperity was conditional upon their obedience to the covenant (s.w. Josh. 1:8); they would never "prosper" whilst disobeying it (s.w. Dt. 28:29), nor could they "prosper" to enter the land as intended whilst faithless (Num. 14:41 s.w.). The faithful minority amongst the exiles believed God would prosper them (Neh. 2:20), and He was indeed eager to do so (Is. 55:11); but this was not to be, because the majority were faithless. This prosperity was to finally only be through the work of the Lord Jesus (Is. 53:10), seeing the potential 'servant' figures of the restoration all failed

(Is. 48:15). David liked to imagine that Solomon would "prosper" because he built the temple (1 Chron. 22:11); but such prosperity was conditional.

This demand for prosperity *now* would be the attitude of those who shouted "Hosanna" and were disappointed. Verse 26 is their welcome of the Lord, but He disappointed them. And so :27 speaks of the Lord's death on the cross, bound like Isaac was bound. And the conclusion is that God is "good" and His grace eternal- through the death of that rejected One.

Psa 118:26

Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh! We have blessed you out of the house of Yahweh-
LXX "Blessed be who enters in the name of the Lord." These words were used to welcome pilgrims arriving at the temple. But clearly they refer to the Lord Jesus. His second coming would be as if He is the special, once rejected pilgrim arriving at the gates of Jerusalem, and everyone is glad to see Him and open the gates to Him- implying their repentance, their re-thinking, of this once rejected stone. Israel's repentance is therefore critical to the Lord's return. We could translate: "Blessed is the one who enters. In the name of
Yahweh we have blessed you. From Yahweh's temple we have blessed you". This individual is the rejected stone who revives and becomes the cornerstone. The musical arrangement here may be as suggested on :19,20. This is another soloist, replying or perhaps chanting as it were from the temple gate, in response to the arrival of the King at the temple gates. The 'coming one' was Messiah (Mt. 11:3). These words were sung to the approaching Lord Jesus (Lk. 19:38), but they were totally misunderstood. They will be finally be sung by those of the last day who see the Lord Jesus return to Zion. Thus He interpreted them in Mt. 23:39, where He understands that when Jerusalem sees Jesus again, they will be saying: "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord". This would suggest they are waiting for Him. And these words being taken from the Passover Hallel here in Ps. 118, it could be that the Lord returns to them at Passover time, when they traditionally expect Him. Indeed, Jerusalem will not see the Lord *until* they say "Blessed is he..."- as if the time of His return depends upon their 'seeing' / perceiving Him beforehand.

But the Lord quoted these words to those who were to crucify Him. He was saying that He now was going to stop them 'seeing' / perceiving Him for who He was, so that they would crucify Him. And they would only again perceive Him as God's Son all too late, when at the day of judgment they uttered the words of Messianic welcome "Blessed is He that comes...". And yet even in this terrible judgment there was interwoven a possibility of hope. They would only perceive Him again as God's Son *when*, or, *until the time that*, they recognized Him as Messiah in the Messianic words "Blessed is He that

comes...". Once they made that repentance, they would again perceive / see Him. However, it could be argued that that is axiomatic. The thrust of the Lord's words is surely that in the day of judgment, all too late, they would perceive Him again as He is in truth. But all too late. When they are appointed their portion with the hypocrites and there is wailing and gnashing of teeth, *then* shall the Kingdom be likened unto the five wise and five foolish virgins. *Then* the rejected will understand the principles of that parable, crystal clearly. Members of the ecclesia of Israel will say "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord"- but be rejected. Likewise the Egyptians, fleeing in the mud from Yahweh as they vainly hoped against hope that the returning waters wouldn't somehow reach them... they came to know Yahweh (Ex. 14:18). It could well be that this knowing of Yahweh involves a desperate recounting of their sins, seeing that one of the purposes of condemnation is to make men aware of their sinfulness and the depth of God's grace.

Psa 118:27

Yahweh is God, and He has given us light-
This is the phrase used for how God "gave light" at creation (Gen. 1:15,17). The idea is that a new creation was to come about with the coming of Messiah to Zion (:26). See on :24.

Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar-
This is obviously appropriate to usage in the feasts (see on :1). The exiles had no temple; these words are being said in faithful expectation of the day when the temple would be restored, and a thank offering offered (:28).

Psa 118:28

You are my God, and I will give thanks to You; You are my God, I will exalt You-
This continues the allusion to the song of Moses in thanksgiving for the Red Sea deliverance (Ex. 15:2). The "us" of :27 now becomes "me". The personal wonder of salvation is to be ever appreciated. This is no mere nationalistic fervour of praise for Israel's deliverance, but a deep sense that little me... has indeed been eternally saved.

Psa 118:29

Oh give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good, for His grace endures forever-
This forms the conclusion, in the same words as the opening verses. This great salvation is indeed all of grace, and the God who has seemed distant to the exiles, shrouded behind the problem of evil, will be finally and eternally revealed as ultimately "good".

PSALMS CHAPTER 119

Psa 119:1
ALEPH

Ps. 119 was apparently initially written at the time of Saul's persecution of David, although there are some verses which reflect David reusing it in later parts of his life. David was noted for behaving himself wisely, and Ps. 119 explains that this was due to his love of God's law that made him wiser than his foes.It mentions David as a young man devoting himself to the word rather than riches (:72)- the riches which might have seemed could have been his if he mentally surrendered to Saul, or if he killed Saul and took the kingdom. He often laments how he is in exile from Yahweh's word (:43,46,54), which would have been on account of his being away from the sanctuary at Gibeah. He pleads the promise of the word that he would be preserved from Saul's persecution (:41,58), and several times mentions Saul's attempts on his life (:87,95,109,110). The following verses are evidently relevant to this period: 61,63,67,79,84 (= 1 Sam. 27:1),95,98 (= 1 Sam. 18:14,15),110 (cp. the 'snaring' with Michal), 119 (the emphasis is on 'You *will* destroy the wicked like Saul- one day), 125 (David is often called Saul's servant), 150,154 (= 1 Sam. 24:15), 157,161,165,176. Therefore in the face of such hatred and pain, feeling he must be careful of every step he took, emotionally and physically, David could rejoice: "I will walk at liberty (AVmg. 'at large'): for I seek Your precepts" .

David was surely illiterate. This Psalm reflects his love for God's word, and is designed to be memorized. We imagine him formulating and singing it to himself as the rejected kid brother sent out watching the sheep. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet and the Psalm is split into 22 sections, one for each letter of the alphabet. Each verse in each section begins with that letter of the alphabet, e.g. the first eight verses begin with Aleph (= A), the second eight with Beth (= B). This style is clearly intended to assist memorization by the illiterate. And there are other such features. Thus there are adjacent verses beginning with the same word (:1,2; 23,24; 65,66; 71,72; 81,82; 127,128; 145,146; 147,148; 167,168). And there adjacent verses containing the same word elsewhere in the line, sometimes in the same position in the line (:47,48; 57,58; 69,70; 107,108; 109,110; 111,112; 121,122; 169,170). The Hebrew text shows many examples of alliteration and assonance, similar sounding words in close proximity (:33-4, 57-8, 59-60, 69-70, 73-4, 111-12). The 22 stanzas, each following a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet, each repeat a word in lines 1 and 7, in lines 2 and 6, in lines 3 and 7, in lines 5 and 8 and in lines 4 and 8. All this invites us to imagine the illiterate young David watching his sheep and repeating this Psalm from memory.

Fear of Shame

Psalm 119 gives us the impression that David loved God's commandments, but lamented he had not followed them in his life- indeed he fears some kind of shame if his sins catch up with him. His fear of shame is often repeated (:6,22,31,39,46,51,80,116,141); this could refer to some public shame for an openly revealed sin. Or it could reference his sense of shame that "in sin did my mother conceive me" and his sense of shame that he was a poor man now in the opulence of court life. Possibly his illegitimate background had been hushed up, although it was known by "the one who taunts me... the arrogant mock me... utterly derided me"

(:42,51); but when his sin with Bathsheba is revealed, he openly states for all the world to know that his mother conceived him "in sin". Yet despite this potential shame, David says he will cling to God's word of promise that he would be king. If his mother were a Moabite or non-Israelite, accounting for his red hair, he may have assumed that he as an illegitimate Gentile could never be king of Israel- if that were known about. We recall how Jephthah and Abimelech were the sons of prostitutes and how this militated against their leadership (Jud. 8:29-31; 11:1,2). Jesse was asked to parade his sons before Samuel in order for a king to be chosen. None of them are chosen; but when asked if he has any other sons, Jesse answers rather awkwardly and obliquely that there is David who is minding the sheep. That sounds an excuse as the family did have a "keeper" of the sheep apart from David (1 Sam. 17:20). This would be appropriate if David were in fact illegitimate. He was therefore "a stranger to my brothers, And an alien to my mother's children" (Ps. 69:8). "Stranger" is Hebrew *muzar* which is related to *mamzer* or bastard / illegitimate. All this rejection and lack of attention set David up for what was likely some form of Narcissistic Personality Disorder. Dt. 23:2-4 was clear that a Moabite could not enter the congregation of Israel until the 10th generation. And David was descended from Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 4:13-17). And so his faith in God's word of promise, that he would really be king, is in tension with his fear that he would be shamed and never accepted as Israel's king- seeing he was illegitimate, and not fully Hebrew. In addition to this Dt. 23:2 likewise says that an illegitimate man couldn't enter for ten generations: "One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of Yahweh". "Let me not be ashamed of my hope / expectation" (:116 LXX) therefore reflects how David felt that his hope of being King could lead to shame if his illegitimate, Gentile background were revealed. But he asks that this shall not be the case.

Awareness of Failure Whilst Confident of Salvation

Despite his awareness of sin, he asks God to make him obedient, to turn his heart to be as he would like to be. This is a huge theme in Ps. 119. Being the man after God's own heart therefore spoke of a man who wants to go God's way, who loves God's way, even though he is not currently keeping it perfectly and admits he has not done so. He looks ahead to a day when he will "obey all Your commandments" (:6). This may be a reference to his becoming king, when he would no longer be an exile, would be able to attend the tabernacle as the law required, and could govern the land according to God's law.

The Psalm is full of language about those against the Psalmist. All the terms could apply to Saul's persecution of David. The enemies are 'rulers' (:23,161), 'kings' (:46), 'arrogant people' (:21,51,69,78,85,122), 'wicked people' :53,61,95,110,119,155), 'enemies' (:98), 'plotters' (:150) and 'opponents' (:139,143,157). They plot against the Psalmist (:23), mock him (:51), lay snares for him (:61), falsely accuse him (:69), treat him unjustly (:78), dig pits for him (:85), persecute him without cause (:86), attempt to destroy him (:87,95), lay a trap for him (:110), persecute him (:161). They put him to shame (:6,31,80), insult him (:39,42), make him suffer (:50,92,107,153), oppress him (:134). Always, this behaviour is contrasted with David's obedience to God's law and his hope in God's word- which I suggest is the word of promise that he would be king. Saul was clearly suffering for extreme spiritual jealousy of David, piqued by David's victory over Goliath by pure faith. David sees Saul as disregarding God's law. He and his supporters stray from it
(:21,118), abandon it (:53), disregard it (:85), break it (:126), do not keep it (:136, 158), forget it (:139), keep their distance from it (:150) and do not care about it (:155).

Many of these terms allude to the warnings in Deuteronomy about not breaking the covenant. David frequently admits his past and present imperfection, and yet insists that he 'keeps' the law. I read this as him saying that he remains loyally in covenant with God. David parallels those who seek God with their whole heart with those who keep His laws (:2). Seeking God implies we haven't found Him fully yet. But this is keeping His covenant. Even though David acknowledged his failures, he perceived that we have been given God's laws so "that we might fully obey them". He didn't see failure as inevitable for humans. This is our pattern- confident of our covenant relationship, looking forward to the word of the Kingdom coming true for us, and yet aware deeply of our failings to be obedient as we should be.

The Hope of the Kingdom

He uses various terms for God's word: His word, commandments, precepts, law etc. These aren't mere poetic variations on a theme. Some of those terms specifically reference the law of Moses and / or the ten commandments. But the "word" he speaks of has a specific reference to how he has been anointed king and despite all odds, believes that word will judge Saul, lead him to his death in battle, and make him king- the David who was apparently a loser and no hoper. This was the "word" of Yahweh for him (1 Sam. 15:1,10). "Fulfil Your promise to Your servant" (:38) clearly makes the 'word' mean the word of promise that David would be king and receive the Kingdom. He asks God to establish or accomplish His word unto David (:38), to let mercies and salvation come to him according to that word (:41). That word of promise comforted David in his afflictions (:50), he longed for the word to be fulfilled and asked how long it would be until it was fulfilled (:82,123,154), that word of promise was what he often says he hoped in, even in the middle of the night (:49,74,81,114,116,147), he pledged not to forget that word (:16) despite all his afflictions, his trust in that word was his answer to those who reproached him (:42). Despite being "weary with sorrow" he asks to be strengthened and revived by "Your word"- the promise of the Kingdom (:28). That word of Kingdom promise was the light to his path and lamp to his feet (:105), governing his short term step by step decisions and his overall life path. It was the knowledge [AV "opening"] of that word that gave light to his darkness (:130). Saul his enemy forgot that word of promise about David (:139). But David knew that this word was "true" and would come true (:160). He was in awe of that word (:161). That word governed his whole understanding of life (:169).

David was clearly hurt by all the slander from Saul, for he often mentions his "reproach" and slander. But the antidote to it was that "I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word" (:42). The word of promise to us likewise includes the word of the Kingdom- and this is the comforting answer to the pain of slander and "reproach". This too shall pass, and one day I shall be in God's Kingdom. "Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your word" (:161). God's word [of promise] revived him when he felt depressed and almost dead (:50). David asks God not to take away His "word of truth" (:43). Reading "the word" as 'the Bible' makes no sense but all falls into place once we understand this "word" as God's true promise of the Kingdom. His impatient longing for God's word to be fulfilled likewise speaks not of the whole Bible coming true, but of God's word of promise coming true; "Do good to Your servant according to Your word" (:65) is a common plea in Ps. 119. Verses 82,84 likewise: "My eyes fail for [the fulfilment of] Your word; I say, When will You comfort me?... When will You execute Your word on those who persecute me?". Away from Samuel, David had no real teachers; and so he asks God to teach him His laws and ways. Many who lament

the absence of good teachers in their lives can feel the same. Ps. 119:76 shows that God's "word" was specifically that to David that he would be king in the Kingdom- and he feels that was by grace alone: "Please let Your grace be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant". And yet he tries to act now in accordance with such a gracious word of promise: "I have kept my feet from every evil way, that I might observe Your word" (:101). And he asks for Gods help in making him righteous because of His word of promise that David would be in the Kingdom: "Establish my footsteps in Your word; don't let any iniquity have dominion over me" (:133). But he comforts himself that if God has promised the Kingdom, it will surely happen: "Your word is settled in heaven forever" (:89).God's word created all things, and the power of that same word meant that for sure, David would one day be king: "our faithfulness is to all generations. You have by a word established the earth, and it remains" (:90). "I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great spoil" (:162) is applied by the Lord Jesus to the man who finds the promise of God's Kingdom like hidden treasure, and rejoices. All these references to "the word" make perfect sense if we understand "the word" as God's word of promise to make David king. Likewise "the promises" are God's promise to David that Saul would be removed and he would be king. ANd he thought so often about this as we should about the promise of the Kingdom: "How sweet are Your promises to my taste, more than honey to my mouth!" (:103). But the frequent use of "torah" may also at times refer to this same word. Although torah is used in Ps. 119 for the "law" of Moses, there are multiple examples of torah referring not to the Mosaic law but any statement of God; the word is used many times well before the Mosaic law was given. So "How I love Your law! It is my meditation all day" (:97), "Great peace have they who love Your law" (:165) could as well refer to David's meditation upon the word of promise of the Kingdom which he had received. Every night he thought about this wondrous promise, and every morning he awoke thinking about it: "My eyes stay open through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your word... I rise before dawn and cry for help, I put my hope in Your words" (:147,148). And it gave him joy: "Let my tongue sing of Your word" (:172). In contrast, his enemies forgot God's word (:139)- Saul acted as if he had forgotten the word that David would be king instead of him. But David asked for understanding according to God's word of promise (:169), to understand life in the perspective of our future salvation.

In weakness David had laid up the words of the Philistines in his heart (1 Sam. 21:12), but he brings himself back on track by remembering God's word of promise that he would be king, and he lays that word up in his heart.

We too have been anointed (2 Cor. 1:21), that "anointing which you received of him abides in you" (1 Jn. 2:20,27), it refers to the gift of the Spirit in our hearts which is the deposit / guarantee of our place in His Kingdom. We "were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is a guarantee of our inheritance, of the final redemption of God's own possession" (Eph. 1:13,14; 2 Cor. 5:5). To be anointed doesn't mean we are now kings, just as David wasn't immediately king. But our future kingship is likewise guaranteed by the Spirit. This is why David keeps persuading himself to trust in God's word of promise of the Kingdom, by which word his enemies [Saul especially] would also be judged. And this is our pattern- persuading ourselves of the simple reality that we shall indeed reign eternally.

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to Yahweh's law- We wonder at David's possible arrogance in assuming that he or any man can

walk blamelessly. Only the Lord Jesus fits this. And yet this is the phrase used in God's command to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:1). It was only possible for Abraham to do so by his faith in imputed righteousness, by grace through faith. But it's questionable as to whether David at this point realized that; he had to learn it through reflection upon the wonder of how God had counted him righteous after the sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 119:2

Blessed are those who keep His statutes, who seek Him with their whole heart-
This is not to be read as David pronouncing himself amongst those who totally kept God's statutes, for he often laments that he doesn't (:5). But he appears to have in view some he knew whom he felt were like this; perhaps Samuel was among them. So many times does David parallel those who *seek* God with those who keep His word. We will never achieve perfect obedience; but seeking it is paralleled with it. We are progressively coming to *know* the love of Christ which passes our natural knowledge (Eph. 3:19), to experience the peace of God that passes our natural understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Psa 119:3

Yes, they do nothing wrong; they walk in His ways-
In spiritual youth and immaturity, it is easy to consider older, faithful believers as perfect. This Psalm was likely edited over a period of time, and we in see :99 some progression from this youthful imagination that David's teachers were perfect.

Psa 119:4

You have commanded Your precepts, that we should fully obey them-
This clearly indicates that at this point, David didn't believe that sin is inevitable. And neither should we, we are not forced to sin by our natures. For the Lord Jesus had our nature but never sinned. We must hang our heads over every sin. And yet we wonder whether the Bathsheba incident made David reassess his position on this; for after that he reflected: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity. In sin my mother conceived me" (Ps. 51:5).

Psa 119:5

Oh that my ways were steadfast to obey Your statutes!-
If a man prepares his way after God's principles (2 Chron. 27:6; Prov. 4:26), then God will 'prepare' that man's way too (Ps. 37:23; 119:5), confirming him in the way of escape. When Solomon teaches that God must be allowed to establish or direct our way (Prov. 4:26; 16:29), he is using the same Hebrew words as in Ps. 37:23 and Ps. 119:5, when David says the same. It's as if he was given God's truth and yet he never quite made it his very own- he still articulated it in terms of the faith of his fathers. And thus he lost it in the end.

"Steadfast" is the word for "established". Saul was not "established" in his kingdom (1 Sam. 13:13). But David begs that his ways would be established, using the same word in Ps. 119:5,133).

Psa 119:6

Then I wouldn't be ashamed when I obey all of Your commandments-
The sense may be that when David felt he *had* been fully obedient, he thereby saw the rest of his life in stark contrast, and was ashamed that he hadn't obeyed all the commandments at other times. But he still seems to fail to realize that even keeping

all the commandments for a period of time was still not the path to salvation. He needed to learn the telling detail in Lk. 17:10 which reflects the grace of Jesus: "When you *shall have done* (not 'when you do') all these things which are commanded you, (you will) say, We are unprofitable servants". It may be that this is taking us forward to the Kingdom; it is at the judgment that we 'do all' (Eph. 6:13), it is in the Kingdom that we will obey all the commandments (Ps. 119:6). This parable is a glimpse into the appreciation of grace we will have as we enter the Kingdom; once we are fully righteous, we will realize how unprofitable we are of ourselves (notice we may still feel in a sense " unprofitable" then).

Psa 119:7

I will give thanks to You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments-

David throughout this Psalm sees a difference between knowing / being aware of God's judgments; and learning them / being taught them. He believes that if God teaches him the real meaning of the laws and requirements which David already knew, then this would lead him to "uprightness of heart" and integrity in worship. This desire for integrity in worship ought to be known to every spiritually sensitive soul; for the words of our songs and hymns are often of an altogether higher level than our average spiritual level. Here David implies that he has not yet come to a total knowledge of God's mind / judgments; but he gives thanks to Him for every incremental advance.

Psa 119:8

I will observe Your statutes; don't utterly forsake me-

God counted David as having observed His statutes (s.w. 1 Kings 3:14), even though he laments that he doesn't observe them as he wished (:5). His desire to observe them was counted finally as if he had done so. But we wonder whether David is correct in thinking that observing the statutes as it were bought God's 'not forsaking' him. Or we may have here another hint that David was very aware of his sins as a young man. He asks "forsake me not utterly" because such forsaking was the punishment for sin (Is. 49:14; 54:7; Dt. 31:17).

BET

Psa 119:9

How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word-

"Keep... pure" is the word for "cleanse" in Ps. 73:13, where David later momentarily considers he may have wasted his effort in doing this in his youth. David was to later realize (after the sin with Bathsheba) that cleansing was a matter of God washing the heart by His Spirit, rather than steel willed obedience to "live according to Your word".

Psa 119:10

With my whole heart I have sought You; don't let me wander from Your commandments-

David doesn't claim total obedience to God's laws, as he so often laments in this Psalm. But he can say that he has *sought* God wholeheartedly, his desire was for total obedience; and this should be our pattern. He frequently recognizes that there is a power from God available to keep us obedient to His ways; there would be no point in asking "Don't let me wander..." if steel willed obedience was all God is looking for,

and waits to see who has that iron in their soul. He is more proactive than that. And this power to keep us from wandering is what the New Testament calls the Holy Spirit, given freely to all who ask and desire to walk in God's ways. David here uses the same word for how Saul 'wandered' out of the way (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:21), and David seems to have initially written Ps. 119 in his wilderness years; he is asking to be stopped from going the path of Saul (Ps. 119:10,21,118). We see this same request for God to make him obedient to God's word, to act directly upon his heart and psychology, in :10,18.

"With my whole heart" alludes to the repeated encouragement of Deuteronomy to follow God's law with a whole heart (Dt. 4:29; 6:5 etc.). Saul admitted that he had "erred" (1 Sam. 26:21, s.w. 'wandered'), and so David asks that *he* will be stopped from erring (Ps. 119:10,21,118 s.w.).

Psa 119:11

I have hidden Your word in my heart, that I might not sin against You-

The Lord Jesus was the parade example of this, responding to His wilderness temptations as David did to his, by quoting God's word to himself, "in my heart". David often feels that God has hidden him (Ps. 27:5; 31:19,20); and this was God's mutual response to David having His word in his hidden part. Solomon seems to allude to David hiding God's word in his heart (Ps. 119:11) by asking his son to hide *his* word in his heart (s.w. Prov. 2:1; 7:1). Again Solomon is putting his own words in the place of God's words. Whilst his wisdom was inspired by God, I detect something wrong here. He is effectively playing God, and not directing people to God's word but rather to his own words, true and inspired as they might be. This came to full term in Solomon's attitude that personal loyalty to himself was loyalty to God- even when Solomon was far from God in his ways. And the same trap is fallen into by those who hold parts of 'God's truth'; they can come to thereby play God and demand personal loyalty to themselves rather than to God.

Psa 119:12

Blessed are You, Yahweh; teach me Your statutes-

From his youth, David had asked to be taught God's way (Ps. 119:7,12,26,64,66,68,73,108,124,135), and at the end of his life David recognized that indeed God had "taught me from my youth" (s.w. Ps. 71:17). In secular life, teaching is something experienced in youth, and then life is spent practicing what was learned. But in spiritual life, David perceived that the God who had taught him from his youth was continuing to teach him (Ps. 71:17). This is part of the "newness of life" experienced in Christ, the ever fresh spring water that we drink.

Psa 119:13

With my lips I have declared all the ordinances of Your mouth-

One danger of Bible study, especially in the age of screens being looked at in private, is that we are left with a mass of wonderful truths and ideas; but they remain within us. As God's mouth had declared His word, so David's lips and mouth would publically declare them.

Psa 119:14

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches-

David doesn't claim total obedience to God's laws, as he so often laments in this Psalm. But he can say that he loves God's word and His ways. His desire was for total

obedience; and this should be our pattern. Often in Ps. 119 he contrasts his love of God's word with the love of wealth. The desire for wealth is a typical issue faced by young men. And David sets a commendable example in this.

Psa 119:15

I will meditate on Your precepts, and consider Your ways-

Mere possession of Divine truth will not of itself save anyone; there must be meditation upon those truths, which in turn leads to meditation upon His overall ways, which leads to reflection upon *our* ways. "Meditate" and "consider" are here in parallel. God's precepts are a "way" of being and not to be considered as isolated, ritualistic demands upon man. For the individual commandments are not mere tests of obedience, but aids towards a way of life.

Psa 119:16

I will delight myself in Your statutes, I will not forget Your word-

The command to "not forget [the] word" was given in Dt. 4:9 (s.w.). Israel were to never forget that they were in covenant relationship with Yahweh, and the gift of His word to them was so wonderful they were never to forget it. Our awareness of the wonder of having God's word will elicit our delight in it. A John Carter rightly pointed out, our attitude to God's word determines our obedience to it. This is where attitudes to inspiration are so important in practical living.

GIMEL

Psa 119:17

Do good to Your servant; I will live to obey Your word-

The 'doing good' is parallel with 'living'. We can interpret this as meaning that David asks God to preserve his life, because he promises to use that preserved life to obey God's word. Perhaps the word in view was specifically the word of promise that David was to become king and govern according to God's will. R.V. "So will I observe thy word". David wants his life to continue because this will give him the opportunity to live in obedience to God's word.

Psa 119:18

Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of Your law-

The allusion may be to the Angel opening Hagar's eyes to see a well of water (cp. the word) in the desert (Gen. 21:19). See on 119:135. We see this same request for God to make him understand and be obedient to God's word, to act directly upon his heart and psychology, in :10,18,27,29,34-37. LXX "Unveil thou mine eyes" suggests David felt as Moses, who spoke to Israel from behind a veil, but unveiled himself in the presence of God in the tabernacle "outside the camp". David felt his seeing wonderful things in the law were those moments of personal, unveiled encounter with God which Moses experienced. We see this same request for God to make him understand His word, to act directly upon his heart and psychology, in :10. Recall how the Lord Jesus opens hearts to His word (Lk. 24:31,32,45; Acts 16:14). Therefore pray briefly before you read the Bible, as you would for daily food, thanking God for the power and grace of His word, and asking for your eyes to be opened to the real meaning, and that you will have God's gracious help to apply it in everyday life.

We should also consider that 'opening eyes' is used as an idiom for being granted a revelation of God's word in a prophetic sense (Num. 24:4,16). David was indeed a prophet (Acts 2:30). The "wondrous things" (s.w. "hidden things", Dt. 30:11) of the torah were ultimately the things of the Lord Jesus, which David indeed perceived

(Acts 2:30). But they may also refer to God's miraculous acts which David vowed to share with others now his eyes were opened to them (Ps. 9:1; 26:7; 78:4; 119:27). This verse is parallel with Ps. 119:27, where the same term for "wondrous things" is used. David there asks to be *made* to understand them; this is the opening of his eyes here spoken of.

"Open" is the word for 'unveil' [as LXX]. Paul may have this in mind when he writes that when the veil is lifted from the eyes of those who read the Torah, they see the Lord Jesus. And it worked for David, who saw the future Lord Jesus always before his face. He came to the spirit of Christ even in the Old Testament.

Psa 119:19

I am a stranger on the earth, don't hide Your commandments from me-

On the run from Saul, David felt like a Gentile in the land. But thereby he became a true seed of Abraham, who was likewise a stranger in the earth / land of promise. David had the commandments; he wanted them to be opened to him, and not hidden. We see here the way that God can both open and close minds to His word.

Psa 119:20

My soul is consumed with longing for Your ordinances at all times-

Devotion to God's word can so easily be something we only temporarily manifest. But David longed for God's words "at *all* times". This 'longing for the ordinances' requires us to read in an ellipsis- David longed [to be obedient to and understand] the ordinances. Perhaps he refers to his desire whilst in the wilderness to be able to come before the sanctuary (from which he was exiled by Saul's persecution); this is a common theme of his wilderness Psalms (e.g. Ps. 42:2 cp. Dt. 31:11; Is. 1:12).

Psa 119:21

You have rebuked the proud who are cursed, who wander from Your commandments-

David here uses the same word for how Saul 'wandered' out of the way (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:21), and David seems to have initially written Ps. 119 in his wilderness years. The proud therefore refers to Saul; Saul's curse was that he would not be king any more, but would be replaced by David. The "rebuke" was that Saul would be replaced as king by David.

Psa 119:22

Take reproach and contempt away from me-

David was always deeply hurt by words; the reproach and contempt from Saul hurt him so deeply, especially as it implied that he was disobedient to God's statutes.

For I have kept Your statutes-

Ps. 119 reflects David's awareness that he didn't keep God's law as he should. The first four verses speak of the blessedness of the man who is obedient. But he laments: "O that *my* ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then will I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments" (Ps. 119:5,6). He seems to be saying that when he feels he *is* obedient, it makes him feel ashamed because he realizes how far short he has come of obedience at other times and in other ways. He concludes this matchless psalm of praise for God's word with a seeming paradox: "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget they commandments" :176). Yet often throughout the Psalm he remarks how he has kept God's law, and will thereby be justified (e.g. :22). He expresses no doubt about salvation. The resolution of all this

seems to be that we can know that we are obedient to the basic way of life inculcated by covenant relationship with God, and be comforted by this fact; whilst at the same time realizing how very far we come short of total obedience, and therefore how far we fall short of the spiritual blessedness which is attainable for us even now. Yet despite an agony as to his failures, David still had a remarkably open and enthusiastic relationship with God.

Psa 119:23

Though princes sit and slander me, Your servant will meditate on Your statutes-
LXX "For princes sat and spoke against me: but thy servant was meditating on thine ordinances". This implies that Saul and his sons, the princes (apart from Jonathan), sat and slandered David in his presence. But in the face of slander he meditated upon God's words. This is a great example to all who are slandered.

Psa 119:24

Indeed Your statutes are my delight and my counsellors-
David was in a very difficult situation whilst living at Saul's court. Everybody likely advised him differently, all doubtless dogmatic that their advice must be followed. And he as a young man, a shepherd boy, could easily have been caught in an endless complex of indecision. Instead he delighted in God's words and found that word to come alive; those verses of print on paper became as it were his counsellors.

DALED

Psa 119:25

My soul is laid low in the dust; revive me according to Your word!-
David felt at times that he would surely perish ["in the dust"] at Saul's hand (1 Sam. 27:1). But he was revived from that depression by his faith in God's prophetic word that he would indeed one day be king and Saul's persecution would pass. Ps. 119 has many references to David being given life in accordance with his obedience to God's word. "Life" is repeatedly promised as the reward of obedience to God's law (Dt. 8:3; 30:6,15,19,20; 32:47). So David correctly understood that the promise for obedience was life- spiritual life with God now, as the guarantee and foretaste of the eternal life. Such references to "life" and living are common in Ps. 119. David wants preservation of his physical life so that he may live spiritually. And that really is our only reason for wanting to be alive- to live before and with and in God.

David writes as if he was very near to death. And he told Jonathan that indeed there was but a step between him and death at Saul's hand. This desire to be kept alive is a strong theme in Ps. 119: Psa 119:37, Psa 119:40, Psa 119:88, Psa 119:107, Psa 119:149, Psa 119:154, Psa 119:156, Psa 119:159.

Psa 119:26

I declared my ways, and You answered me. Teach me Your statutes-
This declaration of his ways was perhaps an opening up of his life to God. Although God knows all things, we are to tell Him of our life experiences and feelings. And God responded; He opened up His statutes to David, full of personal meaning and relevance to David.

Psa 119:27

Let me understand the teaching of Your precepts! Then I will talk of Your wondrous works-
This verse is parallel with Ps. 119:18, where the same term for "wondrous things" is used. David there asks to have his eyes opened to these things; here, to be made to

understand them. Again we see his belief that God can act directly upon human hearts to make us understand.

David in the Psalms often makes the link between appreciation of God's ways and the inevitable witness this will result in. This contrasts with our tendency to amassing of pure, intellectual truth- but without very much telling of it forth to others. "He that is wise [i.e., has true wisdom] winneth souls" (Prov. 11:30 RV).

Psa 119:28

My soul is weary with sorrow: strengthen me according to Your word-

The particular "word" in view was not simply 'the Bible' as David then had it, but the specific word of promise that Saul's persecution would one day end, and he would become king. His weariness is perhaps at the time of 1 Sam. 27:1, where he felt he would perish at Saul's hand.

Psa 119:29

Keep me from the way of deceit. Grant me Your law graciously!-

AV "Remove from me", again suggesting as noted on :18 that God can keep us from temptation, acting directly on the human mind. This is the whole purpose of praying "Lead us not into temptation". The answer to this request to be kept from a deceitful way of life was to be through being given God's law. Yet David had God's law in the sense that he knew the various commandments. We may have to therefore read in an ellipsis: "Grant me [to keep / have in my heart] Your law". See on :30.

Psa 119:30

I have chosen the way of truth, I have set Your ordinances before me-

In :29 David has asked to have the way of deceit removed from him; but he himself had chosen the way of truth. His request in :29 is therefore that he should be spiritually and psychologically confirmed by God in his choice; and he had set God's laws before him so that God could work through that; see on Ps. 25:12.

Psa 119:31

I cling to Your statutes, Yahweh-

Referring to the plea to cling or cleave to God so that Israel might enter and inherit the Kingdom (Dt. 30:20). To cling to God is to cling to His words; for God is His word, "the word was God", and our attitudes to His word are our attitudes to Him.

Don't let me be disappointed-

Typical of men of his time, David seems to fear shame [s.w. "disappointed"] more than death itself. Defeat meant shame, and he desperately begged not to be shamed. Perhaps it was the function of his failure with Bathsheba to help him redefine the motives for his trust in God.

Psa 119:32

I run in the path of Your commandments, for You have set my heart free-

This is a great theme of this Psalm; that obedience to God is not a life of being shut up in a boring and constricted path of being, but rather is the way of ultimate psychological freedom. And it is this which many seek for, and yet look for it in all the wrong places. The Hebrew can suggest that when David is set free, he will run in the way of God's commands. The context is David's hope that when he becomes king, and is free of Saul's persecution, he will use that freedom and situation to serve God obediently.

As noted on :18, unveiled eyes reading God's law led to an openness or enlarging of heart. "Enlarge my heart" is literally 'set my heart at liberty', as in Is. 60:5. 2 Cor. 6:11,13. The same theme is in :45 . This is the liberty of the heart set free by the spirit of Christ. Regardless of all present dramas in David's life.

HEY

Psa 119:33

Teach me, Yahweh, the way of Your statutes; I will keep them to the end-

David often suggests that understanding God's laws is what empowers keeping them. He didn't see them as a set of ritual commands to be obeyed for the sake of it, to as it were prove ourselves to God. Rather does he perceive them as a way of life, and he asks God to teach them to him. He knew the various regulations of the Mosaic law; but to keep them as a way of life he needed to have them explained to him. And he asks God to directly visit his heart and open his eyes to their true meaning. Mere possession of those laws was not enough without further guidance.

David often mentions his desire to keep God's ways and laws. He has in mind how in 1 Sam. 13:13 Saul didn't keep the commandment and so was rejected from being King, to be replaced by David. And he wants to live up to the Divine expectation.

Psa 119:34

Give me understanding, and I will keep Your law; yes, I will obey it with my whole heart-

As noted on :18, David repeatedly asks for psychological strength in order to be obedient to God's law. This is the Old Testament equivalent of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. See on :33.

Moses persevered because he *understood*. “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law” (Ps. 119:34) is one of many links in David’s thought between understanding and obedience. " For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter" (Mk. 7:29) shows the value which the Lord placed on correct understanding. The Gentile woman had seen the feeding of the 5,000 and *understood* the implications of the lesson which the Lord was teaching. We get the feeling that the Lord was *overjoyed* at her perception and therefore made an exception to His rule of not being sent at that time to the Gentiles, but to the house of Israel.

It is significant that Solomon's spiritual life has more appearance of spirituality the closer we get back to David's death. David had asked for wisdom (Ps. 119:34), and even Solomon’s request for wisdom can be seen as rooted in a desire to live out parental expectation more than purely from his own volition. For David had told him: “Thou art a wise man” (1 Kings 2:9), and Solomon wanted to live up to that expectation. In other words, David's influence was extremely strong, but it decreased over the years.

Psa 119:35

Direct me in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in them-

David inclined his own heart to be obedient to the word (:112), but God inclined his heart that way in response (:36). David’s meditation on the law gave him understanding (:99), but he was given understanding by God (:34). He kept his feet in the way of God’s word (:101), but God made him walk in that path (:35). As noted on Ps. 25:4,5 the desire for guidance or being 'directed' suggests that there is a higher power available, beyond a man engaging alone with God's word and seeking to obey it in his own strength. The idea is beyond that of guidance; the same word is

translated "make me to go in the path of Your commandments" (Ps. 119:35 AV). It is the word used for a bow being bent; the idea is of God's hand directly and forcefully acting upon a willing human mind. See on :18.

Psa 119:36

Turn my heart toward Your statutes, not toward selfish gain-

"Turn my heart" continues the strong theme in this Psalm of God acting directly upon the human heart to make us inclined towards obedience to Him; see on :18. This feature of the Divine-human interaction would partly explain how the Lord Jesus had complete human nature, and yet achieved moral perfection. God's hand was in that, but that same powerfully helping hand can be in the lives and hearts of all believers. "Turn my heart" is the word for "incline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward *his* teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

Psa 119:37

Turn my eyes away from looking at worthless things-

"Worthless things" is the term for idols, and it seems idolatry was a major problem to Saul and the Israel of David's time. In the wilderness context, it was because David's heart was 'turned away' from sin, that God 'turned away' the kingdom from Saul to David (s.w. 2 Sam. 3:10).

Revive me in Your ways-

This idea of living in God's ways was a promised blessing for remaining in the covenant (Dt. 5:33; 30:16). Solomon uses the phrase for living in the way of understanding (Prov. 9:6), but the difference with his father David was that David asks to be "revived" or made to live in those ways; whereas Solomon exhorts people to attempt to do this in their own strength and steel willpower. And this ultimately fails, as it did with Solomon.

Psa 119:38

Fulfill Your promise to Your servant, that You may be feared-

The specific promise in view was that he would become king and Saul's persecution would come to an end.

Psa 119:39

Take away my disgrace that I dread, for Your ordinances are good-

GNB is better: "Save me from the insults I fear; how wonderful are your judgments!". The fear of shame was strong in David, coming from a shame based society, but it is

in all of us. The concern for what others think of us is balanced here against a simple awe and wonder at God's expressed word. This is the antidote.

Psa 119:40

Behold, I long for Your precepts!-

We may need to read in an ellipsis- David longed [to be able to keep] God's precepts. This may have been a reference to his pining to be at the sanctuary, from which he was exiled whilst on the run from Saul, and keep the feasts.

Revive me in Your righteousness-

Living new life in righteousness is the language used of the revival of repentance (Ez. 18:21,22,27; 33:16). Perhaps David is aware at this point of his sins, and asks for spiritual revival. This gift of spiritual life is the gift of the Holy Spirit offered in the New Testament, the difference being that the life breathed in is the life of the Lord Jesus, now glorified and able to do this to all in Him.

WAW

Psa 119:41

Let Your grace also come to me, Yahweh-

He wanted to have the spiritual experience of God's grace which he had seen experienced by others, e.g. Samuel.

Your salvation, according to Your word-

The prophetic word that he would be king and therefore be saved from death at Saul's hand.

Psa 119:42

so I will have an answer for him who reproaches me, for I trust in Your word-

The specific individual was surely Saul. David trusted in the prophetic word that he would be king. The Psalms repeatedly use the word "reproach" about Saul's campaign against David (Ps. 44:16; 57:3; 74:10; 102:8)- it must've included much slander which is unrecorded in the historical record, but which clearly was extremely hurtful to David. The reproach was as "a sword in the bones" to David (Ps. 42:10). The word of promise to us likewise includes the word of the Kingdom- and this is the answer to slander and "reproach" which alone can comfort us.

Psa 119:43

Don't take the word of truth out of my mouth, for I put my hope in Your ordinances-

To have a word or covenant in the mouth can mean being within the covenant pronounced in that word. David here is fearful that the "word of truth", the promises to him of kingship and salvation, could be removed. The phrase is specifically used of the promises made to David in 2 Sam. 7:28. By :160, David is confident that the word of truth is indeed "of truth".

Psa 119:44

so I will obey Your law continually, forever and ever-

This could be David's vision of the Kingdom- eternally being obedient to God's law. It's possible to interpret the strange Mosaic phrase "he who keeps the law shall even live in it" in the same way- that the life eternal will be all about obedience to God's

law. David was vowing to be obedient to the law oncehe became king and God's word of promise was fulfilled.

Psa 119:45

I will walk in liberty, for I have sought Your precepts-

This is a great theme of this Psalm (:32,96); that obedience to God is not a life of being shut up in a boring and constricted path of being, but rather is the way of ultimate psychological freedom. And it is this which many seek for, and yet look for it in all the wrong places.

Psa 119:46

I will also speak of Your statutes before kings, and will not be disappointed-

Saul and Achish "king of Gath", both of whom David was "before" (1 Sam. 21:13). He was unashamed [not "disappointed"] of God's ways, even when it would have been politically expedient to keep his mouth shut.

Psa 119:47

I will delight myself in Your commandments, because I love them-

David's love of and "delight" in God's word is a theme of his (Ps. 119:48,16,70). Our attitude to God's word determines our obedience to it; if we love God's ways, then obedience comes naturally and from the heart. If we view His ways as a set of onerous, legalistic commandments- then obedience will be so much harder. And this is seen in the poor moral life of legalists.

Psa 119:48

I reach out my hands for Your commandments which I love; I will meditate on Your statutes-

As noted on :47, David didn't see God's commandments as onerous sets of legal points to be obeyed. Rather was he eager to know what God wanted, stretching out his hands for them, because he quite simply loved God and His words.

ZAYIN

Psa 119:49

Remember Your word to Your servant, because You give me hope-

The idea is 'Fulfill the prophetic word that David would become King'. This was all David had to hope for and cling on to during the years of persecution by Saul.

Psa 119:50

This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has revived me-

As noted on :49, the word in view is the Divine word through Samuel that David was to be king and Saul's persecution would one day end. It seems David fainted at times, but then revived as he remembered that word.

Psa 119:51

The arrogant mock me excessively, but I don't swerve from Your law-

"The arrogant" referred to Saul, primarily (see :69,78). And yet Saul began humble. Power so often changes men into proud people. The link between power and pride, and God's desire that we should be humble, explains why we are often not given the power which we wish for in various ways. Saul was once "little in [his] own eyes".

Psa 119:52

I remember Your ordinances of old, Yahweh, and have comforted myself- David took comfort from the actions and justice of God as displayed in Bible history, even though it seemed God had not yet acted in that way to him. "Of old" may mean that the ordinances had been given long ago; or that David from his youth, "of old" in his personal life, had always been devoted to the same words which now gave him comforted him.

In :82, the future fulfilment of the word of promise was his "comfort"; and yet here he comforts himself at the same time, at the thought of God's previous fulfillments of His promised word, even though the word had not come true for him personally yet. It's like Joseph's confidence expressed to the other prisoners that Divine dreams come true; when his own dream of glory over his brothers seemed so far from fulfilment.

Psa 119:53

Indignation has taken hold on me because of the wicked who forsake Your law- The reference is again to Saul, who had once kept God's law but then forsook it. Solomon condemns those who "forsake the law" (Prov. 4:2; 28:4), and he likely has Saul also in view. But he speaks in Prov. 4:2 of those who forsook *his* law; as if he was playing God, considering any inattention to himself as inattention to God. David by contrast continually emphasizes the need not to forsake *God's* law.

Psa 119:54

Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage- Presumably a reference to David's habit of setting God's statutes to music in the time of his exile. There is an intended juxtaposition of ideas between the words "house" and "pilgrimage". Although he was constantly on the move, his loyalty to God's ways gave him a sense of permanence and stability even in that period.

Psa 119:55

I have remembered Your name, Yahweh, in the night, and I obey Your law- We get the impression that David obeyed God's law "in the night" because he was aware of God's Name. I can only think of one specific commandment which required immediate obedience "in the night". It's in Dt. 23:10 "If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of that which happens to him by night, he must go outside the camp". The idea could appear to be that if a man needed to defecate, then he was to do so outside of the camp of soldiers. Having latrines outside the camp would have ensured hygiene within the "camp". But it seems that defecating is what is in view in Dt. 23:12. Therefore this specifically night time reason for uncleanness must refer to an involuntary emission of semen. Hence the reference to what "happens to him at night". Nobody apart from the soldier knew what had happened. Many of the Mosaic commands invited obedience from men on a very personal and intimate level; for nobody else apart from the soldier would have known whether or not this had happened. This was all designed to inculcate very personal obedience to and relationship with God. See on Ps. 119:56. To have soldiers needing to remain ritually unclean outside the main camp of soldiers was not perhaps seen as the most effective use of soldiers in a conflict situation, where every man was required. But they were taught thereby that victory was not going to come in their own strength, but through obedience to God's ways. We likewise are tempted to think that careful obedience to God's commands will hinder our material progress in life. But the opposite is in fact true, and this commandment taught that.

Psa 119:56

This is my life's way, keeping Your precepts-

As explained in :55, many of the Mosaic commands invited obedience from men on a very personal and intimate level; for nobody else apart from the soldier would have known whether or not this had happened. This was all designed to inculcate very personal obedience to and relationship with God.

CHET

Psa 119:57

Yahweh is my portion; I promised to obey Your words-

The "portion" which David looked forward to in his time in the wilderness was the inheritance of the kingship from Saul; and he promised to have God's words obeyed under his rulership. Or we could render: "My portion, Yahweh, I said, is to keep your words". The allusion would be to the portion / inheritance of the land (Dt. 10:9). As he awaited the physical promise of rulership over the land, David confesses that his essential inheritance is the honour of obedient relationship with God right now. This would then continue the theme of :56.

Psa 119:58

I sought Your favour with my whole heart; be merciful to me according to Your word-

David spoke of seeking and praising God's grace with his "whole heart" (Ps. 9:1; 119:58; 138:1). Solomon uses the phrase, but speaks of being obedient with the "whole heart" (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 6:14) and applying the "whole heart" to the intellectual search for God (Ecc. 1:13; 8:9). There is a difference. The idea of whole hearted devotion to God was picked up by Solomon, but instead of giving the whole heart to the praise of God's grace, he instead advocated giving the whole heart to ritualistic obedience and intellectual search for God. This has been the trap fallen into by many Protestant groups whose obsession with "truth" has obscured the wonder of God's grace.

Psa 119:59

I considered my ways and turned my steps to Your statutes-

Implying David fell into some sin during the wilderness years? There are many hints throughout Ps. 119 that he had ample experience of sin and repentance at this time- e.g. :67, and the conclusion to the whole Psalm. David considered his ways and turned his steps / ways towards obedience (Ps. 119:59); Solomon takes this further, using the same phrase, but saying that God directs the ways / steps of the man who considers his ways (s.w. Prov. 16:9). We have here an example of how the Spirit confirms a Godly person in the way they consciously wish to go.

Psa 119:60

I will hurry, and not delay, to obey Your commandments-

It shouldn't just be the nearness of the Lord's return that makes us urgent. Our decisions to give over each part of our lives, radically, to Jesus should be made not just because life is short and the Lord is at the door; but also because it might otherwise be too late to undo the damage a self-engrossed life has already caused, to the self and to others. Rebekah responded immediately to the call to go marry Isaac, in a story which is clearly to be read as an acted parable of the search for a bride for Jesus. Her 'quick' response is one of her characteristics (Gen. 24:18,20,26,46,64).

Abraham likewise “rose up early” after his night time vision, requiring him to offer his son to God (Gen. 22:1,3). Joshua “therefore” started to attack the confederacy of local kings, in the middle of the night, immediately after God had assured him of victory (Josh. 10:9). David could write: “I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments” (Ps. 119:60 AV). We cannot be passive on receiving the opportunity to serve God. We will urgently seek to do something with what we have been enabled to do for the Lord: “The servant who got five bags *went quickly* to invest the money and earned five more bags” (Mt. 25:16 NCV).

David repeatedly asks God to "hurry to help me" (Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 141:1). But David had hurried (s.w.) to be obedient to God, always wanting to 'say yes straight away' (Ps. 119:60). Our response to God's voice is therefore related to His response to our voice; if His words abide in us, then we experience positive experience in answered prayer (Jn. 15:7).

Psa 119:61

The ropes of the wicked bind me, but I won’t forget Your law-

A reference to unrecorded robbery whilst in the wilderness? Or an allusion to his treatment at the hands of Nabal? We wonder if he has Samson in mind, who was bound by ropes, and arose at midnight to carry away the gates of his enemies (:62). Even in the heat of crisis, David was not unaware of God's word. It was no academic study for him, in evenings when all has gone well in the day.

Psa 119:62

At midnight I will rise to give thanks to You because of Your righteous ordinances-

See on :61. David at this time in the wilderness had not seen God's justice ['righteousness'] done in his case, but he thanked God that God had done justice in history. This is a parade example for those who lament the apparent injustice or inconsistency of God in observed life at their time.

Psa 119:63

I am a friend of all those who fear You, of those who observe Your precepts-

This and other references in Ps. 119 (e.g. :74,79) to David's keen sense of fellowship with other sincere believers reflects his feelings towards Samuel, and perhaps some of the others who came and lived with him in the wilderness.

Psa 119:64

The earth is full of Your grace, Yahweh; teach me Your commands-

David was likely illiterate at this time and his knowledge of God's law would've been taught by Samuel and faithful priests. Without them, he was driven to ask God to directly teach him. Whilst on the run from Saul, it would have seemed all was against him. But he looked around at the natural creation, and saw God's grace encoded into all creation, seeing the cup half full rather than half empty.

TET

Psa 119:65

Do good to Your servant according to Your word, Yahweh-

This can be read as a request for God to fulfil His word of promise to David, that he would become king and Saul's persecution would end. But AV has David praising God for having "dealt well" with him. But this was only in a spiritual sense, for David

in the wilderness was apparently not given immediate justice by God and had a very difficult life.

Psa 119:66

Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in Your commandments-
Believing God's word and being taught by God are two different, if related things. We can "believe the Bible is true", but to be open to being taught from it can be quite another thing.

Psa 119:67

Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now I observe Your word-
See on :59. David implies he had sinned before the wilderness years. He refers to his "sins of youth" elsewhere. He was not, therefore, just an innocent teenager looking after the sheep and composing Psalms in some ethereal teenage spiritual bliss. Yet being "afflicted" was what went on through David's life (s.w. 1 Kings 2:26; Ps. 132:1).

Psa 119:68

You are good, and do good; teach me Your statutes-
It was Moses who 'taught [God's] statutes' to Israel (s.w. Dt. 4:1,5,14; 5:31). David in the wilderness felt such a personal relationship with God that he felt God personally teaching him, without the intermediary of any teacher like Moses. And this kind of intimacy is still possible with God. Away from Samuel, David had no real teachers; and so he asks God to teach him His laws and ways. Many who lament the absence of good teachers in their lives can feel the same.

Psa 119:69

The proud have smeared a lie upon me, but with my whole heart I will keep Your precepts-
"The proud" refer to Saul and his men; see on :51. David presents the antidote to experiencing slander as focusing our whole heart upon God's ways. So often slander elicits a desire to respond or endlessly mull over the experience in our hearts. But instead, whole hearted devotion to God's precepts is needed.

Psa 119:70

Their heart is callous and fat, but I delight in Your law-
Slandering others means having a callous heart, "as fat as grease" (AV), very soon to destroy itself. The essential difference between Saul and David was in the state of their hearts.

Psa 119:71

It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes-
David was driven to love God's word by the wilderness persecution- and Ps. 119 is his celebration of that.

Psa 119:72

The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver-
David felt that the wonder of having God's word meant that the presence or absence of physical blessings in his life was irrelevant (Ps. 119: 72,111). So often in Ps. 119, love of God's word is balanced against the love of wealth. Perhaps David thought that

a more politically astute life in Saul's court might have made him wealthy, or perhaps he was offered wealth n return for unethical support of Saul. But he was faithful to the word of promise, that he and not Saul was to be king. And this apparently meant the sacrifice of apparent wealth.

YUD

Psa 119:73

Your hands have made me and formed me; give me understanding, that I may learn Your commandments-

That God has created us means we want to know Him more and form a relationship with Him. Our search for the invisible Father is what drives us to His word. Our attitudes to God's word are related to our attitudes to His creative power. For the Biblical record is of creation by God's word. If we accept that, then we will find an intuitive interest in living by that word as it forms us into a new creation.

Psa 119:74

Those who fear You will see me and be glad, because I have put my hope in Your word-

See on :63. The "word" is the word of promise that David would be king. All those who feared Yahweh rejoiced in that hope. It seems Samuel's word about David's future kingship was well known in Israel.

Psa 119:75

Yahweh, I know that Your judgments are righteous, that in faithfulness You have afflicted me-

David seems to have felt there were aspects of disobedience in his life before God, and he had been rightly afflicted because of them. His great expressions of love for God's word therefore don't imply that he was perfectly obedient to it. But this is how spiritual life is- loving God's ways, despite still failing.

Psa 119:76

Please let Your grace be for my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant-

The "word" in view is the promise of becoming king after Saul. But David sees this as being by grace alone. God chose him because he was "after God's own heart"; but that didn't mean David was perfect. The choice was still by grace and not according to personal righteousness.

Psa 119:77

Let Your tender mercies come to me, that I may live; for Your law is my delight-

David's survival of Saul's persecution, not dying but living, was a result of God's prophetic word through Samuel. But that word was grace (:76), "tender mercies".

Psa 119:78

Let the proud be disappointed, for they have overthrown me wrongfully; but I will meditate on Your precepts-

The proud could refer to Saul; see on :51. But being "overthrown" suggests this has been reapplied to the time of Absalom's rebellion. Despite the huge emotional pain of all the betrayal, David's heart was still on God's word and ways.

Psa 119:79

Let those who fear You turn to me; they will know Your statutes-

See on :63. If the time of Absalom's rebellion is in view (see on :78), then this would refer to men turning away from the new government and back to David. But it would also apply to those who turned to support David at Saul's time. And David vows that when he comes to power [again, in the Absalom context], he will insist on teaching God's ways.

Psa 119:80

Let my heart be blameless toward Your decrees, that I may not be ashamed-

Typical of men of his time, David seems to fear shame [s.w. "disappointed"] more than death itself. Defeat meant shame, and he desperately begged not to be shamed. Perhaps it was the function of his failure with Bathsheba to help him redefine the motives for his trust in God.

KAF

Psa 119:81

My soul faints for Your salvation; I hope in Your word-

The "word" in view is the promise of becoming king after Saul. And this implied salvation from Saul's persecution, and David longed for that time to come.

Psa 119:82

My eyes fail for Your word; I say, When will You comfort me?-

The fulfilment of the word of promise that he would become king seemed so far off. David as it were loses sight of it. He feels at times that his "comfort" would only be when that word was fulfilled; and yet he comforts himself at the same time, at the thought of God's previous fulfillments of His promised word (:52).

Psa 119:83

For I have become like a wineskin in the smoke, but I don't forget Your statutes-

This may refer to a custom of mellowing wine by putting it in the smoke, implying the affliction was necessary to mature David spiritually. But more likely the idea is that David feels like a shrivelled old wineskin; but regardless of that and his feelings, David continued to be focused upon God's ways.

Psa 119:84

How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute Your word on those who persecute me?-

Whilst on the run from Saul, David felt that he was surely going to die at his hands (1 Sam. 27:1). His faith in the prophetic word that he would be preserved and become king after Saul's demise was pushed to its uttermost. He felt death was but days away, and God must as it were hurry up and fulfil His word of promise or else David would die.

Psa 119:85

The proud have dug pits for me, contrary to Your law-

We note how David correctly and continually analyzes the lead characteristic of his enemies, be they Saul or Absalom, as "pride". David felt pits were dug for him by Saul particularly (s.w. Ps. 57:1,6). We might have said "jealousy", but David saw to the essence- the problem was pride, as it is always to this day. Quite how did they

seek to entrap him with pits? The word is used of the trap of women (s.w. Prov. 22:14; 23:27). Perhaps this was how Saul used his own daughters to entrap David. LXX "Transgressors told me idle tales".

Psa 119:86

All of Your commandments are faithful. They persecute me wrongfully. Help me!- Heb. "They pursued me in vain"- clearly relevant to Saul's pursuit of David. "Help me" is s.w. in Ps. 30:10, a Bathsheba Psalm: "Hear, Yahweh, and have mercy on me. Yahweh, be my helper". Earlier David had sought Yahweh's help on the basis that he had been obedient to God's word (Ps. 119:173 s.w.), and was innocent (Ps. 119:86 s.w.). But the sin with Bathsheba led David to beg for God to be his helper purely on the basis of grace (Ps. 30:10 s.w.). He had asked for God's words to be his "helper" (Ps. 119:175), but now he quits his academic study and begs directly for God Himself to be his "helper". And yet we note his complaint that he was suffering "wrongfully". Despite Nathan's clear explanation to him about the consequences of his sin, David seems to have constantly complained about the consequences; even though he had been spared death. And I have often noted this about David throughout the Psalms dating from Absalom's rebellion, where David feels he is suffering wrongfully.

Psa 119:87

They had almost wiped me from the earth, but I didn't forsake Your precepts- This sounds like David being convinced he was at the very point of being slain by Saul (1 Sam. 27;1), despite God's word to him about being saved from Saul and made king. He may also refer to the geographical extent of the earth / land, from which he felt he had been made to flee in fear of Saul. But even at the point of extinction of hope, David says he remained obedient to God's laws.

Psa 119:88

Preserve my life according to Your grace, so I will obey the statutes of Your mouth-

The preservation of David's life from Saul had been promised in the prophetic word to him about him becoming king. But David recognized that his having been chosen as king was by grace, not because he was more righteous than others. And he vows that if his life is preserved from Saul and he became king, then he would rule in obedience to God's laws. Note how David perceived those laws as having come direct from God's very mouth. The law of Moses was to him a living dialogue with God.

LAMED

Psa 119:89

Yahweh, Your word is settled in heaven forever-

David struggles throughout the Psalm to believe that the prophetic word about him becoming king and Saul's demise would ever come true. But he reassures himself that God's word of purpose is "settled", from the Divine side; even if it appeared so unstable in fulfilment on earth. But David believed that what was settled in heaven would ultimately come true on earth.

Psa 119:90

Your faithfulness is to all generations. You have by a word established the earth, and it remains-

This leads David to reflect that the word to him promising to establish his kingdom

would just as easily come true. Creation was by a word, God spoke and it was done. And David perceives God's word to him, whether in the form of Mosaic commandments or the word of promise that he was ultimately to survive Saul's persecution and become king of Israel.

Psa 119:91

Your laws remain to this day, for all things serve You-

As noted on :90, the word through which God created the earth was the same word as the laws and principles applicable to David. And David took comfort that "all things" in creation were subservient to God's word, and likewise His prophetic word about David would likewise without doubt come true and go likewise into operation.

Psa 119:92

Unless Your law had been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction-

AV "I should then have perished". The "then" is in the Hebrew, and perhaps refers to the point of crisis in :87. Perhaps it was some act of ritual obedience to the law ["torah" is the word here used] which inadvertently saved David from death. Or perhaps he means that God rewarded his obedience by delivering him; but this is at variance with his expressions of faith in God's grace, and his belief that his deliverance from his afflictions was because of God's word of promise to him about becoming king, rather than because of his own righteousness. Or perhaps he here is simply slipping back away from grace, and self-righteously assuming that in fact his preservation had been because of his own obedience to the law.

Psa 119:93

I will never forget Your precepts, for with them You have revived me-

Just as God's word had given life and birth to creation and continues to keep it in life (:90-92), so David felt God's word and ways gave him life. Three times David makes the connection between God's precepts and his inner "revival" (Ps. 119:40,93,159). God's word is a living word in that it is creative and gives life.

Psa 119:94

I am Yours. Save me, for I have sought Your precepts-

David asks for salvation not because he has been totally obedient to God's precepts; but because he "sought" such obedience, he loved God's ways and so wished to be obedient, and identified himself as God's.

Psa 119:95

The wicked have waited for me to destroy me; I will consider Your statutes-

Living in a situation where enemies set ambushes and traps of various kinds, it would seem to the secular person that absolutely all our attention must be given to avoiding them. But David's mental focus instead was upon God's words and ways. David himself promises to "consider Your statutes" (:95), but he then asks that God will give him "understanding" (s.w. "consider") of those statutes (:125). Our freely chosen attitude to God's word is confirmed and extended by the operation of the Spirit on the human heart.

Psa 119:96

I have seen a limit to all perfection, but Your commands are boundless-

This is a great theme of this Psalm (:32,45); that obedience to God is not a life of being shut up in a boring and constricted path of being, but rather is the way of

ultimate psychological freedom. And it is this which many seek for, and yet look for it in all the wrong places.

MEM
Psa 119:97
How I love Your law! It is my meditation all day-
We meditate upon what we love. The fact David found he was meditating upon God's law meant therefore, axiomatically, that he loved it. This means that the statement that "I love Your law!" is not at all self-righteous or self congratulatory. Although *torah* is used here for "law", there are multiple examples of *torah* referring not to the Mosaic law but any statement of God; the word is used many times well before the Mosaic law was given.

Psa 119:98
Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies, for Your commandments are always with me-
David's survival at the court of Saul seems miraculous. He was in such a difficult, compromised situation. We get the sense that David pitted his wisdom against Saul's anger and bitter persecution; David's wisdom is mentioned in tandem with Saul's anger against him (1 Sam. 18:5,11,15,30). "David behaved himself wisely (AVmg "prospered") in all his ways; and the Lord was with him" runs like a refrain through 1 Sam. 18:5,14,15,30. These words are referring back to Dt. 29:9: "Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do". David's charmed life and prospering despite all manner of plotting against him was due to his single-minded devotion to the Law; to those very chapters which tired Bible readers are wont to skip over as boring and not motivating. Yet David found something immensely inspiring and practical about the Law. The word made him wiser than his foes (Ps. 119:98).
Psa 119:99
I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation-
This Psalm was likely edited over a period of time, and we see here some progression from the youthful imagination that David's teachers were perfect (:3). Whilst there may well have been a touch of youthful arrogance here in David, the words came to absolute fulfilment in the Lord Jesus amongst the teachers of the law in Jerusalem at 12 years old. We note that understanding is here predicated upon meditation. David's requests to be given such understanding therefore imply God's Spirit working upon the internal meditations of those who love God's law.
"Understanding" is the same word for 'wisdom' used three times about David in 1 Sam. 18. His wisdom was because he meditated in God's law.

Psa 119:100
I understand more than the aged, because I have kept Your precepts-
This may be an allusion to Job's comment and experience that age is not at all to be linked with understanding. The Pentateuch and book of Job were likely the only texts David had or was aware of. Understanding is here predicated upon keeping God's precepts. The advantage of obedience is that the life it elicits of itself gives us insight and understanding; all part of an intended upward spiral.

Psa 119:101

I have kept my feet from every evil way, that I might observe Your word-
This could be read on a surface level as David saying he has kept himself from any sin. But the idea is maybe that David knew that if he was walking in a good way, he would find it easier to observe God's word. He knew that there is an upward spiral in spirituality. Or "your word" may refer to the word of promise that David would be king.

Psa 119:102
I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, for You have taught me-
David gives God the credit for his obedience, for he recognizes that God has worked upon him to make him obedient. He sees God's "teaching" of His laws, not just the laws themselves, as what led him to obedience.

Psa 119:103
How sweet are Your promises to my taste, more than honey to my mouth!-
The promises immediately in view were the promises of receiving the Kingdom and the destruction of Saul. Elsewhere David contrasts living by God's word with present wealth; and here we may have a similar contrast. The "honey" offered in prospect by the house of Saul was nothing compared to the promise of the Kingdom.

Psa 119:104
Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way-
The experience of obedience to God's precepts of itself gives us added spiritual insight and understanding, a deeper dislike of "every false way", perhaps an allusion to idolatry.

NUN
Psa 119:105
Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path-
The "word" in view may be the prophetic word that David would be king and Saul would be destroyed. Whilst under persecution from Saul, it seemed hard to believe that word would come true. But David lived as if God's word of promise was what guided his feet (his short term immediate decisions) and his overall path, and believed God would confirm him in his choices (see on :133). Solomon reapplied Ps. 119:105 in Prov. 6:23; but his legalism comes out, in that he changed "Your word" (of promise) to "the law" and the "commandments". We likewise are guided in short and longer term decisions [both our step by step foot movements and our overall path] by the word of promise- that we will indeed be in God's Kingdom.
Psa 119:106
I have sworn, and have confirmed it, that I will obey Your righteous ordinances-
This appears to be another promise from David that when God's word about his kingship came true (see on :105), he would ensure that he would govern according to God's ordinances.

Psa 119:107
I am afflicted very much. Revive me, Yahweh, according to Your word-
David was aware that the word of promise was true- that Saul's days would end, and he would become king. But there were times when this seemed impossible of fulfilment, and David asks God to revive him, to help him see that the prophetic word

which he theoretically knew was true- was in fact going to come true for him personally. And we need to pray likewise.

Psa 119:108

Accept, I beg You, the willing offerings of my mouth. Yahweh, teach me Your ordinances-

In exile from the sanctuary, David was unable to offer sacrifice there. And so he matured to understand that the offerings God accepts are those of our mouths, our words. And perhaps David vowed with his mouth to perform sacrifice when he was able to get to the sanctuary. His understanding matured beyond this after his sin with Bathsheba, when he perceived that God wants a contrite heart rather than sacrifices. But already the Father was working to develop his young mind to perceive that literal sacrifices weren't absolutely required. And so He works so gently with us too.

Psa 119:109

My soul is continually in my hand, yet I won't forget Your law-

David felt he could be slain any moment by Saul and his supporters (1 Sam. 27:1). But he says that he will not forget obedience to God's law even in crisis situations. However *torah,* "law", had a wide range of application and need not refer strictly to the Mosaic ordinances. He may simply mean that he would not forget God's word of promise.

Psa 119:110

The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I haven't gone astray from Your precepts-

The implication is that the snares laid would have meant going astray from God's precepts. The initial reference may have been to Saul laying snares for David through getting him to marry his daughters and thereby seeking to kill him. But the Psalm finishes with David saying bluntly that he *has* "gone astray" (:176), as if to say that earlier [as at this point in the Psalm] he far overrated his own obedience to God's law. Or we can understand this as David accepting he did go astray from obedience to God's laws, but he persistently remained loyal to the covenant.

Psa 119:111

I have taken Your testimonies as a heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart-

David on the run appeared to have no inheritance. But his inheritance was God's "testimonies"- a possible reference not so much to the Mosaic law as to the prophetic testimonies from Samuel that he would inherit the Kingdom and Saul would be deposed.

Psa 119:112

I have set my heart to perform Your statutes forever, even to the end-

"Set my heart" is the word for "incline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we

ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

SAMEKH
Psa 119:113
I hate double-minded men, but I love Your law-
Heb. double hearted, as Saul was in comparison to David. David was chosen over Saul because he had a heart after God's.

AV "vain thoughts" or "vanities", perhaps a reference to idolatry as well as to the hypocrisy of Saul. David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah.* This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

Psa 119:114
You are my hiding place and my shield. I hope in Your word-
When hiding from Saul in the wilderness [s.w. of David's "hiding places" at this time in 1 Sam. 19:2; 25:20], David hoped in the prophetic word that one day Saul would be no more and David would be king. The idea of God as a hiding place fits absolutely with David's years on the run from Saul. As does the idea of God keeping him safe, delivering him, :117,134 etc. Spiritually these were David's best years, and Ps. 119 reflects that... before the rain set in. But still he will be saved. We see this with Gideon, Samson and others. They reached highs of spirituality which they didn't maintain until the end. But will still be saved.

Psa 119:115
Depart from me, You evildoers, that I may keep the commandments of my God-
This is the word for how God had departed from Saul, and maybe this was initially behind David's desire that Saul leave him alone. But it is also the word used for how violence would never depart from David because of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:10). David prayed for this to "depart" but it never did. David was open to the possibility that through prayer, God can remove the consequences of sin in this life; but such prayer is not always answered. We may also have here David's dislike of being surrounded by lawless outlaws who came out to live with him whilst he was on the run from Saul.

Psa 119:116
Uphold me according to Your word, that I may live. Let me not be ashamed of my hope-
LXX "expectation". The parallel between "Your word" and David's hope or

expectation confirms the suggestion that the "word" in view in this Psalm is the specific promise to David of becoming king after Saul's judgment and destruction. But David felt that the fulfilment of that prophetic word required him to be unashamed of it.

Psa 119:117

Hold me up and I will be safe, and will have respect for Your statutes continually-

As David respected God's words, so he asks God to spare or respect him (s.w. Ps. 39:13). This is not to be read as meaning that Bible study assures a man of salvation; but rather that there is a mutuality in relationship between God and man. Our respect of His words is reflected in His saving respect of us. But in the immediate context, David is asking for God to preserve him from Saul, and vowing to always enforce God's statutes when he becomes king.

Psa 119:118

You reject all those who stray from Your statutes-

David here uses the same word for how Saul 'wandered' or strayed out of the way (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:21), and David seems to have initially written Ps. 119 in his wilderness years. Saul was rejected from being king because of this.

For their deceit is in vain- "Vain" is better "wrongfully" reflects again David's deep sense of injustice (see on Ps. 35:7). He uses the word for "false witness", as if they were breaking one of the ten commandments; and he uses it often, heaping condemnation upon any who dare lie / bear false witness about him (Ps. 38:19; 52:3; 63:11; 101:7; 119:29,69,86,118; 120:2; 144:8,11). And yet David lied and deceived in order to get Uriah killed so that he could take his wife for himself. Surely reflection upon that sin made him realize that his zeal to condemn dishonesty was at best misplaced; to lament it is one thing, but David was to be taught that he had himself done the very thing he so condemned.

Psa 119:119

You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. Therefore I love Your testimonies-

The "word" so often in view in this Psalm is the prophetic "testimony" that Saul would be deposed and David would become king. This is the same situation in view here, when the wicked of the earth would be put away. David speaks in the present tense of that which he believed was yet to happen- such was his faith in the prophetic word.

Psa 119:120

My flesh trembles for fear of You; I am afraid of Your judgments-

LXX "Penetrate my flesh with thy fear; for I am afraid of thy judgments". The preceding verses have all alluded to how God's word of promise was that He would judge Saul and replace him with David. But David concludes this verse of the Psalm with a request to have God's direct action upon his mind so that he would personally tremble before God's moral requirements. David truly feared for Saul's judgement, his deep concern for those disobedient to God's word and covenant is apparent throughout the Psalm.

AYIN

Psa 119:121

I have done what is just and righteous. Don't leave me to my oppressors- Oppression seems to have been a characteristic of the reigns of Saul and Absalom. This was the equivalent of how Saul oppressed David (Ps. 119:121,122,134). Samuel's insistence that *he* has not oppressed the people is in the context of his warning that Saul would do this (1 Sam. 12:3,4). When Solomon later condemns the 'oppressors' (s.w. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3,24), he has in view a wishing of judgment upon the house of Saul. "The poor" whom they had oppressed would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6).

Psa 119:122

Ensure Your servant's well-being. Don't let the proud oppress me- See on :121. This appears to be the one verse in Ps. 119 that doesn't mention God's word. But it does so effectively, once we understand that the Psalm is largely about David's request for the prophetic word to come true- of him becoming King and Saul's demise. Again we note that "the proud" is Saul; this was the lead characteristic which characterized his entire failure. His jealousy over David being more praised by the women than he was reveals the basic pride which grew into the obsessive feature of his personality.

Psa 119:123

My eyes fail looking for Your salvation, for Your righteous word- "Salvation" is *Yeshua,* 'Jesus', "the word made flesh" (Jn. 1:14). But in the immediate context, the fulfilment of God's prophetic word about Saul's demise meant David's salvation. The admission that his eyes were failing in looking for this... is as if to say 'My faith is failing in Your promised salvation, but I accept Your word is right and just; please give me faith in Your word again'. Constantly we see the implication that God gives faith, and it is not true that God simply faces off against man over an open Bible, and it is for us to summon the faith to believe it, in our own strength.

Psa 119:124

Deal with Your servant according to Your grace, teach me Your statutes- From his youth, David had asked to be taught God's way (Ps. 119:7,12,26,64,66,68,73,108,124,135), and at the end of his life David recognized that indeed God had "taught me from my youth" (s.w. Ps. 71:17). In secular life, teaching is something experienced in youth, and then life is spent practicing what was learned. But in spiritual life, David perceived that the God who had taught him from his youth was continuing to teach him (Ps. 71:17). This is part of the "newness of life" experienced in Christ, the ever fresh spring water that we drink.

Psa 119:125

I am Your servant. Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies- David himself promises to "consider Your statutes" (:95), but he then asks that God will give him "understanding" (s.w. "consider") of those statutes (:125). Our freely chosen attitude to God's word is confirmed and extended by the operation of the Spirit on the human heart.

Psa 119:126

It is time to act, Yahweh, for they break Your law-
David wants God to fulfil immediately His word of promise that Saul would be overthrown and David established king. It was the same frustration at the apparent slowness of fulfilment of a prophetic word which the exiles experienced, along with all the faithful.

Psa 119:127
Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, more than pure gold-
Again David points the contrast between God's commands, and the love of wealth. So often love of wealth is presented as the most common form of spiritual downfall, and the antithesis of loving God and His word.

Psa 119:128
Therefore I consider all of Your precepts to be right; I hate every false way-
"Every false way" may refer to idols, which were prevalent in Israel at David's time. The "therefore" connects with the previous verse, which condemns the love of wealth. There is an upward spiral in spirituality. Once wealth has been rejected (:127), "therefore" we appreciate the rightness of God's precepts, and all the more hate false ways. This love of what is just and hatred of what is false means that we will not vicariously enjoy the "false" through viewing movies about it; we will simply love what is right and thereby hate all that is false.
PEY
Psa 119:129
Your testimonies are wonderful, therefore my soul keeps them-
The motivation for obedience is related to our attitude to God's word. This is why our understanding of the nature of Biblical inspiration has an effect upon our actual walk before God in practice.

Psa 119:130
The entrance of Your words gives light, it gives understanding to the simple-
David likens himself to the simple who was made wise by God's word (Ps. 19:7; 119:130), and was therefore preserved (Ps. 116:6). To be taught by God's word we have to become "simple", unlearning and placing to one side all our perceived knowledge and understandings. Solomon repeats David's theme by saying that wisdom makes wise the simple (Prov. 1:4; 8:5; 9:4). But he is equating "wisdom" with the words of God, although for Solomon, "wisdom" seems to be what he is saying and teaching. Solomon doesn't direct his listeners back to God's word, as David did, but rather towards loyalty to his teaching. Inspired as it was, his lack of extended reference to God's law places his own teaching of "wisdom" above that law. This is in sharp contrast to David's attitude in Ps. 119. David sees God's words as entering him and giving him understanding; as if God takes the initiative in entering the mind of man.

But the Hebrew for "entrance" is literally 'opening', and may be an idiom for explaining or teaching (as in Ps. 49:4; 78:2). Hence GNB "The explanation of your teachings gives light". "Gives light" is the word for daybreak; the idea may be that a new day dawns in the lives of the person who has God's word explained to them and they accept it. We note that the light is not simply the word of God, but its explanation.

Psa 119:131

I opened my mouth wide and panted, for I longed for Your commandments-
The opening of the mouth suggests a desire to have something put into the mouth. David knew the commandments, so we surely have to understand an ellipsis here, "longing for [obedience to] Your commandments". Constantly we are given the impression that mere possession of God's word is not enough; there must be some further action of God, in teaching and strengthening- what the New Testament calls the work of the Holy Spirit.

Psa 119:132
Turn to me and have mercy on me, as You always do to those who love Your name-
As often, David appeals to God's actions in history for other believers in the past ["always"]- at a time when he felt God hadn't turned to him, hadn't paid attention to him in his immediate crises.

Psa 119:133
Establish my footsteps in Your word; don't let any iniquity have dominion over me-
David recognized that God's word of promise that he would be king and Saul would be deposed, was what should guide the choice of steps he himself took (see on :105). But he asks that his choices, the steps he chose in response to that hope and understanding, should be "established" or confirmed by God. And his request to not be dominated by sin suggests he realized that God's prophetic intentions for him were all the same conditional upon his continued correct walk. And he believed God has the power to keep us from falling into sin (Jude 24). Constantly we see the work of the Spirit over and above a man looking at God's word and trying to find the steel will to make himself obedient to it.

Psa 119:134
Redeem me from the oppression of man, so that I will observe Your precepts-
See on :121. The "oppression" in view was the persecution by Saul, and David vowed that if and when God's word came true and he became king, he would govern according to God's precepts.

Psa 119:135
Make Your face shine on Your servant. Teach me Your statutes-
The passages which talk about God's face shining upon men refer primarily to the Angel in the Most Holy shining forth in blessing upon men. Far from the sanctuary in the desert, David felt this closeness to God. It was Moses who 'taught [God's] statutes' to Israel (s.w. Dt. 4:1,5,14; 5:31). David in the wilderness felt such a personal relationship with God that he felt God personally teaching him, without the intermediary of any teacher like Moses. And this kind of intimacy is still possible with God.

Psa 119:136
Streams of tears run down my eyes, because they don't observe Your law-
The "they" could refer to David's eyes, or this could be another lament for the disobedience of his persecutors. Likewise the faithful in Ezekiel's time sighed and groaned over all the abominations committed in Jerusalem (Ez. 9:4); Paul spoke "even with tears" about those in the ecclesia who lived as enemies of the cross of

Christ (Phil. 3:18), exhorting the Corinthians to mourn for those they had to disfellowship (1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 12:21); Ezra wept for the sins of his people (Ezra 10:1). The bleeding hearts of Jeremiah and Moses were actually for the ecclesia. Is this attitude seen amongst us? We lament in a gossipy way the weaknesses of the brotherhood; but is there this bleeding heart for the cases we mention? We should never think of disfellowshipping anybody unless the decision has been come to through a process of such prayerful mourning for them first.

TZADI
Psa 119:137
You are righteous, Yahweh; Your judgments are upright-
GNB "just". Here and in :138 David seems to be reasoning against some implication or position that God's laws are somehow unjust or unreasonable. This was perhaps the position of Saul, who impatiently disobeyed God's law (1 Sam. 15:22).

Psa 119:138
You have commanded Your statutes in righteousness; they are fully trustworthy-
"Righteousness" and "truth" [s.w. "trustworthy"] are words found together in 1 Sam. 26:23, where Saul recognizes David had acted in "righteousness and truth" in not killing him when he could have done. Perhaps David is reflecting upon how God's "statutes" had led him not to kill Saul.

Psa 119:139
My zeal wears me out, because my enemies ignore Your words-
The command to "not forget [the] word" was given in Dt. 4:9 (s.w.). Israel were to never forget that they were in covenant relationship with Yahweh, and the gift of His word to them was so wonderful they were never to forget it. Our awareness of the wonder of having God's word will elicit our delight in it. A John Carter rightly pointed out, our attitude to God's word determines our obedience to it. This is where attitudes to inspiration are so important in practical living. Saul's enemies were Saul and his supporters, who impatiently disobeyed God's law (1 Sam. 15:22).
Psa 119:140
Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and Your servant loves them-
God's promises to David that he would become king and Saul would be destroyed seemed so far away from fulfilment at the time. But David reflects that historically, God's promises to others had been fulfilled. We encounter this reasoning often in David's Psalms. It is in sharp contrast to the excuse for unbelief we often encounter- that God has not come through for me in my experience right now at this moment.
Psa 119:141
I am small and despised but I don't forget Your precepts-
A sensitive person like David was going to be deeply hurt by being despised as he was by his brothers and his wife (2 Sam. 6:16 s.w.), and as he was by Goliath (s.w. 1 Sam. 17:42) and later by all his people after the sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 22:6 s.w.). This would explain why David so often takes comfort in the way that *God* doesn't despise him (Ps. 22:24; 51:17; 69:33; 102:17). It is God's perspective which is so critical in overcoming the negative self-image which others seek to project onto us.
The young David in Saul's court in 1 Sam 18:23 calls himself a poor and lightly esteemed man; and he uses these words "poor and lightly esteemed" about himself in Ps. 119:141, suggesting Ps. 119 was written as reflection on this period of David's

life. David's thought was that although he was poor, he believed Yahweh's word of promise that he would become king.

"The youngest" (1 Sam. 16:11) is literally "the littlest / shortest", and David is presented as not as tall as Eliab. We wonder whether he was short- again, showing how God chooses not as man does. The short, youngest, runaround servant brother. The Septuagint includes a Psalm 151, which was also found in the Psalms Scroll from Cave 11 at Qumran. In this psalm David speaks in the first person about himself, and says: "Smaller was I than my brothers" [see J.A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll*]. In Ps. 119:141, reflecting on his younger life, David recalls: "I am small and despised". Saul and Eliab are both noted as tall, as is Goliath. But it was David the small who was chosen to bring down Goliath and not those with the human qualification of being tall. "Despised" is the word used for Goliath despising David (1 Sam. 17:42); clearly this wasn't the first time David was despised, and it seems during the wilderness persecution he likewise felt despised. But his experience with Goliath was intended as programmatic for him, to understand that this too would cease.

Psa 119:142

Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness; Your law is truth-

GNB "always true". Thus the eternity of God's truth is paralleled with the eternity of His righteousness (as in :160). David walked / lived "in truth and righteousness" (s.w. 1 Kings 3:6; Ps. 15:2), because this was how God is. The Messianic seed of David was to have this characteristic, ruling on David's throne in truth and righteousness (s.w. Is. 16:5).

Psa 119:143

Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, but Your commandments are my delight-

I suggest the parallel is with :139. David is troubled for those who do not delight in God's commandments. But he himself does delight in them. "Trouble and anguish" is the term used for condemnation (Job 15:24; Prov. 1:27; Rom. 2:9). David is so identified with the wicked that like the Lord Jesus, he as it were feels their condemnation, whilst being personally innocent.

Psa 119:144

Your testimonies are righteous forever. Give me understanding, that I may live-

The internal connection of the verse is that the eternity of God's testimonies is connected with the eternal living of David. David sees eternity, or at least living instead of dying at the hand of Saul, as connected with his identity with God's testimonies which are eternal.

KUF

Psa 119:145

I have called with my whole heart. Answer me, Yahweh! I will keep Your statutes-

This and the following verses appear to be David's intense cry for deliverance from a particular period of his persecution by Saul. It appeared he faced death, but he remembers God's word promising that he would become king and Saul would be disposed of. He promises obedience to God's laws if he is delivered; and I suggest this primarily means he was vowing to govern Israel according to the Mosaic law. Or it could be that he felt he was suffering because of personal disobedience, and asks for deliverance with the promise that in future he will keep God's laws. In this

application, these verses may also have relevance to David's sufferings as a result of his sin with Bathsheba. But see on :146.

Psa 119:146

I have called to You. Save me! I will obey Your statutes-

See on :145. David says that he has 'obeyed Your statutes' (s.w. :167,168). Perhaps he means that when God fulfills His promise to make him king, which required immediately saving him from some situation with Saul, he would continue to "obey Your statutes" in the way he governed Israel. But perhaps he feels he is suffering because of disobeying God's statutes. And yet later in :167,168 he says he has obeyed them. This difficulty in self examination [which we also can identify with] is reflected in how David also says in different Psalms that Israel both obeyed God's statutes, and also disobeyed them (Ps. 78:56 cp. 99:7).

Psa 119:147

I rise before dawn and cry for help, I put my hope in Your words-

See on :145. David's first waking moments were naturally of prayer to God. And this is our pattern. He often mentions his habit of regular prayer morning and evening (Ps. 5:3; 55:17; 59:16; 88:3; 119:147). This should not have to be enforced upon us, but rather the natural outcome of a life lived in constant connection with God. David perceived that the Mosaic ritual of morning and evening sacrifice taught the sacrifice of prayer should be made in daily life, even though at the time of many of the Psalms, David was exiled from the sanctuary. This exile from organized religion led him to make this connection, as it can for us too.

The Psalms give further insight into the disciplined nature of David's prayer-life: "Evening and morning and at noon will I pray" (Ps. 55:17); "I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning" (Ps. 59:16); "in the morning shall my prayer come before you" (Ps. 88:13); "to praise your mercy in the morning, and your faithfulness every night" (Ps. 92:2); "before the dawning of the morning, I hope in your word" (Ps. 119:147). This kind of self-discipline is the utter essence of practical Christianity. It is through this that we will realize every morning that God is our "arm", our strength, for the coming day (Is. 33:2); and God's mercies are only renewed every morning in that the righteous man *thinks afresh about them* every morning (Lam. 3:23)- for God's mercy itself is around the clock! Likewise the comment in Zeph. 3:5 that God's judgments are revealed every morning only becomes true in that the believer meditates upon God's word each morning.

Psa 119:148

My eyes stay open through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your word-

The "word" in view may refer specifically to the promise that he would be preserved from Saul's persecution to become king. And when that promise seemed so unlikely of fulfilment, he stayed awake at night imagining how it might come to fulfilment.

Or we can take "Your word" to refer to God's word generally, such as was revealed to David at that time. The whole of Ps. 119 describes how he rejoiced at God's law, staying up late at night, straining his eyes into the candlelight to read it, getting up first thing in the morning to read some more (Ps. 119:147,148). He obviously saw something in it that perhaps we don't. Perhaps he appreciated more keenly the prophecies of Messiah than we do. Peter makes the point that David knew so much about Jesus, although he wasn't even born then, that David could say: "I foresaw the Lord (Jesus) always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I

should not be moved" (Acts 2:25). David "foresaw" the coming of Jesus at all times; the only source of knowledge he had was the Law of Moses (remember David lived before the time of the Old Testament prophets like Isaiah). Jesus was ever present in David's thinking; thanks to his meditation upon the Law of Moses and the book of Job, which was likely all the scripture then available to him.

Psa 119:149

Hear my voice according to Your grace. Revive me, Yahweh, according to Your ordinances-

If the ordinances in view are the prophetic words that he would become king, even when it seemed impossible whilst under persecution from Saul, then we note that David realized that this was all to be according to God's grace, rather than his worthiness. Even though God saw him as a man after His own heart. And David asks God to revive his faith in those promises. Otherwise it is hard to see how revival of faith was specifically promised in the "ordinances" of the Mosaic law.

Psa 119:150

They draw near who follow after wickedness, they are far from Your law-

Heb. "Who follow after me maliciously". Relevant to Saul's persecution of David. "Draw near" is a common idiom for offering sacrifice and worshipping God. But that sacrifice must be from men who are near to God's law, and not offering just as mere tokenistic ritualism. He may be alluding to Saul's insincere sacrifices and religious rituals which led to his rejection and David's choice as the next king (1 Sam. 14:36,38; 15:22).

Psa 119:151

You are near, Yahweh-

This continues the idea of :150. Insincere men claim to draw near to God in worship and sacrifice, but God is near to those like David who are far from any sanctuary of religious rituals. "Near" is literally, 'next to', 'neighbour / relative to'. This is how close God feels to the broken hearted and crushed; and conversely, how far He is from the self satisfied and self congratulatory, 'the strong' in secular terms. It is this feature of Yahweh which makes Him unique; no other God has this characteristic of 'nearness' (s.w. Dt. 4:7).

All Your commandments are truth-

"Truth" is a word often associated with the covenant. The "truth" of covenant relationship binds Him to those truly within the covenant. "Truth" is often used in a covenantal context.

Psa 119:152

Of old I have known from Your testimonies, that You have founded them forever-

David may refer to how he had learnt from "of old", in his youth, that God keeps his word. The adventures and answered prayers of boyhood and youth remained real to him, and he didn't just pass them off as the stuff of youth. But we note that he learnt that God keeps His word "from Your testimonies". He saw internal evidence from his own experience of God's word. And this is the basis of faith; not so much empirical, apologetic evidence, as something within God's own revelation which elicits further faith. What he had in view was that God's prophetic testimony through Samuel that he would one day would become king- was founded forever, and would not change.

RESH

Psa 119:153

Consider my affliction and deliver me, for I don't forget Your law-

This could be read as one of several points in this Psalm, written in relative youth, where David overestimates his obedience. He legalistically assumes that he ought to be delivered from whatever affliction he faced because of his stellar loyalty to God's word. This would explain the otherwise strange ending of Ps. 119, where David confesses he is a lost sheep and has not at all been obedient to God's way as he ought to have been.

Psa 119:154

Plead my cause, and redeem me! Revive me according to Your promise-

The "promise" was the promise that he would become king and Saul would be disposed of- which often must have seemed so unlikely of fulfilment. Just as unlikely as the promise that "little me" shall one day be a king-priest of God's kingdom, in the power of an endless life; when we are so weak and faultering in our understanding and devotion. David sees his situation with Saul as being played out before the court of heaven; and he asks God to act not only as judge [who could "redeem"] but also as his advocate for the defence, who could "plead my cause". Paul uses this same idea in Rom. 1-8, triumphing that if God "be for us", as both judge and advocate, then nothing can go against us (Rom. 8:31). Sinners that we are.

Psa 119:155

Salvation is far from the wicked, for they don't seek Your statutes-

We note that David often [although not always, see on :153] speaks in terms of 'seeking' God's laws, rather than being totally obedient to them. Ezra 7:10 uses the same term, and differentiates between "seeking" and "doing" the statutes. We see in Ps. 119 a man "after God's own heart"; not in that he was morally perfect nor totally obedient, but in that he wished and sought after such obedience, and loved God's laws rather than despised them.

Psa 119:156

Great are Your tender mercies, Yahweh. Revive me according to Your ordinances-

The parallel is with :154 "Revive me according to Your promise". The "promise" was the promise that he would become king and Saul would be disposed of- which often must have seemed so unlikely of fulfilment. And this is the set of "ordinances" in view here. But becoming king was to be by God's tender mercy, "the sure mercies of [i.e. given to] David" (Is. 55:3). Repeatedly David says this; that the fulfilment of God's word to him about becoming king would be the outworking of His grace (:41,76,88,124,149,159).

Psa 119:157

Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, but I haven't swerved from Your testimonies-

"Swerved" is the word for "incline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we

ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

Psa 119:158

I look at the faithless with loathing, because they don't observe Your word- David's eyes wept "because they keep not Your law", and yet he grieved for those who do not keep Gods word (Ps. 119:136,158). In other words, he grieved for where their way of life would lead them, even though he saw that at times he behaved like them. "The faithless" primarily refer to Saul and his followers. David loathed Saul at this time, and yet when Saul dies, he weeps for him deeply (see on 2 Sam. 1). We can conclude that part of that weeping was because David had felt so harshly about him, he wept for him as a man for his mother, lamenting he had not appreciated her as he ought to have done (Ps. 35:14). We note too the parallel between being faithless and not observing the word. Faith comes by hearing [obeying] the word of God in that the experience of the obedient life elicits more faith (Rom. 10:17).

"Faithless" or "Transgressors" is Hebrew *bagad*, meaning traitors, or treacherous men. David had plenty of experience of being betrayed in the wilderness years.

AV "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word". But "was grieved" is literally 'loathed myself' [as in Job 42:6]; he saw the same tendencies in himself.

Psa 119:159

Consider how I love Your precepts. Revive me, Yahweh, according to Your grace- Just as God's word had given life and birth to creation and continues to keep it in life (:90-92), so David felt God's word and ways gave him life. Three times David makes the connection between God's precepts and his inner "revival" (Ps. 119:40,93,159). God's word is a living word in that it is creative and gives life. Repeatedly David says that the fulfilment of God's word to him about becoming king would be the outworking of His grace (:41,76,88,124,149,159). Here he says that God's grace would revive him, but elsewhere that the word [of promised kingship] would revive him (:25,50,93,107,149).

Psa 119:160

All of Your words are truth, every one of Your righteous ordinances endures forever-

The phrase "word of truth" is specifically used of the promises made to David in 2 Sam. 7:28, which began with the promise that David would become king and Saul would be deposed. David had feared in :43 that they could somehow be abrogated, but now he expresses his confidence that the promise of the Kingdom was eternal. Thus the eternity of God's truth is paralleled with the eternity of His righteousness (as in :142). David walked / lived "in truth and righteousness" (s.w. 1 Kings 3:6; Ps. 15:2),

because this was how God is. The Messianic seed of David was to have this characteristic, ruling on David's throne in truth and righteousness (s.w. Is. 16:5).

SIN AND SHIN

Psa 119:161

Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart stands in awe of Your words-

Saul's sons, David's brothers-in-law, the brothers of his deep best friend, joined their father in persecuting him in the wilderness years . These are the "princes" in view, although later the words applied to princes like Absalom. The continued emphasis in David's psalms upon "without cause" surely reflects a self righteousness (Ps. 35:19; 69:4; 109:3; 119:161). For David's righteousness was only impressive relative to the wickedness of his enemies; before God, it was filthy rags. It was true that Saul persecuted David "without cause" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5), but the experience of "without cause" persecution can lead us to an inappropriate self-righteousness. This is what happened to Job, who also suffered "without cause" (s.w. Job 2:3), and had to be convicted of self-righteousness at the end of the story. And it seems this happened to David. David himself intended to shed blood "without cause" and was only saved from it by grace (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:31).

Psa 119:162

I rejoice at Your word, as one who finds great spoil-

The Lord based His parables of the lost sheep and the man finding the treasure of the Gospel in a field on the statements of David (Ps. 119:162,176), as if He saw David as representative of all those who would truly come to Him. The word in view was initially the promise that David would become king. This was David's joy during his afflictions at the hands of Saul. This is also another example of where David compares wealth against the things of God's word of promise. The desire to accumulate wealth is particularly strong for young men in David's position.

Psa 119:163

I hate and abhor falsehood but I love Your law-

The "falsehood" in view was likely the idolatry practiced by Saul.

Psa 119:164

Seven times a day I praise You because of Your righteous ordinances-

This could refer to how David regularly reminded himself throughout every day of his persecution by Saul that the word / ordinances of promise were that he would become king and Saul would be disposed of.

Psa 119:165

Those who love Your law have great peace; nothing causes them to stumble-

Whilst this is true in a general sense, the word in view was the promise that he would become king and Saul would be disposed of. But the "those" in view would have been those like Samuel whose lives of loving God's law were known to David.

Psa 119:166

I have hoped for Your salvation, Yahweh-

These almost seem the words of Simeon in the temple. "Salvation" is Yeshua, 'Jesus',

"the word made flesh" (Jn. 1:14). But in the shorter term, the salvation David hoped for was that from Saul, promised in God's prophetic word to him.

I have done Your commandments-

This could be read as one of several points in this Psalm, written in relative youth, where David overestimates his obedience. He legalistically assumes that he ought to be delivered from whatever affliction he faced because of his stellar loyalty to God's word. This would explain the otherwise strange ending of Ps. 119, where David confesses he is a lost sheep and has not at all been obedient to God's way as he ought to have been.

Psa 119:167

My soul has observed Your testimonies because I love them exceedingly-

See on :166. Obedience is related to how much we love the commandment being obeyed; and that requires a basic love of God, and everything about Him, perceiving His character which we love revealed in all His commandments. David in the wilderness was unable to be legally obedient to all the commandments; hence he says that his "soul" observed them. Actual total obedience is effectively impossible for us all, but we can still love God's ways and testimonies.

Psa 119:168

I have obeyed Your precepts and Your testimonies, for all my ways are before You-

In :146 David promises that "I will obey Your statutes / precepts" (s.w.). But here David says that he has 'obeyed Your statutes' (s.w. :167,68). Perhaps he meant in :146 that when God fulfills His promise to make him king, which required immediately saving him from some situation with Saul, he would continue to "obey Your statutes" in the way he governed Israel. But perhaps he feels he is suffering because of disobeying God's statutes. And yet here in :167,168 he says he has obeyed them. This difficulty in self examination [which we also can identify with] is reflected in how David also says in different Psalms that Israel both obeyed God's statutes, and also disobeyed them (Ps. 78:56 cp. 99:7).

TAV

Psa 119:169

Let my cry come near before You, Yahweh-

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

Give me understanding according to Your word-

Again, David is asking for something beyond God's word itself. God can give us "understanding" of it. Or if the "word" in view is specifically the promise that David would be king, he could be asking for wisdom ["understanding"] in how to rule Israel. And this was likewise the prayer of Solomon when he became king (1 Kings 3:9); but

his motives were less than pure because he was consciously seeking to imitate his father in this request.

Psa 119:170

Let my supplication come before You and deliver me according to Your word-
The reference is to the word of promise that David would become king, and Saul's abuse of him end. He imagines his prayer for that "word" to come true as coming "before" God. He visualized a court of heaven, before which his prayers came for consideration.

Psa 119:171

Let my lips utter praise, for You teach me Your statutes-
It was Moses who 'taught [God's] statutes' to Israel (s.w. Dt. 4:1,5,14; 5:31). David in the wilderness felt such a personal relationship with God that he felt God personally teaching him, without the intermediary of any teacher like Moses. And this kind of intimacy is still possible with God. David knew the "statutes", but he wanted God to teach them to him in practice. There is a huge difference between mere Bible reading, and God teaching us to the meaning of His word.

Psa 119:172

Let my tongue sing of Your word, for all Your commandments are righteousness-
We may enquire why David speaks of his singing about God's word as yet future; why doesn't he do so at the time? It makes sense if we understand "Your word" as referring to the word of promise that David would become king, and Saul's abuse of him end.

Psa 119:173

Let Your hand be ready to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts-
"Help me" is s.w. in Ps. 30:10, a Bathsheba Psalm: "Hear, Yahweh, and have mercy on me. Yahweh, be my helper". Earlier David had sought Yahweh's help on the basis that he had been obedient to God's word (Ps. 119:173 s.w.), and was innocent (Ps. 119:86 s.w.). But the sin with Bathsheba led David to beg for God to be his helper purely on the basis of grace (Ps. 30:10 s.w.). See on :175. But the immediate "help" in view was help against Saul. Again we note that David doesn't claim total obedience; but that he had "chosen Your precepts".

Psa 119:174

I have longed for Your salvation, Yahweh. Your law is my delight-
These almost seem the words of Simeon in the temple. "Salvation" is Yeshua, 'Jesus', "the word made flesh" (Jn. 1:14). But in the shorter term, the salvation David hoped for was that from Saul, promised in God's prophetic word to him. And his response was going to be to govern Israel according to God's law which he delighted in.

Psa 119:175

Let my soul live, that I may praise You. Let Your ordinances help me-
In :173 David asks for God to "help him" to escape Saul's persecution when it seemed his soul would not live (1 Sam. 27:1) and to become king, according to God's word of promise. And so here he asks that those promises or ordinances would help him. "Help me" is s.w. in Ps. 30:10, a Bathsheba Psalm: "Hear, Yahweh, and have mercy on me. Yahweh, be my helper". He had earlier asked for God's words to be his

"helper" (Ps. 119:175), but later after sinning with Bathsheba he quits his academic study and begs directly for God Himself to be his "helper". See on :173.

Psa 119:176

I have gone astray like a lost sheep. Seek Your servant, for I don't forget Your commandments-

This may appear a strange ending, and structurally it appears to have been added on. I suggest it was likely written by David with his mind on his follies relating to Bathsheba, so far from the spirit of his youthful devotion to God's law and ways. And yet it is the taken by the Lord and used as the basis for the parable of the lost sheep, whereby all who have sinned go through the David experience.

The lost sheep who leaves the fold and goes off (Mt. 18:12) is based on this verse. The lost sheep that is found therefore has the attitude of recognizing it is lost, that it is still the servant of the shepherd although isolated from him, and still has not forgotten the things of God's word. The picture in Ps. 119:176 is strange indeed: a lost sheep asking the shepherd to come and find him. It's as if the sheep talks to himself, feeling the shepherd can't and won't hear, feeling that he's just too far away. And this is *exactly* the position of all those who leave the faith and return: they don't forget the doctrines of the Faith, in their hearts they feel too far away, but they wish somehow something could happen to get them back. This explains the type of sheep one is dealing with in the parable, and why the parable isn't true of all who go astray.

PSALMS CHAPTER 120

Psa 120:1

A Song of Ascents-

Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

In my distress, I cried to Yahweh. He answered me-
This is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah's cry for healing, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards. This is why some of the verses "fit" some of these contexts but other verses don't.

The "distress" of :1 would refer to Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 19:3; Is. 37:3). The crying out to Yahweh would then be the prayers of Isaiah and Hezekiah at this time (2 Kings 19:3,4,14-19; Is. 37:15-20; 38:23). The request "Deliver me" (:2) would refer to the request to Yahweh to deliver Jerusalem from the siege (2 Kings 18:30,32). The abusive "lips" (:2), the one great lip, would refer to Rabshakeh's abuse outside the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:19-35; 19:8-13). "They are for war" (:7) would refer to the Assyrian war against Judah (2 Kings 18:19; 2 Chron. 32:2; Is. 36:5). The other verses of the psalm don't "fit" so well because the psalm originated in a situation with David, and was repurposed for usage by the exiles.

The psalm however concludes with a lament, indeed it is a lament, that the psalmist is still in exile in Meshech, and cannot see the peace [of Jerusalem] he longs for. I suggest therefore that the idea is that he begins his lament by accepting that in other areas, God has indeed answered him in his prayer life. And this is important to remember; for we can become fixated upon one request that goes unanswered, and forget all the other prayers that were. Most psalms begin with a lament and end with praise. A very few are the other way around- beginning with praise and ending with lament. Psalm 120 is one of them. They are examples of how life doesn't always work out but we never lose faith in God, and are ever aware of His past mercies. Humans have a tendency to forget past mercies and get cranky if their current request isn't heard. We see it in children. Jeremiah sets the example, of beginning his struggles with God with a rcognition right at the start that God has to be right: "Righteous are you, O LORD, when I complain to you; yet I would plead my case before you. Why does the way of the wicked prosper?" (Jer. 12:1). However, the Songs of Ascents have some progression within them. This opening song pictures a Jew feeling under persecution in exile, in Meshech and Kedar, longing for the peace of Jerusalem. In Ps. 121 the pilgrim begins to move towards Jerusalem, comforted by God's presence, and then in Ps. 122 arrives at the gates of Jerusalem.

Psa 120:2

Deliver my soul, Yahweh, from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue-
David would have been referring to Saul and later to Doeg and Ahithophel (the same words are used about the deceitful tongue of Doeg in Ps. 52:2); Hezekiah would have had in mind the lies pouring from the lips of Rabshakeh outside the walls of Jerusalem. The returning exiles singing this may have had in view the false accusations of Haman.

David's intolerance of "deceitful" persons (Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:3) must be compared with the fact that he himself was only counted as not deceitful by grace; for he was very deceitful regarding Uriah.

Psa 120:3

What will be given to you, and what will be done more to you, you deceitful tongue?- David was to later plot the destruction of Uriah by his words; and when he repented of this in Ps. 32:2, he says that lack of deceit / guile (s.w.) is only possible through imputed righteousness. David's intolerance of "deceitful" persons (Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:3) must be compared with the fact that he himself was only counted as not deceitful by grace; for he was very deceitful regarding Uriah. But the Psalm has application to Hezekiah's desire for the tongue of Rabshakeh to be destroyed, and the exiles likewise had a whole array of possible people to sing this about, the likes of Sanballat and Haman. We note that the tongue is personified as a person; for we are our words, and by them we reflect who we really are and shall therefore be judged by them, as the Lord Jesus taught.

Psa 120:4

Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper- This is God's response to the description of the lying tongue of :3. Their slanderius words were like arrows, and God responds with arrows. Arrows kill from a distance, and so does gossip and slander. The connection betweeen arrows and words is clear so often: Jer. 9:3; Prov. 26:18; Jer. 9:8, “Their tongue is a murderous arrow”; the wicked "shoot their arrows, even bitter words" (Ps. 64:3). And in response God shoots arrows of judgment in response to those words (Dt. 32:23,42). By words will men be justified or condemned. How we speak is that important. Likewise the tongue is a fire (Prov. 16:27; James 3:5), and God's judgment is as coals of fire too. Glowing coals speak of God's judgment in Ps. 140:1. In the Hezekiah context, this was fulfilled by the destruction of the Assyrians outside the walls of Jerusalem. It was done by a single Angel, perhaps "the mighty [one]" in view. "Coals of juniper" were used to make charcoal; the idea is 'the hottest fire'. However the grammar and flow of the argument may mean that this verse describes the "deceitful tongue" of :3; and indeed James says that the tongue is as a fire (James 3:6). It was God's tongue which was as a devouring fire upon the Assyrians of Hezekiah's time (Is. 30:27); so we have the picture of the fiery tongue being its own condemnation, in fire from Yahweh. In the context of David, he had lamented that the outlaws with whom he lived and the house of Saul had tongues as sharp arrows (Ps. 57:4; 64:3).

Psa 120:5

Woe is me, that I live in Meshech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar-
Kedar was the second son of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13), one of the wild roaming tribes whose hand was against every man (Gen. 16:13). Perhaps there was a time when fleeing from Saul when David had to live amongst them, and he longs to be back in Zion. Or perhaps he simply means that he has to live among hostile and barbarous people, who are characterized as the wild Kedar and Meshech. The tribe of Meshech was known to David, as a neighbouring people who hated peace (:6). It can therefore scarcely refer to Moscow, as some insist.

Meshech and Kedar clearly refer to a place of exile, where the psalmist would rather not be. They are far from each other, so the psalmist wasn't living in both at the same time; they are figures for Gentile areas far from Israel. Meshech refers to remote mountain dwellers in what is now Armenia. The psalmist feels he lives amongst barbarians and wild people- although he lived in Babylon. But the majority of the exiled Jews did well for themselves in their distant exile. He was one of the few who hated it, who saw Babylon as the prophets did- a place of darkness, a prison house, a land of slavery.

Psa 120:6

My soul has had her dwelling too long with him who hates peace-
The individual who hated peace was likened to the war like (:7) and aggressive wild tribes of Kedar and Meshech. The "him" becomes "they" in :7, so perhaps the peace hater is a personification of the various groups opposed to those using the Psalm in whatever context.

Psa 120:7

I am for peace, but when I speak, they are for war-
This could apply to how Hezekiah sought to make peace with the Assyrians. But he gave them the gold of the temple for that peace treaty which they broke; but here he appears to whitewash that lack of faith as his love for peace. We can understand the initial reference to David, who truly sought to live at peace with Saul. And perhaps it has application to the returned exiles and their conflicts with the local Samaritans.

The words "peace" and 'to speak' or "say" recur in Ps. 122:8: "For my brothers' and companions' sakes I will now say, Peace be within you". The pilgrim realizes that s/he has to keep on praying for the peace of Jerusalem and striving for it (Ps. 120:6). It has not come yet; the "good" of Jerusalem's future status must still be sought (Ps. 120:9), and the motivation is not simply selfish. It is for the sake of their brothers [fellow Jews?] and "companions" [Gentiles who would be blessed in Jerusalem's eternal final status?]. 'Say' is 'to speak', and these are the same words as in Ps. 120:7: "I want peace, but even if I speak, they want war". The pilgrim prayed and spoke for the peace of Jerusalem, but

was frustrated by those who wanted war- possibly alluding to Jewish nationalists who thought that the Kingdom peace of Jerusalem would only be achieved by violent war.

PSALMS CHAPTER 121

Psa 121:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey Zionwards.

The Mishna understands these Psalms as those sung literally on the 15 steps in the temple: "The fifteen steps that go down from the court of Israel to the court of the women, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascent in the Book of Psalms, on which the Levites would stand and would recite in song... And there were fifteen steps that went up from its midst to the court of Israel, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascent that are in the Book of Psalms, on which the Levites would stand in song" (Mishna Middot 2:5).

I will lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from?-
"The hills" may be an intensive plural referring to the great hill of mount Zion. This is clearly the idea in another of these songs of ascents, Ps. 125:1,2: "Those who trust in Yahweh are as Mount Zion which can't be moved but remains forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people". But the hills were associated with idolatry and the high places (Dt. 12:2; Hos. 4:13; Is. 57:7; 65:7; Jer. 3:6,23; Ez. 6:2-7,13; 18:6,15). To lift up the eyes to the hills meant to lift up the eyes to foreign gods; in Jer. 3:2 Israel looks to the sanctuaries on the heights. David and subsequent users of the Psalm may have meant that they looked not to the hills but to Yahweh, the creator of heaven and earth (:2). It is as it he looks to each of the mountains, each associated with

some supposed god, and muses as to from which one could his help come. And he gives up and focuses instead upon Yahweh, who had created each of them and indeed the whole heaven and earth (:2). Or perhaps he also implies that there is only one mountain from which help comes, and that is Mount Zion. In this case we can read the words not as a question but as a statement made in faith: "... to the hills from where does come my help". We recall Ps. 3:5 "He answers me out of His holy mountain". Because the God who created all things (:2) specifically dwells there. For this is after all a song of ascent to Zion, to be sung as the returned exiles or pilgrims ascended up to Zion.

Another possibility is that the Psalmist on the way to Zion lifts up his eyes at the mountains along the way- in fear. Because Bedouin robbers would come down from the mountains and attack travellers. But he comforts himself that Yahweh will preserve him on his journey to Zion.

The psalmist lifts his eyes to the hills, perhaps to the great hill, of Zion, and feels assured his help comes from Yahweh. In response he is assured by the sense that Yahweh does not slumber but is his "keeper" (twice stressed in :3,4). I will develop the point that "keeper" is also the word for 'eyelid'. God is in fact watching him closely, unblinking, with great focus, never closing His eyes in sleep. It's as if the Psalmist's eyes meet God's eyes, in the sense that God is watching him so closely.

I suggest that initially the Psalmist sees the mountains as the place of other gods but rejects that view, and thinks instead of the one true mountain, Zion, the throne of Israel's God. He persuades himself as his thought develops in the Psalm; something we see in many Psalms.

Psa 121:2

My help comes from Yahweh, who made heaven and earth-
"Help" is literally 'my surround'. Surrounded by mountains, the Psalmist feels surrounded by God. He looked not to the created but to the creator. And that is a profound principle to live by. The Psalm is a great example of self talk. This is what spirituality is about- talking to yourself and reasoning with the voice of the Spirit against that of the flesh. Or we could see this progression from "me" to "you" in :3 as the psalmist inviting others to share his personal faith. The logic and language is similar to Ps. 134:3: "May Yahweh bless you from Zion, the creator of heaven and earth". This would encourage us to interpret the "hills" of :1 as an intensive plural for the one great hill, of Zion.

So often, the fact Yahweh is creator is presented as a reason to trust Him for help (Ps. 115:15; 124:8 "Our help is in the name of Yahweh, who made heaven and earth"; 134:3; 146:5,6 "Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help... who made heaven and

earth"; Is. 42:5; 45:18; Jer. 10:11,12). To minimize His creative power through faithless scientific theory simply takes away our grounds for personal faith. The restoration prophecies stress the connection between creation and salvation: Is. 42:5,6 "He who created the heavens and stretched them out, He who spread out the earth and that which comes out of it... I will hold your hand and will keep you"; Is. 43:1 "thus says Yahweh who created you, Jacob, and He who formed you, Israel: Don't be afraid, for I have redeemed you"; Is. 44:24-28 "Thus says Yahweh your Redeemer, and He who formed you from the womb: I am Yahweh who makes all things". Any fears about our final salvation should be assuaged by the reflection that God can do and create anything- what He has done physically is the guarantee He can do it spiritually. The God who created the heavens and the earth is the God who created His people through His acts of salvation. This is why Isaiah's argument often mocks the gods of the nations because they were not the creators, and therefore unable to save. This is why the Psalmist of Ps. 121 looks to the mountains, each with their own supposed deity, and reflects that *his* help comes from Yahweh who is the sole creator of heaven and earth. Later on the Psalm mentions that Yahweh neither slumbers nor sleeps. This too is a polemic against other gods, for we learn from the Elijah story that Baal was known to sleep (1 Kings 18:27). Likewise the sun and moon not smiting by night refers to the belief that there were sun gods and moon gods who could smite people. Significantly, Ez. 8:16 describes the Jews at the time of the exile worshipping the sun god. The Psalmist refuses to be influenced by the weakness of God's people at his time and focuses solely upon Yahweh as the only help. There are various polemics against these gods, e.g. Ps. 74:16 saying that Yahweh established sun and moon to rule, and the creation record itself makes that clear.

Psa 121:3

He will not allow your foot to be moved-
"Allow" is *nathan*, to give. We aren't given a foot that can be moved. Somehow there is a higher hand in our spirituality. The idea is that the restoration was to be permanent, and never again would Israel go into captivity and have to leave Zion.

He who keeps you will not slumber-
Note the progression from "me" (:1,2) to Israel (:3-5). David saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). This is how we are to make sense of suffering- by understanding that it plays a role in the salvation of others,

and is part of a wider nexus of Divine operation. We suffer so that we may be able to minister the comfort we receive to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Job likewise came to realize that his sufferings were not so much for his personal maturing, but for the teaching and salvation of the friends.

God had allowed the feet of His people to be moved out of their land, but the intention was that this was to be temporary, and their return would be a witness to the Gentiles amongst whom they lived- leading them to join in and also come to Zion in penitence and faith. And then He would not again allow their feet to be moved from their land (s.w. Ps. 66:9).

David asked to be kept as the apple of God's eye (Ps. 17:8) by God's grace. Yet God still kept disobedient Judah as the apple of His eye. In Hebrew, the eyelid is literally 'the keeper'. This is alluded to in how Ps. 121:3 speaks of how "He who keeps you will not slumber". The slightest dust, or even possible approach of a foreign object, causes the keeper, the eyelid, to come down to protect the apple of the eye. This is how sensitive God was and is to His people. And yet when God says Judah are the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:8), He appeared far off, distant, disinterested in the fact that the life of the returnees hadn't turned out well. Haggai bluntly tells them that this was because they had strayed from God; Zechariah takes another tack in showing that God is still totally sensitive to His people and so loves them.

Psa 121:4

Behold, He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep-
The statement that God will not "rest" for Zion's sake (Is. 62:1) must be understood in the context of the faithful at that time urging God *not* to "be still" [same Hebrew word translated "rest"] for His people (Ps. 83:1; Is. 64:12). This is an allusion to Boaz not being at rest until he had redeemed Ruth and Naomi. God is *not* at rest, He is *not* distant from us; and yet His people in Babylon felt that He was. It's no wonder that we are tempted to feel the same. Yet we must give Is. 62:1 it's full weight- God is answering the complaint of His people by stating that no, He will never rest for them. In this same context we read that He that keeps Israel will "neither slumber nor sleep" (Ps. 121:4). The fact that *God* will never 'hold His peace' for His people's sake (Is. 62:1) means that *we* should likewise not 'hold our peace' for them (the same Hebrew is used in Is. 62:6). In our prayers for them, we are to give God no rest (Is. 62:7).

We note that the confident statement that Yahweh doesn't slumber nor sleep for His people was disavowed by the exiles, and perhaps by David too in his low moments in Ps. 44:23: "Wake up! Why do You sleep, Lord? Arise! Don’t reject us forever". To accuse God of sleeping seems as inappropriate as the disciples' demand for the Lord Jesus to awake from sleep because His apparent sleeping showed that He didn't care that they

perished (Mk. 4:38). He did of course care for their perishing. He gave His life for that. In fact quite often the Psalms call upon Yahweh to awake (Ps. 7:6; 35:23; 44:23; 59:4,5). We can only conclude that all those appeals reflected a lesser faith than this Psalmist had, who knew Yahweh never sleeps nor slumbers but is always intensely focused upon His people.

Psa 121:5

Yahweh is your keeper, Yahweh is your shade on your right hand-

The songs of ascents, part of the restoration Psalms, are relevant to any 'ascent' or 'going up' to the Lord's house. They are full of reference to God's eternal purpose with Jerusalem and the temple. It seems to me that they may have been re-written under inspiration with reference to God's people returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. "The Lord is Your keeper...the sun shall not smite you by day..." (Ps. 121:5,6)- reference to Israel's exodus from Egypt, but also to God's miraculous keeping them on the desert journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, without a guard from the Babylonian authorities. Isaiah 40 and other restoration prophecies see the return from exile as a journey out of captivity and through the desert under Divine protection, just as Israel experienced at their first beginning. Sadly most of them preferred to remain in the land of their exile. In the context of the 'ascent' from Babylon to Jerusalem by the exiles, we note that the word Marduk means literally 'the shadow', i.e. the defender of Babylon. But Yahweh is His people's shade or shadow.

"Shade" is 'defence'. A warrior had a shield in his left hand but his right hand had no defence- but Yahweh was this warrior's right hand defence, playing the role of a warrior's armour bearer who stood at his right hand. The pilgrim's journey to Jerusalem is thus presented as a warrior's fight, with Yahweh's protection. This imagery connects with our suggestion on :1 that the pilgrim begins by looking anxiously at the hills, from where brigands and enemies could appear and attack him. The pilgrim is persuading himself, in his own self talk, that he need not fear because he is a warrior who has Yahweh as his very own armour bearer. Other allusions to being a warrior protected by God are found in the description of his foot not slipping (:3) and his going out and coming in (:8), which can be a military term (Dt. 28:6; Josh. 14:11).

Indeed Ps. 121 is very similar to Ps. 91, which can be read as a prayer for the protection of a military leader, Joshua in the first instance. Thus Ps. 91:1 "who abides in the shadow of Shaddai" = Ps. 121:5,"Yahweh is your shade"; Ps. 91:5,6 "You shall not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day" = Ps. 121:6, "By day the sun shall not strike you, nor the moon by night". Ps. 91:10 "No evil shall befall you" = Ps. 121:7 "Yahweh will guard you from all evil"; Ps. 91:11 "to guard you in all your ways" = Ps. 121:8

"He will guard your going and coming"; Ps. 91:12 "lest you dash your foot against a stone" = Ps. 121:3 "He will not allow your foot to slip".

The Hebrew word *samar*, "keeper", is the key word of the Psalm- occurring six times in eight verses. And here in :5 it is in the exact middle of the Psalm. The same number of syllables come before and after this occurrence of the word.

Psa 121:6

The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night-
The exiles were comforted that as the pillar of cloud and fire protected Israel on their journey to the promised land, so God would be with them in returning from exile. Not being smitten by day nor night is the language of Ps. 91:6 [see note there]. They were to follow the path intended for Joshua, and earnestly believe they could participate in the restored kingdom of God. There is allusion to the belief that there was some demonic power in the moon; hence Ps. 91:6 LXX "from ruin and the demon of the midday". Whatever belief in demons the people held, the simple truth was that God destroyed the wilderness generation; all was under His absolute control. There is no radical evil in the cosmos. The simple take away is that we will be preserved from all our fears, whether or not those fears are rational or actual. Even if they are mere fictions in our imagination- that's OK, God will still preserve us from them.

The reference is as in Ps. 105:39 to how God "spread a cloud for a covering, fire to give light in the night" to Israel leaving Egypt. And He would have done the same to the exiles leaving Babylon. The sensitivity of God is revealed here. The cloud kept the heat of the sun off them in the day time, and the fire kept them warm at night when the temperatures plunged in the desert. This same care was potentially available to the exiles; but most didn't even want to make the journey, and remained in Babylon. These promises are therefore reapplied to the new Israel (Rev. 7:16), As Yahweh provided a pillar of fire to give light in the night to His people in the wilderness, so Israel were to arrange for a fire to be burning throughout the night in the tabernacle. They were to give light in response to God's giving light to them.

The key word "to keep watch / guard" is used six times in the psalm, and is the same word used in Josh. 24:17: "Yahweh our God who brought us and our ancestors from the land of Egypt... and guarded us in all the way we went". The reference to going out and coming in (:8) would then comfortably fit the going out from Egypt and coming in to the promised land.

Psa 121:7

Yahweh will keep you from all evil; He will keep your soul-
As discussed on :6, the "evil" may refer to their wrong understandings of cosmic evil. The Lord Jesus never actually stated that demons don't exist; rather did His miracles demonstrate that God was so far superior to their power, that effectively they didn't. And the same logic is being used here.

Clearly enough, bad things happen to good people in this life. "Evil" does happen to God's people, as other Psalms often lament. The keeping of the "soul" could suggest that the "evil" we are kept from is not so much misfortune, as spiritual stumbling. "Keeping" is the main theme of the Psalm (see on :5). The conclusion surely is that God will keep us spiritually on the journey, as the New Testament often says. He will "keep us from falling". Such keeping is the work of the Holy Spirit. This 'keeping' is constant and unblinking (:3,4) and in all circumstances (:8). For our desire, and God's intention, is for us to reach Zion. Not without any material mishap on the way, but without spiritually stumbling from that path. The blessing of Num. 6:24-26 is that we will be 'kept' by God's grace and thus have peace: "Yahweh bless you, and keep you. Yahweh make His face to shine on you, and be gracious to you. Yahweh lift up His face toward you, and give you peace". Here in Ps. 121 we see what that 'keeping' feels like. We can have perfect peace on our journey, knowing that we are being 'kept' spiritually so that we shall reach Zion and abide there eternally. It is tragic that Ps. 121 has been misused as a talisman for material protection. Christian people have been mutilated in road accidents with this verse tattooed upon their bodies or written on the vehicle dashboard. That isn't the promise at all. It is a promise of spiritual protection on the journey to eternity. The way the exiles were indeed materially protected on their return to Zion, even without any Persian guard going with them (Ezra 7), is simply a prototype of the spiritual protection we have on our spiritual journey to Zion.

Psa 121:8

Yahweh will keep your going out and your coming in-
The idea may be that the regular pilgrimages to Zion to the keep the feasts (cp. Ps. 122:1), going out and coming in, were envisaged as now being eternally established. We note "going out and coming in", and not the other way around. The implication is that Zion was to be the actual abode of the worshipper, even if he only came in and out for a brief period three times / year.

From this time forth and forever-
This could imply that "forever", eternity, was seen as beginning with the coming in to Zion. The restoration of the exiles could potentially have been the time of the reestablishment of God's Kingdom on earth; but that possibility was precluded by Israel's lack of faith and repentance. We can begin living the eternal life now, in that we can now act as we shall eternally. We shall be eternally appreciating, trusting, loving

and praising God's Name, just as He keeps us both now and eternally- and we can begin those experiences with Him right now. This is an Old Testament form (also in Ps. 113:2; 115:18; 121:8; 125:2; 131:3) of the Lord's teaching as recorded in John's Gospel, that we can have and live the eternal life right now. We have that life not in the sense that we shall never die, but in that we can begin living and being now as we shall eternally live and be. The promise is that our going out and coming in will be kept eternally. Our exit from the world and coming in to Zion will be kept. There is no promise in this Psalm of deliverance from car crashes or catastrophe in this life. That actually is to miss the point. It is our successful journey to Zion that will be eternally kept and nothing shall ultimately derail us- if we believe this Psalm from our hearts. And that is all that ultimately matters.

PSALMS CHAPTER 122

Psa 122:1

A Song of Ascents. By David-
The songs of ascents, part of the restoration Psalms, are relevant to any 'ascent' or 'going up' to the Lord's house. They are full of reference to God's eternal purpose with Jerusalem and the temple. It seems to me that they may have been re-written under inspiration with reference to God's people returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go unto the house of the Lord" (Psalms 122:1)- the feelings of a faithful Jew in Babylon responding to Cyrus' decree. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" (Psalms 122:6)- the faithful in Babylon praying for Zion.

I was glad when they said to me, Let's go up to Yahweh's house!-
This may have begun as David's prophetic anticipation of the day when the temple would be built, and he would be invited to go up there in worship- implying his faith in bodily resurrection, seeing he had been told that such a temple would not be built in his lifetime. But the Psalm is obviously used in hope that the temple would be restored and the exiles with joy would receive the invitation to "go up" there. But the reality was so different; the majority of them refused to "go up" when invited to by Cyrus, preferring exile in opulent Persia. And so these things are reapplied to a new Israel and a new temple. And finally they will be fulfilled when with joy all peoples say "Let us go up to the house of Yahweh" (Is. 2:3), seeing that the exiles generally preferred to remain in Babylon and didn't go up to Zion with gladness.

Psa 122:2

Our feet shall stand within your gates, Jerusalem-
This is the more pertinent to the exiles when we recall that the gates of Jerusalem were

totally broken down. The picture is of the arriving pilgrims looking at the city, about to enter it. Verses 3-5 go on to express the joy of the pilgrim who reached Zion, and verses 6-9 become a general blessing of Zion and desire to keep praying for her as the pilgrim returns home.

The reference to the rebuilt, joined together walls and gates could hint that this psalm was sung at the dedication of the temple walls (Neh. 12:27-43). The two halves of the psalm (:1-5, :6-9) would then each have been sung by the two choirs which are recorded as singing on the walls.

Psa 122:3

Jerusalem, that is built as a city that is compact together-
"Jerusalem is a city that has been built" encourages us to see this psalm as having special reference to the pilgrims coming to the rebuilt Jerusalem after the work of Nehemiah (see on :2).

Again we recall that at the time of the exiles, Jerusalem was not at all "built" but was in ruins. The exiles were invited to return and build it into a compact city, rather than a broken down set of ruins. "Compact together" could be translated to the effect that it was built in fellowship together, perhaps referring to the unity of the builders and the unity to be found within it. But the majority turned down the invitation and remained in Persia / Babylon; and the exiles were anything but united, as the records in Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai-Malachi make clear. These things therefore come ultimately true in the things of the new Jerusalem which the New Testament speaks of.

Or we could translate "joined together for itself". This is the picture of the restored city- the walls have been rebuilt, the ruined houses repaired, the gaps filled up; Nehemiah's record describes how the parts of the wall were joined together. Or we can read "that is at unity with itself", LXX" whose fellowship is together". One of the most wonderful things about salvation will be the final unity of God's people. Remember that Zion refers to both the literal city and also to God's people. The same word for "compact together" is found at the end of the songs of ascent: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is, when brothers live together in unity" (Ps. 133:1).

Psa 122:4

where the tribes go up, even Yah's tribes, according to an ordinance for Israel, to give thanks to the name of Yahweh-
The implication is that the true Israel go up to keep the feasts at the sanctuary. The fact most of the exiles didn't want to "go up" therefore precluded them from being the true Israel. The Psalm had its historical origin in David's longing to be able to get to the

sanctuary to keep the feasts (Ps. 42:2 etc.). This was to be the longing of the exiles to return to Zion; but generally, they preferred to remain in exile. Likewise, if this is a reference to how things were before the exile [LXX "Where the tribes used to go up"], it is an idealized picture. Because only Judah and Benjamin went to worship at Jerusalem; the ten tribes were excluded and had their own shrines.

To "give thanks" renders the Hebrew word which means to confess, literally, to hold the hand out. This confession is because the great judgment throne is set in Jerusalem (:5). Given this context, the sense of confessing sins makes better sense than worshipping. For there at judgment day, every knee shall bow and every tongue confess all sin to God.

Psa 122:5

For there are set thrones for judgment, the thrones of David's house-
The idea is of a supreme court at Jerusalem, to where the hardest cases were referred (Dt. 17:8 "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose"). "The thrones of the house of David" refer to how the king was apparently assisted in judging by the royal family. This is alluded to in Jer. 21:12: "House of David, thus says Yahweh, Execute justice in the morning".

This was a Psalm by David, originally (:1). He looked for the day when his throne would be established in Jerusalem, replacing the throne of Saul. "Thrones" may be an intensive plural for the one great throne- that of David, which would also be the time of judgment on all those who had opposed him. This will finally be fulfilled in the reestablishment of David's throne, when the Lord Jesus returns to Jerusalem. And that throne will also be the throeu 17:8 "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choosene of His judgment, which will also be in Jerusalem (rather than in Sinai, as some curiously believe).

Psa 122:6

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; those who love you will prosper-
Peace was impossible for Jerusalem until Judah repented (Jer. 4:10; Ez. 13:16). "Peace" in the Bible is often 'peace with God'. The desire was therefore for the day to come when Judah would repent, and the restoration prophecies of Judah's peace would come true. Peace will only finally go forth from Jerusalem when the latter day invaders are destroyed and the Lord Jesus establishes His Kingdom there (Zech. 9:10 s.w.).

Peace in Jerusalem was the goal of the restoration, as made clear in Is. 66:12 "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river". Likewise Is. 65:18,19: "I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying". But that didn't happen then. And so peace in Jerusalem is applied to us all in spiritual terms; and the literal fulfilment of it is delayed and rescheduled until the Lord's return to Jerusalem.

LXX, “Ask now for Jerusalem the things which belong unto peace”, alluded to be the Lord as He entered Jerusalem (Lk. 19:42, "the things that belong to your peace"). Those who hate Jerusalem will not prosper ultimately (Ps. 129:5), although in the short term Jeremiah complained that "her enemies prosper" (Lam. 1:5). There is only one letter difference between the Hebrew words for lover and enemy. Apparently small differences will have eternal consequences. The love of Jerusalem is not a love of the physical city, but a love of the time of her peace with God. 'Zionism' in this sense isn't Biblical.

Psa 122:7

Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces-
This was to be in contrast with how the enemies of Zion apparently prospered in her destruction (s.w. Lam. 1:5). This is a prayer that the current situation will be inverted. Zion's destruction had been because "prosperity" had led them to turn away from their God (s.w. Jer. 22:21; Ez. 16:49). The prayer was that prosperity would come without the tendency to unspirituality which it brings in a secular sense.

There is a word play here by assonance between words. Jerusalem means city of peace (shalom); and ‘prosperity’ is shalvah. Jerusalem will become what it's name prophesies- the place of peace with God.

Psa 122:8

For my brothers’ and companions’ sakes I will now say, Peace be within you-
The return to the first person, "I", is because the pilgrim realizes that s/he has to keep on praying for the peace of Jerusalem and striving for it (:6). It has not come yet; the "good" of Jerusalem's future status must still be sought (:9), and the motivation is not simply selfish. It is for the sake of their brothers [fellow Jews?] and "companions" [Gentiles who would be blessed in Jerusalem's eternal final status?]. 'Say' is 'to speak', and these are the same words as in Ps. 120:7: "I want peace, but even if I speak, they want war". The pilgrim prayed and spoke for the peace of Jerusalem, but was frustrated by those who wanted war- possibly alluding to Jewish nationalists who thought that the Kingdom peace of Jerusalem would only be achieved by violent war.

The returning exiles were to be aware that their desire for the peace of Jerusalem, the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies and the end of the 70 year exile, were not to be simply for their own sake; but for the sake of their distant brothers and also their companions with them on the journey. We likewise must not wish our place in the Kingdom or the coming of that Kingdom purely for our own sakes; but for that of the wider community.

Psa 122:9

For the sake of the house of Yahweh our God, I will seek your good-
'Seeking the good' of Jerusalem is exactly the phrase used in the context of the restoration in Neh. 2:10. And in response, God would 'seek the good' of all who sought the good of Jerusalem (s.w. Ezra 8:22). The idea may be that the returning exiles were to seek the good of their brethren (:8) for the sake of the restored Kingdom / house of God. "The good" of both their brethren and the Kingdom of God was one and the same- the restored Kingdom to the glory of Yahweh.

PSALMS CHAPTER 123

Psa 123:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

To You I do lift up my eyes, You who sit in the heavens-Jehoshaphat's prayer for deliverance includes the words "our eyes are upon thee" (2 Chron. 20:12), which is quoted in Ps. 123:1,2 - one of the Songs of Degrees written against the background of

the Assyrian invasion, pleading for deliverance by God. There is a repeated Biblical theme that the believer's relationship with the Father too is essentially *mutual*. Our eye is upon Him (Ps. 25:5; 69:3; 123:2), as His eye is upon us (Ps. 32:8; 33:18). The Lord stresses, with apparently needless repetition, that to the man who responds to His word, "I will sup with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). There may be the implication that the Psalmist looks to the God who is in the "heavens", a term sometimes used as a metaphor for the temple or sanctuary- and not to any idol. See on :2.

The application to Hezekiah's time is to Is. 37:15,16: "Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh, saying, Yahweh of Armies, the God of Israel, who is enthroned among the cherubim, You are the God, even You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; You have made heaven and earth".

There are many connections within the songs of ascent. They were to be sung on the pilgrimage to Jerusalem which speaks of our journey to God's Kingdom. Psalm 123 is perhaps a low point on the journey. The lifting of the eyes to Heaven is what the pilgrim did in Ps. 121:1, lifting their eyes to the mountains but then lifting them higher, to God above the mountains [see notes there].

Psa 123:2

Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress; so our eyes look to Yahweh our God until He has mercy on us-

Slaves looked to the hand of their owners for provision. They trusted their master or mistress to provide for them. "The hand" is symbolic of power; they trusted completely in their masters, and those with good masters rarely wanted freedom from them; they would have been psychologically unable to cope in the 'free' world. All provision, of food, clothing and even marriage partners was made by the master. This is the idea, rather than them looking to the hand of their owners for commands.

But the looking to the hand or power of the owner is defined as looking to God for mercy. Perhaps the image is of the servant who has done something wrong, looking to the hand of the master for forgiveness. This is indeed the situation of the exiles before God. But this psalm is the thoughts only of a small minority. Most considered, as Ezekiel engages with, that they had unjustly suffered the exile because of their fathers' sins.

The idea may be that the Psalmist considers Yahweh as lord or master- the very meaning of the term 'baal'; because he looks to Yahweh and not to any of the Baals. See on :1.

The songs of ascents, part of the restoration Psalms, are relevant to any ‘ascent’ or ‘going up’ to the Lord’s house. They are full of reference to God’s eternal purpose with

Jerusalem and the temple. It seems to me that they may have been re-written under inspiration with reference to God's people returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. "As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters... so our eyes look unto the Lord... until he have mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us...for we are exceedingly filled with contempt...with the scorning of those that are at ease" (Psalms 123:2-4)- the faithful by the rivers of Babylon praying for the captivity to end.

Zech. 1:12 has the Angel representing the exiles asking God to "have mercy" on the exiles and bring about the restoration of the Kingdom. Here, we have the exiles themselves praying this. It's as if their representative Angel was representing them before Yahweh in the court of heaven. But the reality was that few of them really wanted this "mercy" and were quite happy with the life in Babylon / Persia.

Psa 123:3

Have mercy on us, Yahweh, have mercy on us, for we have endured much contempt-
For "have mercy", see on :2. As the book of Esther makes clear, the exiles lived comfortable lives in Babylon / Persia, with Jews in leading positions. It was only the spiritually minded who considered life there to be in "contempt"; just as the restoration prophecies of Isaiah present Babylon as a place of suffering and imprisonment after the pattern of Israel's sufferings in Egypt, all of which was only true on a spiritual level. This language of "contempt" is also relevant to the abuse suffered by the exiles: Lam 3:15; 3:30; Ps. 80:5.

Psa 123:4

Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scoffing of those who are at ease, with the contempt of the proud-
The "contempt" of :3 had really filled or saturated (Heb.) their deepest soul. They had let it 'get to them' and had absorbed false guilt; the words and accusations had taken a lodging within them. "At ease" is the same word as "raging" in the Hezekiah context, used about the Assyrians in Is. 37:29 "Because of your raging against Me, and because your arrogance has come up into My ears, therefore will I put My hook in your nose and My bridle in your lips". As noted on :3, this pain at the "scoffing" was only felt by the spiritually minded amongst the exiles. There is ample evidence in Ezekiel and also Hag. 1:2 that the exiles were at ease in exile and were the ones scoffing at the restoration prophecies as being unlikely now of any fulfilment. Those "who are at ease" is the term used of those amongst God's people who were at ease in sinful lives (Am. 6:1 "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion"), ignoring any possibility of judgment to come (Job 12:5; Zech. 1:15).

PSALMS CHAPTER 124

Psa 124:1

A Song of Ascents. By David-
Psalms originally written by David are reappropriated to the exiles, and used at the restoration. For the "ascent" in view is that to Zion. Worshippers are spoken of as 'going up' to Zion. Before then it was probably used by Hezekiah to glory in the victory over the Assyrians, which was associated with the ascent and descent of the sun on his sundial. For his sickness was at the same time as the Assyrian destruction.

If it had not been Yahweh who was on our side, let Israel now say-
This is very much the spirit of David personally in Ps. 94:17: "Unless Yahweh had been my help, my soul would have soon been silenced". But the exiles were to follow the path of David, in devotion to God's word, repentance and thence restoration.

These were Jacob's words when in exile in Mesopotamia (Gen. 31:42), making this relevant to the exiles in Babylon.

Psa 124:2

if it had not been Yahweh who was on our side when men rose up against us-
The rising up of men is developed into the rising up of flood waters against God's people (:4,5). These flood waters represented the Assyrians at the time of Hezekiah, and then later all the Gentile enemies of Israel. But the first reference was to the way that Saul "rose up" against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29).

Psa 124:3

then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their wrath was kindled against us-
The reference may be to Ahithophel's plan to swallow up David at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 17:12,16 s.w.). David's prayer of Ps. 35:25; 69:15; 124:3 not to be swallowed up / destroyed was answered, but he was devastated at the answer- for it meant the death of Saul [which he lamented] and then later of his son Absalom. Again David has Job in mind, who had his 'brethren' arguing that he should be swallowed up / destroyed without cause (Job 2:3 s.w.). But being swallowed alive was the fate of the apostate amongst Israel in the wilderness (s.w. Num. 16:30). So the idea may be that God's people were saved from rightful condemnation- by Divine grace.

This swallowing up is the language used if the beast of Babylon swallowing up Judah (Jer. 51:34; Lam. 2:16).

Psa 124:4

then the waters would have overwhelmed us, the stream would have gone over our soul-
The reference in the Hezekiah context is to the waters of the Assyrians flooding the whole of Judah and coming up to the neck of those in Jerusalem (Is. 8:7,8 "The Lord will bring the emperor of Assyria and all his forces to attack Judah. They will advance like the flood waters of the Euphrates River, overflowing all its banks. They will sweep through Judah in a flood, rising shoulder high and covering everything"). The language of floods overwhelming a man is used by David about his various persecutions.

Psa 124:5

then the proud waters would have gone over our soul-
We note that the Assyrians are characterized by pride. We might rather have stressed their aggression or idolatry. But God is so sensitive to pride, that this is the lead sin perceived in them.

Psa 124:6

Blessed be Yahweh, who has not given us as a prey to their teeth-
The imagery changes from overflowing waters, to a beast of prey with teeth which were about to close upon God's people. This was clearly the case when the Assyrian beast encircled Jerusalem and appeared to be moments away from sinking teeth into the prey. This may look forward to the deliverance from the latter day Assyrian around Jerusalem, by the return of the Lord Jesus to earth to save His repentant people.

Psa 124:7

Our soul has escaped like a bird out of the fowler's snare. The snare is broken, and we have escaped-
Often David likens his enemies' plans to catch him as snares, gins etc. set for birds (e.g. Ps. 84:3; 102:6; 124;7; 140:5)- all the language of hunting birds. He had probably done plenty of this as a youngster caring for the sheep, and the influence of those formative years remained. The Babylonian captivity was "the snare of the fowler" just as much as were the judgments for sin which came upon the wilderness generation, from which Joshua was delivered (Ps. 91:3). The exiles were intended to follow Joshua's example. The Hezekiah reference is clear- Jerusalem was surrounded by the snare of the Assyrian encirclement, but this was broken in a moment by the Angel destroying their army in a moment. The snare didn't work at the last moment; the frame broke or the spring failed to act, so that the bird was not captured and flew away. The reference is to the words of

Sennacherib on his cylinder, where he mentions Hezekiah by name, whom he had got "as a bird in a cage".

Psa 124:8

Our help is in the name of Yahweh, who made heaven and earth-
Again, God's power as creator is used as an encouragement to believe that the God who created all can quite easily save His people from any predicament, no matter how humanly impossible. Any attempt to rationalize or dilute His creative power at the beginning will have negative implications for our faith in His abilities in our lives today.

PSALMS CHAPTER 125

Psa 125:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

Those who trust in Yahweh are as Mount Zion which can't be moved but remains forever-
David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov.

25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

"He will never be shaken" is spoken in Ps. 112:6 in the context of the outcome of the final judgment. Being unmoved or never shaken is a major theme of the Psalms of David. Human beings naturally seek for stability, but look for it in the wrong places, imagining that their idols shall never be shaken (s.w. Is. 40:20; 41:7). It is only the receipt of eternal salvation at the last day which means we shall never be moved; that is the only ultimate stability (Ps. 62:2,6 s.w.). Their stability will be associated with that of God's eternal Kingdom to be centered upon Zion (s.w. Ps. 125:1). For in secular life under the sun, the righteous do suffer and their lives are "shaken". Solomon's statements that the righteous shall never be shaken / moved (Prov. 10:30; 12:3) are only ultimately true in this sense; but whether he spoke them with that understanding is debatable.

Just a very small amount of real faith during this life will enable us to move "this mountain", surely referring to Mount Zion in the immediate context (Mt. 17:20). The idea of Mount Zion being moved sends the mind to Zech. 14:4,5, describing how Mount Zion will be moved at the Lord's return; and also to Ps. 125:1, which speaks of how they who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be removed; and yet Christ said we *will* remove it by prayer. The point of these allusions is surely to show that real faith will bring about the coming of the Kingdom, which is a totally super-human achievement; the unshakeableness of Mount Zion is likened to the solidity of true faith. The Lord's point seems to be that if we truly believe, then the coming of the Kingdom will be brought about by our faith; the outcome of our faith in this life will be seen in the Kingdom. But what our faith will achieve in the Kingdom will be hugely out of proportion to what it really is now.

David's frequent statements that the earth shall never be "moved" or removed, and Zion likewise would never be moved (Ps. 56:5; 125:1), reflect his fantasy that his kingdom and dynasty would last for ever. But the mountains, the great mountain of Zion, were removed. David admittedly did state that even if the mountains were removed he would still trust in God (Ps. 46:2). The prophets speak of how the land and mountain of Judah would be removed, but the covenant would not be broken (Is. 24:19; 54:10). So David wrongly conflated the presence of the ark with the establishment of the eternal Davidic kingdom. The promises to David explained that this would happen but through his great seed, Messiah. But still he retained his idea that his immediate fleshly dynasty and physical house would continue eternally. This is as naive as thinking that if you build a house on a plot you own, then your descendants will live there for eternal generations after you.

We note that mount Zion was not shaken. But the temple upon it was destroyed. The implication is that the true Zion is God's people, not the religious structures, and like the

literal mount Zion, they will never be moved; and neither will God's faithfulness to them.

Psa 125:2

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so Yahweh surrounds His people from this time forth and forever-
The hills around Jerusalem are not huge mountains. They are small hills, and this is the picture of God's protection; not hugely visible, but there. But the mountains around Jerusalem became the "high places" of idolatry (1 Kings 11:7; 2 Kings 23:13; 2 Chron. 21:11); what should have been the symbols of Yahweh's protection became perverted.

We can begin living the eternal life now, in that we can now act as we shall eternally. We shall be eternally appreciating, trusting, loving and praising God's Name- and we can begin that now. This is an Old Testament form (also in Ps. 113:2; 115:18; 121:8; 125:2; 131:3) of the Lord's teaching as recorded in John's Gospel, that we can have and live the eternal life right now. We have that life not in the sense that we shall never die, but in that we can begin living and being now as we shall eternally live and be.

Psa 125:3

For the sceptre of wickedness won't remain over the allotment of the righteous; so that the righteous won't put forth their hands to do evil-
Whatever the primary reference of this Psalm, it is a reworking of David's feelings when persecuted by Saul and likewise on the run from him. For circumstances repeat in our lives, and it would be natural for David to reconsider Psalms written at the time of one exile and apply them to another, just as these Psalms were also used for others in their times of exile. "Wickedness" is the word used about Saul's persecution in 1 Sam. 24:13.

In the context of Hezekiah and then later the Babylonians, the "lot" (AV) of the righteous was Jerusalem or the land of promise, which was originally split into lots (Josh. 18). The rod of wickedness would not lead God's people into sin. This is the principle of 1 Cor. 10:13, that sin is not inevitable, and a way of escape will always be made. This is a very powerful motivation in the peak intensities of temptation; we are not forced to sin by situations.

In the context of the exiles, we reflect that it was God's intention that the scepter or rule of the Gentiles over Jerusalem, the lot of the righteous, would not be permanent. And yet Ezra and Nehemiah were clearly working for the Persians, and Nehemiah was the Persian tirshatha, their governor, a kind of 'Minister for Jewish affairs', and he built a fortified mansion for the Persian governor on the wall of the temple [that later became the Tower of Antonia in Roman times]. There was no rising up to achieve independence

as envisaged in the prophets; Zion was not free but still enslaved during the time of the so-called restorers.

Psa 125:4

Do good, Yahweh, to those who are good, to those who are upright in their hearts-
Rom. 6:19 speaks of how the ever increasing downward spiral of obedience to sin is turned round at baptism, so that we begin an upward spiral of obedience to righteousness. God does good unto those that are good, but leads those who turn aside even further astray (Ps. 125:4,5). Those who are "[born] of God" are able to hear and understand God's words (Jn. 8:47)- and baptism is surely how we are born of God (Jn. 3:3-5). This seems to open up the possibility of yet higher growth once we are baptized- it's all an upward spiral, like any functional relationship.

Psa 125:5

But as for those who turn aside to their crooked ways, Yahweh will lead them away with the workers of iniquity. Peace be on Israel-
As noted on :4, this is the downside of :4. God can "lead into temptation" [for we pray that He will not do so to us], further down the downward spiral; if we ourselves turn aside. The idea of being "lead away" is of captivity; this is an acceptance that the captivity had been an appropriate judgment, as Israel had indeed turned aside (s.w. Is. 30:15; Am. 5:12 and often). And Ezekiel records how the exiles struggled with this. The true "Israel" of God who would have "peace" were those who recognized this and yet returned, both to their God and to Zion. Sadly the exiles didn't wish to do this.

Those in Zion who turned aside refers to the pro Egypt and even pro Assyrian group within Jerusalem at Hezekiah's time.

GNB "But when you punish the wicked, punish also those who abandon your ways. Peace be with Israel!". The punishment of the apostate amongst Israel, those who leave His ways, will be along with the punishment of the wicked Gentile abusers of Israel- "condemned with the world". "Peace be with Israel!" defines "Israel" as those who have not abandoned God's ways. It's as if this declaration of peace upon Israel is a kind of benediction uttered over Zion with outstretched hands. It is the "peace of Jerusalem", the Kingdom age, which was prayed for in Ps. 122. The restoration of the Kingdom didn't happen as envisaged at the time the exiles returned from Babylon. And so these things re-applied to us, with Paul quoting these words in Gal. 6:16 “Peace be... upon the Israel of God".

PSALMS CHAPTER 126

Psa 126:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

When Yahweh brought back those who returned to Zion, we were like those who dream-
LXX "We became as comforted ones". The allusion is to the prophecies of later Isaiah, especially Is. 40, announcing "comfort" to "My people", the returning exiles. But they for the most part refused that comfort. So we are reading here of prophetic hope, which didn't come fully true at the time, although those prophecies were reapplied to the "comfort" announced by John the Baptist in the work of the Lord Jesus. We note it was Yahweh who "turned back" (Heb.) the exiles; the term refers to both repentance and literally returning to the land. But most of the exiles refused to make use of the potential repentance given them.

The songs of ascents, part of the restoration Psalms, are relevant to any 'ascent' or 'going up' to the Lord's house. They are full of reference to God's eternal purpose with Jerusalem and the temple. It seems to me that they may have been re-written under inspiration with reference to God's people returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. "The Lord brought back those that returned to Zion" (Ps. 126:1 RVmg.) is obviously relevant to the exiles returning. They are described as going forth into captivity weeping but bearing previous seed, and now returning home with the sheaves (Ps. 126:6). This could be a reference to their children whom they had taken with them 70 years previously returning; or it could also imply that there had been a spiritual growth and fruition during the captivity. At least, this was what God had intended.

Psa 126:2

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, Yahweh has done great things for them-
The past tenses here shouldn't be read as meaning that this Psalm was the reflection of the returned exiles. For the relatively few who did return did so in fear, unbelief and uncertainty, to be greeted by famine and troubles. Rather is this the Psalmist believing by faith that 'the future is now', seeing ahead with the eye of faith to how things would be at the restoration, and rejoicing in it. The intention of the restoration was so that the Gentile nations would recognize Yahweh's great work for His people, with the result that they too turned to Him. This didn't happen at the restoration. Yahweh did do great things for His people, but they refused to respond. The same phrase is found in Is. 1:2, where Yahweh "nourished" or 'did great things' for His people "and they rebelled against Me". So these things will finally come true in the last day, when Yahweh again will do "great things" for the land at the return of the Lord Jesus (s.w. Joel 2:21).

"Singing" is literally 'shouts of joy'; the word is often used in the restoration prophecies of Zion's restoration (Is. 44:23; 48:20; 49:13; 51:11; 54:1; 55:12). This is the joy expressed in the Psalms of the Return (Psalms 93–100). The Gentile nations were intended to praise the wonderful return and revival of God's people (Is. 52:10; Ps. 98:2).

In the Hezekiah context, it is the singing of the songs of Is. 38:20: "Therefore we will sing my songs with stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of Yahweh". The talk amongst the nations about Judah's salvation is referred to in 2 Chron. 32:23: "Many brought gifts to Yahweh to Jerusalem, and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah; so that He was exalted in the sight of all nations from thenceforth".

Psa 126:3

Yahweh has done great things for us, and we are glad-
As noted on :2, this is the 'prophetic perfect' tense, speaking from God's perspective, of the future as if it has already happened. Such was the Psalmist's faith that he and his community were full of joy even at the prospect of this great but yet future salvation.

But overpowering joy is not what we read of in the accounts of the return in Ezra and Nehemiah. And so these things are reinterpeted and reapplied to the believer coming to Zion, both in conversion now and at the final arrival at the Lord's return.

Psa 126:4

Restore our fortunes again, Yahweh, like the streams in the Negev-
The idea is that the streams appeared suddenly in the dry riverbeds, or that they would run in one direction in the sand of the Negev and just as easily in the opposite direction a short time later. This was the speed with which the Psalmist is praying for the path of Judah into exile to be reversed, with them returning along the same tracks they took into

exile. This sudden reversal of fortunes was given in the decree of Cyrus. But the majority of God's people didn't want to go in the paths opened up for them. Initially very few returned from Babylon under Zerubbabel; the prayer was that this trickle would suddenly become a roaring river of people flowing up to Zion, as prophesied in Is. 49:18. This explains why in :1, the psalmist speaks as if he has arrived in Jerusalem and has been restored. Whereas in :4 "Restore *our* fortunes..." sounds as if the collective fortunes of God's people hadn't been restored. The resolution is in the fact that this psalmist had indeed returned to Jerusalem and marvelled at it, but desperately wanted this to be the experience of all God's people. He was one of a very few, like a trickle of water in a large, dry river bed; and he asks that the trickle becomes a flash flood, with all God's people quitting Babylon and making the same journey he had. Another take on this is that the description of having returned to Zion in :1-3 is a dream ["we were like those who dream", :1], and :4-6 are begging God to make the dream a reality. We must ask ourselves what our deepest dreams and hopes really are. For salvation, for the Lord's coming, for the Kingdom? Or for relationships, material things and security in this life?

Psa 126:5

Those who sow in tears will reap in joy-
This 'sowing' was the 'going out' from Judah and Jerusalem in captivity of :6. That tragic exile was in fact a sowing, potentially anyway, which would rise up in a harvest of joy at the restoration. This was the prophetic intention. But the reality was that the majority of the exiles didn't want to return, neither did the seed of the prophetic word achieve the intended harvest. For they were stony, bad ground and unresponsive to the word of prophetic hope. The potential application in Hezekiah's time was recorded in 1 Kings 19:29, where joyful reaping was to be a sign to the people. This would only happen if Judah sowed in righteousness; and then they would reap mercy (Hos. 10:12 s.w.). This didn't come true at the restoration.

Psa 126:6

He who goes out weeping, carrying seed for sowing, will certainly come again with joy carrying his sheaves-
Amazing harvest after a time of famine has a clear fulfilment in the Hezekiah context: "Then Isaiah said to King Hezekiah, "Here is a sign of what will happen. This year and next you will have only wild grain to eat, but the following year you will be able to plant grain and harvest it, and plant vines and eat grapes" (Is. 37:30 GNB). And in the context of the exiles, "precious seed" (AV) refers to the scarcity of corn during the famine at the time of the restoration (Hag. 1:10, cp. Ps. 85:12).

“Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of” children (Ps. 127:5) is surely to be connected with Ps. 126:6, where the sower [the preacher] returns with joy, “bringing his sheaves [converts] with him”. In the first context, the sheaves refer to the reborn children of Zion.

It seems that God intended the 70 years in Babylon to be the time when the Jews would come to a fullness of repentance whereby they would be able to return, rebuild the temple, and usher in a Messianic Kingdom. Ps. 126:1,6 speak of how the Lord would bring back the returnees to Zion (RVmg.), and thereby he who went forth into captivity weeping, bearing the precious seed of the next generation as little children, would in that sense return to Zion with joy, bringing his sheaves with him. Jer. 24 speaks as if the “good figs” were to be those who went to Babylon and through that experience there became “good figs”. Micah speaks of the same process. Zion was to be plowed and Jerusalem become heaps, which happened in the Babylonian invasion. But then afterwards- 70 years afterwards- the temple was to be rebuilt, “the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains” (Mic. 3:12; 4:1). “In that day... will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather that has been driven out... and I will make her that was cast off a strong nation: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth even for ever... the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem”. A Messianic Kingdom could then have come. This whole situation would be brought to pass because the daughter of Zion was to “go forth out of the city” of Jerusalem “and come even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered [RV rescued]: there shall the Lord redeem thee” (Mic. 4:10). How was the travailing daughter of Zion to be delivered / rescued in *Babylon* after having been taken captive there from Jerusalem by the Babylonians? Surely in that there, God intended a spiritual revival of the people, there they would hear Ezekiel’s appeal to repent, which if responded to would enable them to build the temple which he had described (Ez. 43:10,11) and thus usher in a Messianic Kingdom.

But the reality was that the exiles didn't repent, and most remained in Babylon rather than returning to Zion. The idea of the restored Kingdom therefore became reapplied to the return of the Lord Jesus to earth (Acts 1:6).

PSALMS CHAPTER 127

Psa 127:1

A Song of Ascents. By Solomon-
Ecclesiastes is so packed with contradictions. Solomon knew and perceived God’s truth, and yet felt it meant nothing to him personally. Thus he teaches truth in Ecclesiastes, but intersperses it with his own personal depression and sense that none

of it really has any meaning for him personally. The themes of labour, vanity, sleep and children which are found in Ecclesiastes all occur in Psalm 127, a Psalm of or for Solomon- where the message is clearly given that unless the Lord builds the temple, all this labour is in vain. And yet knowing this Solomon *did* labour for it so hard, and then came to the conclusion that it was indeed in vain. If only he had believed the words he earlier composed and sung in Ps. 127, he needn't have had to come to that sad conclusion.

Unless Yahweh builds the house, they labour in vain who build it. Unless Yahweh watches over the city, the watchman guards it in vain-
The songs of ascents, part of the restoration Psalms, are relevant to any 'ascent' or 'going up' to the Lord's house. They are full of reference to God's eternal purpose with Jerusalem and the temple. It seems to me that they may have been re-written under inspiration with reference to God's people returning from Babylon to Jerusalem. Psalm 127 has obvious relevance too: "Except the Lord build the house [the temple], they labour in vain that build it... the watchman [cp. Nehemiah placing watchmen on the rebuilt walls] wakes but in vain... it is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late [cp. working so hard on the wall they had no time to even change their clothes]... they shall speak with their enemies in the gate" [cp. Nehemiah talking to the Arab traders and enemies in the rebuilt gate of Jerusalem, and setting watches over the city].

We can understand the house as the temple, and the city as Jerusalem. For God is the builder of the house of Israel (Am. 9:11; Jer. 31:28), and He is the watchman of Israel (Ps. 121:4). To build up a house is a figure for God giving a family (Ex. 1:21), and it is in this context that we can understand why the Psalm goes on to speak of the blessing of children (:3). All human efforts to build a family / dynasty are vain without God's blessing. He indeed promised to David that He would do this, but it was only fulfilled through the Lord Jesus, David's greater Son- and the blessed children described in :3-5 are those in Him. As discussed on :3, any hope this applies simply to literal children is ill founded.

Perhaps the Psalm originated in Solomon's reflections as he began building the temple, and was then rewritten and reapplied to the exiles rebuilding it. More likely it is God's inspired advice to him as he began the building work. To build a house and not live in it was a curse for breaking the covenant (Dt. 28:30; Zeph. 1:13), and this was to be the curse if the house of the temple was built but not inhabited by the shekinah glory. And this is indeed how it worked out; the temple was rebuilt, but the glory didn't return to it as foreseen in Ezekiel's visions of Ez. 40-48, because the exiles weren't obedient to that vision.

But God didn't really want a physical house built for Him; rather had He promised to build up the house or seed of David (2 Sam. 7:27 s.w.). And this is why this Psalm goes

on in :3-5 to say that God will build up the family / house of the faithful. Solomon correctly perceived all this, as noted on :1, and yet insisted on going ahead with the grandiose building program which was not really what God wanted.

Psa 127:2

It is vain for you to rise up early, to stay up late, eating the bread of toil; for He gives sleep to His beloved ones-
Ps. 132:4 "I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids" therefore appears to be a studied disregard for the revelation of Ps. 127:2, which urges David and his seed not to stay up late planning to build a physical temple, but to accept sleep from God and trust Him to build *him* a house in the sense of a Messianic seed and family / kingdom.

David seems to have recognized that the building of the temple was conditional on Solomon's spirituality, but he overlooked this in his enthusiasm for Solomon to be the Messiah. He tells Solomon to show himself a man (1 Kings 2:2), and goes on in v. 4 to speak of how “a man” would eternally reign on his Messianic throne. He was encouraging Solomon to be and act like Messiah. Ps. 127 is "For Solomon" (v.2 "beloved" = Heb. Jedidiah), and warns him that his labour for the temple will be in vain unless *God* builds it. The Psalm basically says that God will build Solomon a house in the sense of a family centred in the beloved seed who would die [“sleep”] to enable it; and therefore Solomon should not be so sweating himself day and night to build God a house / temple. This is the very message which God had given David earlier. David and Solomon evidently shelved their knowledge of the fact that Heaven is God's dwelling place.

But more than this; the idea may be that instead of building the temple / house for Yahweh, Solomon is advised to let Yahweh build up his house / family as the seed of David (Ps. 127:3-5). God would give sleep to the beloved, "Jedidiah", Solomon, and he would awake and find his house / seed built for him by God- rather than Solomon frantically building a house for God. The same phrase is only used of Solomon *not* giving sleep to his eyes in his mad addiction to works (Prov. 6:4; Ecc 8:16). Ps. 127 was "for Solomon" rather than necessarily "by" him. And it seems he refused the offer of having his house / seed built up for him, but rather chose to try to build God a house. Hence LXX "It is vain for you to rise early: ye rise up after resting, ye that eat the bread of grief; while he gives sleep to his beloved".

It could be that initially, Psalm 127 was David’s Psalm for Solomon written at the very end of his life; he tells Solomon that unless God builds this house / temple, it will all be “in vain” and Solomon will but eat the bread of sorrows, labouring hard all his days for nothing. And this is very much the picture of Solomon in Ecclesiastes. David said that

such labour in vain was made unnecessary by the fact that “So he giveth his beloved sleep” (Ps. 127:2). ‘David’ means ‘beloved’, and it could be that David was gently trying to focus Solomon’s attention on the future David who would be made to sleep / due by the Father, in order to build the real house.

Possibly in the Solomon context he is recalling how he slept and was given the vision of wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-15). We could translate "So He gives to His beloved [Jedidiah, Solomon] in sleep". Or perhaps he is reflecting on how his father David, which means "beloved", didn't give sleep to his eyes because he was so concerned with building the temple; and God closed his eyes in the sleep of death: "I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids" (Ps. 132:4). The psalmist is perhaps reflecting that this labour of David was all in vain. He didn't build the temple in his lifetime, and fell asleep in death before the building even started. And now, in the time of the exile, it was all in vain anyway because the temple had been destroyed. All Solomon's building had been in vain- hence we could read the title of the Psalm as "about Solomon" rather than "of Solomon".

The allusion is clearly to the curse of labour in vain in Gen. 3:16,17; and we have children referred to in :3. The allusions seem to show that with God on our side, the curse can be lifted- if our labour, toil and bringing forth of children are for Him. Otherwise, they are all part of the curse and futile in eternal terms. Possibly the Lord has this psalm in view in His teaching of the seed sown for the Kingdom; the labour for it all brings forth a glorious harvest: "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth. He sleeps and rises, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he does not know how" (Mk. 4:26,27). Hezekiah's labour was ultimately in vain because he raised an evil son, Manasseh, and all his weath and achievements were taken away by the Babylonians. We reflect on Prov. 10:22, "The blessing of Yahweh, it makes rich, and He adds no toil therewith". And only our labour in the Lord is labour "not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). That is why it is worth "always abounding in", because we know that our labour is not in vain, in the Lord. We can live like that now; but that will be our eternal experience in God's Kingdom: "They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of Yahweh" (Is. 65:23).

Psa 127:3

Behold, children are a heritage of Yahweh. The fruit of the womb is His reward-
We are God's heritage, His reward / wages (Heb.), His recompense for all His labour for us (Ps. 127:3 Heb.). "Heritage" is literally "possession". Our children are His. This development of the theme of God given children is continuing the theme raised in :1. God didn't really want a physical house built for Him; rather had He promised to build up the house or seed of David (:1 = 2 Sam. 7:27 s.w.). See on :2. And this is why this Psalm goes on now in :3-5 to say that God will build up the family / house of the faithful.

Solomon correctly perceived all this, as noted on :1, and yet insisted on going ahead with the grandiose building program which was not really what God wanted.

In the Hezekiah context, he may have considered that being given another 15 years to live meant he could have children, which he did. But Manasseh his son was one of Judah's worst kings... "The children of youth" (:4) however may not have applied to Hezekiah. He didn't have children in his youth, as he lamented when in the 14th year of his reign, aged 39, he was told he had to die. Possibly :3,4 are Hezekiah's memory of his regret that he had not had children at the time he was given another 15 years to live. In this case, given what happened with Manasseh and Isaiah's prophecy that Hezekiah's sons / descendants would be conquered by their enemies and be eunuchs in Babylon (Is. 39:7)... this all means that Hezekiah's words here are shown to be untrue and just his human reflections. His sons did not meet the enemy in the gate, they were overcome and taken away and made eunuchs by their enemies...

Psa 127:4

As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth-
LXX "As arrows in the hand of a mighty man; so are the children of those who were outcasts". The reference is clearly to the restoration of the children of Zion after the restoration. Their children were to inherit the Kingdom- potentially. This scenario was precluded by the impenitence and disobedience of the exiles and their intermarriages. I suggested on :1-3 that Solomon was initially being told to allow God to build up his house / seed whilst he "slept", unable to do any works, rather than him building a house for God. But he refused this, not wanting to see the spiritual side of things, but rather only the external and material, centered around his own works.

Psa 127:5

Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they won't be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate-
The allusion may be to the boasting matches held when enemies came to the gate [we recall Goliath's boasting to the Israelites]. The house Solomon built didn't have Yahweh building it, and so it was taken down. The "house" was to be the family built through the promised seed of Abraham and David, who would eternally "possess the gate of his enemies". The promise to Abraham is the only other reference to God's people possessing the gate of enemies: "I will multiply your seed greatly like the stars of the sky, and like the sand which is on the seashore. Your seed will possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:17). These things didn't happen for the temple... the gates of the temple were entered by her enemies (Lam. 4:12). "Happy is the man that has his quiver full of" children is surely to be connected with Ps. 126:6, where the sower [the preacher] returns with joy, "bringing his sheaves [converts] with him". In the restoration context,

these were to be the children of Zion, the new generation of returned exiles who would rise to govern a Messianic kingdom which would dominate the peoples who were their former enemies. But instead they allowed their enemies in through the gates, Tobiah even having his own chamber in the temple, and they intermarried. The fulfilment of the Abrahamic promises of possessing the gate of their enemies would only come about by God building up the house / seed of David (see on :1-3). But Solomon thought he could bring it about in his own strength by building a temple. We see here the contrast between God's grace and work for men, and man's desire to trust in his own works and thereby spurn God's grace and potential activity.

PSALMS CHAPTER 128

Psa 128:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

Blessed is each one who fears Yahweh, who walks in His ways-
"Each one" reminds the exiles, and all of us, that our response to His call is not just a group experience; each is required to personally believe the call to the restored Kingdom in Zion. God's "ways" were particularly the ways to Zion which the repentant exiles were intended to walk, inviting repentant Gentiles to join them on the journey (Is. 2:3; Jer. 50:5). This has obvious relevance to the exiles singing this "Song of ascent" as they ascended to Zion. The blessings this psalm goes on to speak about are those of the old covenant, but they were conditional upon walking to Zion in God's way. Very few of those who returned did this; and so the blessings weren't experienced. Another

pilgrimage psalms speaks of "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion" (Ps. 84:5); NEV "who have set their hearts on a pilgrimage"; LXX "in his heart he has purposed to go up".

To walk in God's ways refers to our patterns of thinking; "ways" and "heart" or mind are often together in the Bible:

"to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart" (Dt. 10:12)

"render to every man according to all his ways, whose heart You know" (1 Kings 8:39)

"Don't let your heart turn to her ways" (Prov. 7:25)

"My son, give me your heart; and let your eyes observe my ways" (Prov. 23:26)

"They do always err in their heart. They did not know My ways" (Heb. 3:10).

Life is lived in practice by the ways of our heart; our patterns of thinking result in our actions. God's ways are to be our ways, our path in our heart. We respond to situations and words by being re-stimulated to think in certain ways. And those ways of mental response become very rigid. The work of the Holy Spirit is to soften our hearts to change the mental paths we take. The new covenant was offered to the exiles, with the possibility of God writing His law in their hearts / minds. Most of them refused this. Which is why the blessings for walking in God's ways weren't experienced by the returning exiles.

Psa 128:2

For you will eat the labour of your hands; you will be happy, and it will be well with you-
Eating the labour of the hands, rather than having it taken away by invaders (Dt. 28:33) like the Babylonians (Jer. 3:24), was a blessing for obedience to the covenant. But this didn't happen as envisaged for those who returned; the work of their hands was consumed by drought (s.w. Hag. 1:11 "Hag 1:11 I called for a drought on the land, on the mountains, on the grain, on the new wine, on the oil, on that which the ground brings forth, on men, on livestock, and on all the labour of the hands") because they were not repentant and not truly seeking the restoration of Zion.

Psa 128:3

Your wife will be as a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of your house; your children like olive plants around your table-
This focus upon children in these Psalms is because (as explained throughout Ps. 127), God wished to build the seed / house of His people, rather than having a literal house built for Him. See on :6. A explained on :2 and :4, the impenitence of the exiles meant

that these things didn't come true as was potentially possible, and so they were given a different fulfilment in the fruitfulness of the Lord Jesus and His seed. If this is initially Hezekiah's thought, we see here his hope to have children after his life was lengthened. But his children / descendants were to go into captivity in Babylon, and his son Manasseh was a disgrace to him. This was merely fantasy in Hezekiah's case, and it largely was in David's case, whose children tried to slay him. Instead their focus should have been upon the promised seed of Abraham and David, the Lord Jesus, and all in Him. This was the true blessing out of Zion (:5); whether or not immediate family work out or not is unrelated to this.

Psa 128:4

Behold, thus is the man blessed who fears Yahweh-
As noted on :2, these things didn't come true for the returning exiles as was potentially possible. And so the prophecies were reapplied to the things of the Lord Jesus. The "man" is the Lord Jesus; we are the children He has been given (Is. 8:18). Israel, His wife like a vine, will be fruitful in the Kingdom (this is prophesied several times), and *we* are promised to sit round his table (Lk. 22:30). Israel in the Kingdom will be the vine that blossoms and buds, and fills the face of the world with spiritual fruit (Is. 27:6).

Psa 128:5

May Yahweh bless you out of Zion, and may you see the good of Jerusalem all the days of your life-
The blessing of Yahweh coming out of Zion was what was possible in the restored Kingdom of God; it would be associated with Yahweh Himself dwelling in Zion (Ps. 134:3; 135:21). This would be the time when the temple vision of Ez. 40-48 was obeyed by the exiles, and the city called Yahweh Shammah, "Yahweh is there". But at the time of the exiles' return, it was precluded by their impenitence and refusal to build the temple and city according to the commands of Ez. 40-48, and the fact the majority refused to participate in the program and remained in Persia / Babylon.

Psa 128:6

Yes, may you see your children's children. Peace be upon Israel-
I discussed throughout Ps. 127 that God wished all interested in building Him a house to realize that this wasn't quite what he wanted. Rather He wanted to build up the seed of David. Peace and blessing would come in the form of generations of David's seed being eternally established in Zion; but this was to be by God's work, and not the result of literally building or rebuilding a temple.

There are several allusions to this Psalm 128 in the restoration prophecy of Zechariah 8: "Old men and old women will again dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age. The streets of the city will be full of boys and girls playing in its streets... " (Zech. 8:4,5). The allusions of Zech. 8 to these verses show that it was capable of fulfilment at the restoration. But that didn't happen and so we must look to a more spiritual fulfilment. Not so much in happy family life, which in any case is often not the experience of genuine believers, but in the fulfilment of the promises about the blessedness of the seed / family of Abraham under the new covenant that was offered to the exiles.

PSALMS CHAPTER 129

Psa 129:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

Many times they have afflicted me from my youth up. Let Israel now say-
The returning exiles were to remember their national afflictions. And yet the generation of exiles who returned hadn't physically suffered much in exile; the majority preferred to remain there rather than return to Zion, and the book of Esther gives the impression of a prosperous, popular community. The afflictions which were to be the "push" factors in leading them back to Zion were therefore only spiritually perceived; Isaiah presents Babylon as a prison house of darkness, but that was only true in spiritual terms.

Psa 129:2

many times they have afflicted me from my youth up, yet they have not prevailed against me-
The idea of this Psalm is that those who had "afflicted" Israel would now be judged (:5-8). This was intended to come about at the time the exiles returned to Zion and the Kingdom of God was restored. Hezekiah failed to realize this potential, and the exiles who returned likewise. The punishment of those who "afflicted" God's people was only to come "If you shall indeed obey His voice" (Ex. 23:22 s.w.), but this didn't happen. And so the destruction of all Israel's afflicters didn't happen as was hoped for in this Psalm and as was potentially possible. The "affliction" of God's people was however because they had sinned and broken covenant, in terms of the covenant agreed in Dt. 28:52 (s.w.). This Psalm lacks the confession of sin and acceptance of the rightness of this punishment which was required to trigger the fulfilment of the restoration prophecies at that time. Instead the focus is all upon lamenting the results and pain of the punishments / afflictions, without accepting that they had been justified and without any clear statement of repentance. David often uses the word for his afflicters or enemies which arose as a result of his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 23:5; 31:11; 42:10 and very often); but he likewise tends to bemoan his afflictions rather than recognize their appropriacy and express lasting contrition for his sin. In the context of the exiles, we note that the same word for "affliction" is used of what Haman did to the Jews (Esther 8:1; 9:10,24 and often).

The fact is that Israel's enemies often did prevail against them. Bit we read of individuals like Jeremiah against whom evil did not prevail. What the psalmist hopes for on a national level didn't really happen, but it is true for faithful individuals. Likewise the fantasy about a wonderful family life. This will only come true for the seed of Abraham in spiritual terms.

Psa 129:3

The ploughers ploughed on my back; they made their furrows long-
This presents the picture of scourging. The Lord Jesus was the "suffering servant" in that in His sufferings, He bore the punishment for Israel's sins as their representative whilst personally innocent. It was only through personal identification with Him (now through baptism into His death and sufferings) that God's people could be saved. In this sense "by His stripes [the marks of scourging] we are healed / saved" (Is. 53:5). "Made long" is a term usually used in the sense of prolonging a period of time; the complaint of the exiles was that the period of 70 years exile was being prolonged, as Ezekiel often had to encounter. But this was because of their impenitence, rather than God's inability or forgetting. The initial whipping of Israel was when in Egyptian slavery. The Hebrew word for "furrow" is from the word for affliction, used of Israel's affliction in Egypt (Dt. 26:6) and by Babylon (Lam. 3:33; 5:11), resulting in Zion being ploughed like a field (Mic. 3:12).

"They cut deep wounds in my back and made it like a plowed field" (GNB). This clearly recalls Micah's words about Zion being ploughed like a field. This was literally fulfilled by the Romans ploughing the temple site, under Titus and also under Hadrian at the time of the Bar Kochba revolt. It is the word used of the "affliction" of the suffering servant, the Lord Jesus on the cross, who bore Israel's judgments: "He was afflicted" (Is. 53:4,7), "I gave my back to the smiters" (Is. 50:6). The furrows from the whipping are presented as deep and long- continuing until their time in Babylon. But the figure of ploughing suggests Israel were thrown to the ground and were being ploughed over; the figure is used of their sufferings under the Babylonians in Is. 51:23.

We might wish that the psalmist recognized more specifically that such afflictions were largely due to their sins. But surely that is the point of :4: "Yahweh is righteous". To declare the rightness of God is to declare human sinfulness. As David and Achan showed in their acceptance of sin, we declare God right when we confess our sins. In this context, the long and deep sufferings of Israel are called 'right'. This was quite the opposite of how the exiles felt; for Ez. 18 reveals that they considered they were suffering unfairly for their fathers' sins. The word translated "long" really means to prolong, to extend (s.w. Dt. 4:26 "prolong your days", "I will lengthen your days", 1 Kings 3:14). The idea is that the sufferings of Judah were longer than they need have been, they were extended- because they refused to repent. And so it is with much human suffering. The quicker we respond, the quicker some sufferings end.

In the Hezekiah context, the same word is used in Is. 28:23,24: "Give ear, and hear my voice! Listen, and hear my speech! Does he who ploughs to sow plough continually? Does he keep turning the soil and breaking the clods?". The idea is that Judah were being continually ploughed, broken up by their invaders- but that was to prepare them for the sowing of the seed and a great harvest. But they were not responding to the seed of the word that was being sown, and so the painful ploughing was continuing without result.

Psa 129:4

Yahweh is righteous; He has cut apart the cords of the wicked-
This is the time of Ps. 46:9, when the enemies of Israel through the entire *eretz* promised to Abraham would be "cut apart" (s.w.). This is stated in the past tense in faith that it would soon happen. Hence "let them be..." in the future tense in :5,6. The fulfilment of this prayerful request was not granted at the time of the exiles in Babylon, but it will ultimately happen at the return of the Lord Jesus. The decree of Cyrus did cut apart the cords- but most of the exiles didn't make use of that potential and preferred to remain in exile.

The cords were broken at the time of the decree of Cyrus- but it was a freedom that Judah generally didn't actually make use of.

Psa 129:5

Let them be disappointed and turned backward, all those who hate Zion-
The "return" of the exiles to Zion was to coincide with the 'turning back' [s.w.] of her enemies. But this depended upon the people of Zion returning both to their God and to their land, and most of the exiles chose not to do so. The time of judgment for those who "hate" God's people is when the promises to Abraham are fulfilled (s.w. Gen. 24:60), and this is now reapplied to the time of the return of the Lord Jesus, Abraham's seed, to the earth.

"Disappointed" is the Hebrew word for "shame"; the same two words for "shame" and "hate" occur in Ps. 44:7; 86:17; Is. 66:5 where again, all haters of God's people will be shamed. Shame is in the presence of someone; it is why the judgment has some public sense to it. Those who have hated us will see us glorified, and will be ashamed for what they said and did to us.

Psa 129:6

Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up-
This imagery is used in Is. 40:8 but with the message that "all flesh" is like this, God's people just as much as their enemies; and only attention to the prophetic word of Yahweh of restoration of the Kingdom would impart any hope of immortality. But the term "grass on the housetops" is only used in the context of the nations surrounding Judah at the time of the Assyrian invasion (Is. 37:27). These words had potential fulfilment in Hezekiah's time, but he instead chose to befriend the Babylonians and preclude any fulfilment of the prophecies of a restored Kingdom of God on earth at his time.

'Withered before it grows' is the picture of man born to condemnation, even whilst he is growing up green and strong, only to later wither and die. But in fact man is withered before he grows, from God's perspective outside of time. We are as it were born old men and old women; and it is our wisdom to perceive that. Such withered grass was not even worthy to be harvested (:7); but it was actually born in that condition.

Psa 129:7

with which the reaper doesn't fill his hand, nor the binder of sheaves his belt-
The idea is that this withered grass is useless for anything. "The reaper" is presented as repentant Israel, the exiles who had once sowed in tears now reaping with joy at the restoration (Ps. 126:5 s.w.). Those Gentiles who would not accept the word of Yahweh, which changes us all from withered grass (Is. 40:8), would not be gathered in by the

repentant exiles. The idea was that they would gather in *repentant* Gentiles, but not impenitent ones. These great possibilities didn't come about; they were precluded by the impenitence of the exiles as well as of the Gentiles.

Psa 129:8

Neither do those who go by say, The blessing of Yahweh be on you. We bless you in the name of Yahweh-
"Those who go by" is literally 'those who cross over', related to the word "Hebrew". The returning exiles who were crossing over from Babylon to Zion would be unable to bless these Gentiles. Repentant Israel were intended to be a blessing to the Gentile world- but they couldn't be if the Gentiles didn't repent. The sadness however was that according to Ezekiel, the exiles went the way of the Gentiles rather than being their guides towards Zion and the God of Israel. But the essence of the prophetic picture of the restoration will come true in the last days, and also in spiritual terms in the things of the Lord Jesus and the new Israel formed in Him. The contrast is how Judah under the new covenant would say these words (Jer. 31:23). Possibly this final verse is a lament that this situation had not yet come about, when passers by would bless Zion. But the words of :8 are a common harvest blessing, used by Boaz and the reapers. The idea is that the bits of grass growing on the flat roof were not worthy to be harvested, and call forth no harvest blessing.

PSALMS CHAPTER 130

Psa 130:1

A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then

by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards. The 15 steps of ascent also links to the literal ascent into the temple. According to Mishna Middot 2:5: "And there were fifteen steps that went up from its midst to the court of Israel, corresponding to the fifteen Songs of Ascent that are in the [Book of] Psalms, on which the Levites would stand in song". The essence of all this is true of us as we journey not just to Jerusalem but into the temple. This background explains why this particular psalm describes a journey from the "depths" (:1) up to the 'height' of restored relationship with God in Ps. 131.

Out of the depths I have cried to You, Yahweh-
The feeling of being submerged beneath deep waters is common in David's Psalms; it was how he felt as a result of his sins with Bathsheba (Ps. 69:1,12,14). The same word is used about the "depths" of moral distance from God due to sin (Is. 29:15; 31:6; Hos. 9:9). This leads to the talk about forgiveness and asking God not to keep a record of sins (:3,4). David's path of repentance, forgiveness and restoration was that to be followed by the exiles. They were to go up to Zion in this spirit. However, they didn't- just as David seems to have cried out for the consequences of his sin to be removed, rather than continuing to be forthcoming in contrition and recognition of his sin. The waters were clearly representative of Gentile nations in the Bible; the figure naturally applies to the exiles in the "sea" of the Babylonian / Persian empire, which could have been 'dried up' to allow them to return, just as Egypt and the Red Sea had been (Is. 51:10 s.w.). But most of them preferred to remain there. In the Hezekiah context, the waters were those of the Assyrian invasion.

It is noteworthy that many Bible students have independently named Ps. 130 as their favourite psalm- Calvin, Luther, Augustine all did.

Psa 130:2

Lord, hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my petitions-
A voice crying from the depths (:1) recalls Jonah in his disobedience and arrogance. Whilst this Psalm is indeed concerned with forgiveness, there is a notable lack of any statement of repentance, guilt or contrition. There is a request for forgiveness to be granted and for God not to remember sin, to just wipe His records (:3). But there is no actual statement of repentance or guilt. Rather is the impression given that God should get on and fulfil His word of restoration (:6), and as it were not be so concerned about Israel's sins. We note that Jonah is clearly to be connected with this crying to God out of the deep waters. The sin he had to ask for mercy for, even though unstated, was the sin of not going where and when he had been told to. The exiles likewise generally didn't respond well to the calls from God to return to the land. Perhaps that is in view here. God's ears being attentive was earlier predicated upon the existence of the temple (2

Chron. 6:40; 7:15). But the psalmist believed that even though there was no temple for the exiles, they could still ask for God's ears to be open to them.

Psa 130:3

If You, Yah, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?- See on :2. This could be read as the Psalmist asking God not to keep remembering Judah's sins against them [for He does "keep a record of sins", s.w. Job 10:14], and to just get on and restore them. Or it could be read as a general statement of truth- that God does not "mark" sin but forgives it, as our love for our brethren should keep no record of their past sins (1 Cor. 13:5-7 N.I.V.). If we refuse fellowship people because of the *effect* of past sins for which they have repented, then we *are* 'marking' iniquity. God does not deal with us in a manner which is *proportional* to the type or amount of sin we commit (Ps. 103:7-12). David likewise was made to 'stand firm' despite his sin (s.w. 2 Sam. 22:34; Ps. 30:7; 31:8). The Hebrew behind keeping a record of or 'marking' is really that of 'watching'; it is the same word translated "watch" [NEV "long"] in :6. If we continue to recall others' sins, we are guarding or watching them in our hearts. And if God were to do that to us, we would not be saved. It is so crucial to forgive *as*, in the same way as, God has forgiven us. Given that we have no power to delete certain memory cells, the only way we can not "mark" others' sins in our own hearts is to deeply experience God's forgiveness of us. We are to watch for the morning (:6) rather than watching others' sins. It's because God doesn't watch our sins that we can confidently watch for the morning of the Lord's return. Otherwise, enthusiasm for it would never be great, as we would be so worried about the outcome of judgment day.

Psa 130:4

But there is forgiveness with You, therefore You are feared-
The fear of respect for God which He seeks therefore arises not from fear of condemnation, but rather from awe at the way He forgives. AV "That thou mayest be feared". Here we are told that fear of God comes from the experience of forgiveness- not as the basis for it. This suggests that the forgiveness in view was granted by grace; and indeed this was the case with the exiles. Had they returned to God, then God would return them to their land. That was the deal. They didn't keep it; yet God returned them, repented them, to their land anyway. The intention was that this extreme grace would lead them to fear God. The forgiveness in view here was granted by God on His initiative, just as we can choose to forgive even when there is no repentance nor agreed version of events from the person we choose to forgive. We could render: "Yours is the power to forgive so that You may be held in awe". We are sinners, and God alone has the power to forgive. This means that the fear / awe that we are to feel is of sinful man realizing that God can forgive him- and therefore he must earnestly repent and seek that forgiveness. This Psalm was used by the exiles (:1). But as Ez. 18 makes clear, the exiles generally

had a problem in accepting personal sin. They felt their sufferings were all a result of the sins of their fathers being unfairly visited upon them, as well as God not stopping the sins of the Babylonians against them. It was totally in line with Ezekiel's appeal for personal contrition and repentance that this psalm of the exiles is a confession of personal guilt. But we wonder how many of the pilgrims really sung or prayed this psalm with any meaning. Indeed there was little awareness of sin in any religion of the time; in fact, the concepts of sin and grace are unique to Bible-based faith and understanding. We note too that no sacrifice is mentioned in order to deal with the sin confessed- this would make sense in the context of the exiles, when the temple cult wasn't working.

Psa 130:5

I wait for Yahweh. My soul waits. I hope in His word-
David speaks of waiting and watching for the Lord in the context of asking for forgiveness (Ps. 130:5,6). Heb. 9:28 speaks of the faithful as waiting for Christ to "appear without sin unto salvation". This alludes to a humbled, repentant Israel on the Day of Atonement, having confessed their sins and afflicted their souls through fasting, waiting for their High Priest to appear and pronounce upon them the blessing of forgiveness. The Spirit is using this as a type of us expecting the second coming of our Lord; the motivation for our enthusiasm should be our earnest need of ultimate forgiveness and reconciliation with God. But "the word" hoped for was specifically the fulfilment of the word of restoration. We note that "the word" is put for "the fulfilment of the word", so certain is God's word of ultimate fulfilment. But the psalmist wanted it to come true immediately, when the preconditions were still not right. The "word" in view initially was the word of blessing from the High Priest, announcing to the 'waiting' crowd that the atonement sacrifice was successful, and they were blessed with forgiveness. The psalmist likens himself to one of those waiting in that crowd. Twice he says that his very soul, his innermost being, waits for that word of blessing, that assurance of forgiveness. And indeed the need to be right with God, to have His forgiveness, is the subconscious desire of every soul; to please the Father and be again right with Him. Those who accept the Gospel are honest and humble enough to accept that. Unbelievers are simply in denial of their deepest psycho-spiritual need.

In our day, "the word" has been spoken; the "word made flesh" in the Lord. The essential *logos* of God was human salvation, which involves forgiveness. That has now been spoken in His Son, and we have heard and believed that word. Paul alludes to the ritual of the High Priest appearing on the Day of Atonement to pronounce the atonement, the blessing of forgiveness: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Our sin has been dealt with; He appears without our sin, it is no more. All those who worry about their sins, who think they can't be baptized into Him because they sin… have failed to engage with this. Sin is dealt with. He shall appear for us who eagerly

look for Him, without our sin. In one sense, we are like this psalmist, eagerly awaiting that word of salvation at the Lord's return; as Job put it in his fantasy about the day of judgment, "sleeplessly I wait for His response" (Job 16:22). But in another sense, that word was pronounced in the cross and we have heard it and with relief, believed it.

But here, the psalmist has not yet heard that word; the word of restoration from Cyrus was effectively a statement that God had taken the initiative in forgiving Judah and they could now return to Zion (see on :4). The psalmist believes that this forgiveness and call to restoration will come- he concludes by expressing faith in God's abundant redemption and forgiveness (:7,8).

Psa 130:6

My soul longs for the Lord more than watchmen long for the morning; more than watchmen for the morning-
Watching for the morning is the phrase used about the plot to slay David by morning (1 Sam. 19:2,11). Ps. 130:6 would therefore have originated with David's reflections that whatever the careful watchings of man to destroy him, his focus was upon longing for the Lord. This then became applied to Hezekiah, who prayed so intensely the night when he thought he would be dead by morning (Is. 38:13). And now it is the thought of the faithful exiles, desperately and intensely longing for dawn of Zion's glad morning in fulfilment of the restoration prophecies. The context is of the psalmist eagerly awaiting the news of confirmed forgiveness. Possibly he was eagerly awaiting the dawn because that was when the morning sacrifice could be offered. Although it is noteworthy that the psalm says nothing explicitly about sacrifices being required for forgiveness to be granted.

Psa 130:7

Israel, hope in Yahweh, for with Yahweh there is grace, with Him is abundant redemption-
Israel were to be encouraged by David's experience that they could receive "abundant" redemption (s.w. "wash me *thoroughly* from my iniquity" in Ps. 51:2). The same "redemption" had been experienced at the Red Sea (s.w. Ps. 111:9). That redemption from Egypt and gift of the Kingdom to Israel was all an articulation of God's characteristics as memorialized in his Name; see on :2. The redemption promised and implied in the covenant with Abraham is ongoing to God's people of all generations. This verse could be read as an appeal to Israel to repent and believe in God's grace. But the specific appeal for repentance isn't there; rather it is an appeal to trust in God's grace, which was hoped to bring about the restoration prophecies with or without repentance.

Psa 130:8

He will redeem Israel from all their sins-
The redemption of Israel from Babylon was essentially dependent upon their being redeemed from their sins. But most preferred to remain in Babylon, and repentance just wasn't on their agenda. It was a redemption refused, even when that redemption was achieved through the ultimate redeemer, the Lord Jesus. If we take "sins" as an intensive plural, we enquire what was the great sin of Israel. It was crucifying the Lord. And yet by that redeeming death, they were forgiven even of that. This is grace indeed. We can render "He Himself will redeem Israel...". We have a glimpse here of God's total identity with His Son on the cross... truly "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself".

PSALMS CHAPTER 131

Psa 131:1

A Song of Ascents. By David-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

Yahweh, my heart isn't haughty-
This Psalm used by Hezekiah wasn't taken seriously by him. For him, it was just the words of a hymn. For his heart was lifted up / haughty, the very same phrase used of him in 2 Chron. 32:25.

Nor my eyes lofty-
The phrase used of the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:22). Hezekiah is saying that his eyes are not as theirs; and yet he was deceiving himself, as just noted. David was aware that God judges people for things like their facial expression and body language (s.w. Ps. 18:27).

Nor do I concern myself with great matters, or things too wonderful for me-
These things too wonderful don't have to refer to things beyond the psalmist's understanding; rather is the sense of things too "hard" for him to achieve in his own strength (Gen. 18:14). Humility comes from truly recognizing that our salvation is of God and cannot be of ourselves. Yet Hezekiah did all he could within his power to effect his deliverance from the Assyrians, he did indeed "concern himself" with the things of salvation.

In the David context, 'to go' ["concern myself"] with 'great things' is the phrase used of David in 2 Sam. 5:10; he "went on [s.w. "concern myself"] and grew great" [s.w. "with great matters"]. So the idea of Ps. 131:1 may be that David didn't pay attention to these things so as not to become proud.

Psalm 131 follows directly from Psalm 130, where the Psalmist has confessed his sins and spoken of anxiously awaiting for the word of salvation and forgiveness- alluding to the High Priest on the Day of Atonement appearing "without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28). Ps. 131 is a statement of the wonder of forgiveness experienced. No doubt rooted historically in David's experience post Bathsheba. The mechanics of our salvation are not our concern; all clever theories of the atonement notwithstanding. These are "great matters... things too wonderful for me". For us, it is the experience of sin forgiven.

Psa 131:2 Surely I have stilled and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with his mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me-
If David was the author of this Psalm, and of Ps. 132, then it provides an example of how David sees himself from outside of himself. Ps. 132 speaks of David in all his afflictions. Ps. 131:2 RV has him speaking of stilling and quieting his soul like a mother does a child- as if he saw himself as the mother to his own soul, talking to himself. He uses the same word for "quieted" in recording how he had quieted himself, telling himself to be calm (Ps. 37:7; 62:5). In the Hezekiah context, this would apply to his calming down after his illness had been healed and he was granted another 15 years.

The well known pattern with nursing infants is that the child cries and wriggles, is fed, and then calms down- and goes to sleep. The psalm speaks of the experience of both David and every man- the drama and angst caused by sin and demanding forgiveness and salvation, followed by the Divine response [cp. the feeding of the baby], and then the calm laying down in sleep. This is how each man in Christ must come to his end. Laying down in sleep assured of forgiveness. The language of stillness and quietness is often used in the Bible about death. This is how we in Christ are to each meet our end.

Psa 131:3

Israel, hope in Yahweh-
As God had come through for David and Hezekiah, so the exiles were to hope for "the hope of Israel", the restoration from exile to the restored Kingdom of God.

From this time forth and forever-
This is just as Israel were to praise the Name of Yahweh "from this time forth and forever". The idea may be that we will eternally be praising the name of Yahweh; in the sense of appreciating and praising His characteristics. For the declaration of His Name to Moses involved the listing of His characteristics which combine to make up His personality. We can begin living the eternal life now, in that we can now act as we shall eternally. We shall be eternally appreciating, trusting, loving and praising God's Name- and we can begin that now. This is an Old Testament form (also in Ps. 113:2; 115:18; 121:8; 125:2; 131:3) of the Lord's teaching as recorded in John's Gospel, that we can have and live the eternal life right now. We have that life not in the sense that we shall never die, but in that we can begin living and being now as we shall eternally live and be.

PSALMS CHAPTER 132

Psa 132:1

It appears hard to decide whether this Psalm refers to the bringing of the ark to Zion by David in 2 Sam. 5 or to the bringing of the ark from Zion to the temple by Solomon. But it could well be that this is a processional Psalm, intended for use perhaps annually, celebrating both occasions. Perhaps David and / or Solomon wanted the entrance of the ark to be celebrated annually in some kind of 'royal Zion' festival, to enforce their [mistaken] view that the covenant with David involved an unbroken line of Davidic kings reigning from Zion. In fact the covenant didn't require this at all, but rather that one of David's descendants would be God's begotten Son and would create an eternal house of people for His Name.

I have discussed on 1 Sam. 4:3 how there was always a tendency to use the ark as a talisman; and God was against that. The religious eclipsed the spiritual as regards the ark, several times in Israel's history. And I suggest David was not immune to this. He brings the ark to Zion without any Divine command to do so and without consultation with Him [David earlier asks God for guidance about his decisions in 2 Sam. 5, but not in the context of the ark]; and there was the disaster with Uzzah the first time he attempted it. This is to be compared to Israel's defeat when they took the ark with them into battle against the Philistines in the time of Eli. David clearly also veered towards

seeing the ark as a talisman. It was almost as if he wanted to underwrite his own enthronement in Jerusalem by having Yahweh enthroned there also over the ark. Likewise David's desire to permanently locate the ark in a physical temple in Jerusalem can be seen as a desire to legitimate the enthronement of his dynasty in that city. As Adele Berlin noted, "temple-building is crucial to the dynastic promise. The link between the two is common in ancient Near Eastern temple-building literature, where the builder of the temple receives a divine blessing for dynastic stability". God's response was that He needed no temple, but He would build David's "house" or dynasty. But on the other hand, David often 'gets it' about the lack of need for the ark's physical presence. His psalms speak of how he lived permanently beneath the shadow of the cherubic wings, as if he lived on the mercy seat, on the sprinkled blood. In 2 Sam. 15:24-29 he flees from Absalom, and refuses the suggestion he take the ark with him. But, so true to real spiritual life, he also had tendencies towards needing the physical and religious when it came to the ark. Just as we pine for the religious at times, whilst also rejoicing in God's presence in our hearts quite regardless of religious context. David wrote at least two Psalms about bringing the ark to Zion, Ps. 68 and Ps. 132. Ps. 68 clearly expects God to bring victory to Israel because of the ark's presence in Zion, and Ps. 132 seems to reason that once the ark is in Zion it will be there forever. This wasn't to be the case. But we see in David's reasoning that he still considered the ark as some kind of physical guarantee of God's presence, and the legitimization of his own enthronement in Jerusalem- and that of his dynasty after him, as he imagined. He was proven wrong- the ark disappeared, his dynasty was cut off, Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed. But God's spiritual presence in human hearts continued and became the stronger after these things. We marvel at how God works through human weakness to achieve His wider purposes.

A Song of Ascents-

Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah’s response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

This mutuality between God and man is brought out by the structure of several of the Psalms, in which God and David are shown to be involved in a dynamic, two way relationship. Consider Bullinger's analysis of Ps. 132:

A (vv 1,2) David swears to God

B (3-5) What David sware

C (6,7) Search for a dwelling place

D (8) Prayer to enter into rest

E (9) Prayer for priests

F (9) Prayer for saints

G (10) Prayer for Messiah

This was responded to by God:

A1 (v 11) God swears to David

B1 (11,12) What God sware

C1 (13) Designation of the dwelling place

D1 (14,15) Answer to prayer in D

E1 (16) Answer to prayer in E

F1 (16) Answer to prayer in F

G1 (17, 18) Answer to prayer in G.

Yahweh, remember David and all his affliction-
Ps. 132, which was written after David's time (:8,10), includes a prayer to God to reward David for all his afflictions (:1). Even after a man's death, faithful men prayed for his salvation; so it seems. This needs some reflecting upon as to its implications. 2 Tim. 1:16 records Paul praying that the Lord would *give mercy* to the house of Onesiphorus; yet the same phrase is used in v. 18 about receiving mercy at judgment day.

The "afflictions" of David are presented as a pattern for those of the exiles (s.w. Ps. 107:17). They too denied their sin initially and struggled to accept its consequences; but David's path of repentance and restoration was to be theirs. But for the most part they refused to follow this. The idea may be that Yahweh is being asked to remember David and his afflictions in the sense of remembering Israel for good on account of David's merits. Solomon [the likely initial author] was asking God to remember him for good because of his father David- a position of religion rather than personal spirituality. Conversely, "Remember Yahweh, the sons of Edom" (Ps. 137:7) is asking God to act now on account of the earlier sins of the Edomites. "Afflictions" could be translated 'efforts'

or 'anxious care' (NAB), and a related word is used of David's 'efforts' to assemble the materials for the temple (1 Chron. 22:14).

The first part of the Psalm recalls David's otherwise unrecorded vow to bring the ark to Zion and build a temple for it- quite possibly exaggerated or even made up by Solomon and / or David. This is followed by a [mis]quotation of the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7 which followed the bringing of the ark to Zion in 2 Sam. 6. But then there is interpretation added by the subsequent author or user of the Psalm- therefore, it is reasoned, God should establish the seed of David as king and make Zion and the temple eternal. Because that was what David wanted. But all this misses how the promises to David were a recalibration or even criticism of David's attitude. God didn't want a physical temple. He would make David's "house" eternal through the promised seed of David, Messiah. The kingly dynasty of David was overturned, the crown was removed, "until He come whose right it is", the Lord Jesus (Ez. 21:25-27). Despite being given the promises of 2 Sam. 7, of unconditional grace to David, David slipped back to the literal and religious, wanting still to ensure a temple was built by his immediate son, Solomon. But that temple was destroyed. The author of this Psalm continues David's fantasy for an eternal literal "Zion" and literal dynasty lasting for ever, wrongly conflating [as David did] the ark with the temple. Thus Solomon's dedication of the temple in 2 Chron. 6:41,42 is very similar to the bringing of the ark to Zion in 1 Chron. 16, and is almost a quotation of Ps. 132:8-10 about bringing the ark to Zion. At the time David brought the ark to Zion, he clearly had in mind building a permanent house for it there. All this missed the point that this was not to be the true interpretation, because God had explained that the "house" was to be of people, and the seed of David who would reign eternally would be Messiah, His son and David's son.

Despite all David's afflictions, he was not swamped by them but remained focused on his dream of bringing the ark to Zion and building a house for it. We can safely take these words as David's by comparing with 1 Chron. 22:14, “Behold, in my affliction I have prepared for the house of Yahweh". David heard of the ark when still living as a child in Ephratah, which is Bethlehem. To see Yahweh worshipped by all Israel had been his dream from a youngster, and all his afflictions didn't dilute his enthusiasm for that. In this matter, David is a great example of retaining focus on Gods glory all his life, despite the dramas caused by his own sins. His lifelong dream to build a temple for God was however not what God exactly wanted, as Nathan explained to him. We could say that he obsessively continued in that dream despite having been redirected by Nathan.

This psalm probably began as David's prayer at the end of his life, asking [like Nehemiah] to be remembered for good at judgment day according to what he had tried to do for God's people. Even if, like Nehemiah, he didn't achieve in reality what he would like to have. It was then added to and used finally by the exiles as a song they sung as they 'ascended' to Zion.

Psa 132:2

how he swore to Yahweh, and vowed to the Mighty One of Jacob-
The idea is that despite his afflictions (:1), David was not so swamped by them that he had no thought for the work of God's house. And in this he was the pattern for the exiles. David was self aware that his afflictions had militated against his temple project, but he can conclude in 1 Chron. 22:14: "Behold, in my affliction I have prepared for the house of Yahweh".

"The mighty one of Jacob" is a phrase used to the exiles in Is. 49:26; 60:16.

The irony is that David swore an oath to bring the ark to Zion and build a temple for it. For the only Biblical account of any such desire by David is in 2 Sam. 7. But God responded by disallowing that oath and swearing an oath to David- that He would build a house of people through his future seed, the Lord Jesus. And they would be His final resting place for His glory.

Psa 132:3

Surely I will not come under the roof of my house, nor go up into my bed-
A case can be made that the psalm is not simply David being remembered and quoted; but David himself speaking. In this case, he would be asking for God to accept Solomon as the Messianic seed (:10,17) for the sake of David's hard work for the temple. But such things cannot be predicated upon the works of another. We see here David labouring under misplaced ideals. He was fixated upon his son Solomon becoming the Messianic seed, and he thought that his own works could somehow bring this about. He [and the exiles] ought to have focused more upon the promises to Abraham than those to himself.

And yet we can discern here an allusion to the words of David's faithful friend Uriah whom he effectively murdered. He refused to go up to his bed nor come under the roof of his own house because he preferred identity with God's suffering people, His "house" (2 Sam. 11:11). David later remembered these words, and alludes to them when he thinks of arranging the building of the temple. The words of Uriah haunted him, and he commendably vows to follow his noble example. In this we see David's humility and repentance.

"Under the roof of my house" is literally "the tent of my house", recalling the tent Absalom spread on the roof of David's house where he slept with David's wives (2 Sam. 16:22), possibly a similar roof top 'tent' where David slept with Bathsheba. In this case it was perhaps guilt over the Bathsheba incident which led to David wanting to build God a temple. But God didn't want that. 'Going up' onto his bed may have sexual

connotations, for Gen. 49:4 uses the figure in describing Reuben's sexual intercourse with Jacob's wife: He "went up to your father's bed… went up to my couch". Possibly David meant that he would abstain from sex until he had arranged to build a temple for God.

We note that Uriah mentions that the ark, along with David's troops, is in a tent and not in a house, and so Uriah will not go down to his house (2 Sam. 11:11). This is clearly to be connected with David's vow that "I will not enter my house or get into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids' until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the mighty one of Jacob" (Ps. 132:3-5). The ark was still in a tent; and David was in his house, he had got into his bed- whilst the ark was still in a tent. Uriah's mention of the ark surely alludes to this situation. David's sin gives the lie to his apparent passion for the ark. God had responded to his "vow" by telling David that God didn't want this. Instead, God would build him an eternal family through his Messianic Son, and he would [by implication] be resurrected to witness this. But instead of rejoicing in that, instead David was just involving himself in opportunistic sex and thus showing no regard for the great promises made about his family. For David was hardly paying any attention to his family and seed by casually sleeping with another man's wife and getting her pregnant. In this we see the progression of theme in 2 Samuel. David's refusal to accept God's grace in the covenant made with him led him to still want to build a temple, and this lack of focus upon the grace to be shown to his own "house" or family led him to the sin with Bathsheba. We could observe that David brought the ark to Zion, and then soon afterwards went up to his roof and his bed- to sleep with Bathsheba. As if he felt he had ticked the box, got the ark to Zion, done his religious thing- and then he fell apart spiritually. This is the danger of a 'religious', tokenistic approach to faith.

Psa 132:4

I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids-
This appears to be a studied disregard for the revelation of Ps. 127:2, which urges David and his seed not to stay up late planning to build a physical temple, but to accept sleep from God and trust Him to build *him* a house in the sense of a Messianic seed and family / kingdom. The words of Prov. 6 show that Solomon's motivation for teaching God's ways to his son (Rehoboam) was because this is how his father had taught him. “Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids”, he exhorts his son (Prov. 6:4), in the very language used to describe his father’s zeal for the building of the temple (Ps. 132:4).

Psa 132:5

until I find out a place for Yahweh, a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob-
David's lifelong passion for the ark and building a permanent home for it was in one way commendable; but it was a case of misplaced ideals. For God had made it clear that He and not man would find and declare a place for the ark, in "the place the Lord, your God, will choose…" (Dt. 12:11). And as Nathan explained to David, God in His wisdom kept choosing new places for the ark. Because He is a God on the move and cannot be tied down to a specific geographical location.

The reference would initially be to the ark being brought to Zion "and set in its place" (2 Sam. 6:17). But searching out a permanent resting place and dwelling for Yahweh was at best misplaced idealism. For God had explained that His eternal dwelling would be in the hearts of humbled people, a house / temple of people formed in and through David's future seed, the Lord Jesus. God was a God on the move. 2 Chron. 6:41 portrays the temple as God's resting place: "Now therefore arise, Yahweh God, into Your resting place, You and the ark of Your strength". And the whole point of God's response to David about the temple was that He is not a God at rest and neither are His people. The people suffered under Solomon's taskmasters building his treasure cities just as they did under Pharaoh; they hardly found rest under his reign let alone through the building of a temple on the backs of their labour and taxation sacrifices. The people were drafted into labour gangs, whereas the building of the tabernacle and resourcing of it was purely voluntary (Ex. 25). And God's Name was to be in a house of people, for a Name / personality / characteristics cannot dwell in a house of stone and cedar and gold. It was this misunderstanding that led the Jews to lament how the destruction of the temple had actually destroyed the dwelling place of God's Name: "They have burned Your sanctuary to the ground, they have profaned the dwelling place of Your Name" (Ps. 74:7). The truth was that God's Name dwelt in the hearts and personalities of His true people. And it was God who destroyed the physical temple to try to get them to realize this (Lam. 2:6,7).

In the context of the exiles, the allusion may be to Jer. 29:14, which says that the repentant exiles would "find" the "place" (s.w.) of Yahweh in their return to their God and to Zion. Earlier whilst on the run from Saul, David longed to be in the "place… and dwelling" of Yahweh, at the sanctuary operated by Samuel (s.w. Ps. 26:8). There was no temple, but Yahweh still had a place and dwelling on earth. But now later in Ps. 132:5 David seems to feel that Yahweh needed a more grandiose "place… dwelling", otherwise He would have no dwelling place. Over the years, he had come to focus more upon the physical and external rather than upon the essential and the spiritual. This is a tendency for all of us. "Dwelling" is the usual word for "tabernacle". Yahweh had a dwelling place, in the tabernacle. But David seems to think that this wasn't quite enough, and there was the need for him to build some more physical structure for His presence. This is a far cry from the younger David in the wilderness, who felt that he was in the presence of Yahweh, right under His cherubic wings, although far from the physical sanctuary.

Psa 132:6

Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah-
This clearly alludes to David's bringing of the ark to Zion. He protests that this shows his concern for the things of the sanctuary, and he sees this as coming to fuller term in his desire to build a temple and see his son enthroned as a king-priest in Zion. "Ephrathah" was another name for David's home town of Bethlehem (Gen. 35:19; 48:7; Ruth 4:11). He may be saying that from his earliest boyhood days he had heard of the ark and had dreams for glorifying it, and he found it much later in Kirjath Jearim, "city of forests", or "Jaar".

Ephrathah in 1 Chron. 2:50,51 was a clan within Judah which settled near Bethlehem. We could read this verse as meaning that David first heard of the ark in Ephratah, and "we heard..." invites the reader or reciter of the Psalm to identify with David's zeal for the ark and temple. Or the Hebrew *epratah* could refer to Ephraim, where the ark was [in Shiloh, in Ephraim] before the Philistines captured it. The same root word is used for 'Ephraimite' in 1 Sam. 1:1. Or we could translate it simply as 'fruitful field', parallel to "the field of Jaar" or "the fields of a forest", alluding to Kirjath Jearim, 'city of forests' where the ark was kept for twenty years (1 Sam. 7:2).

We found it in the field of Jaar-
"Jaar" is "forests". It could be argued that "Ephrathah" referred not only to Bethlehem, but was also the name for the area around Kirjath-jearim, "city of forests". The firstborn son of Caleb's wife Ephrath [a form of "Ephrathah"] was Hur (1 Chron. 2:19), who is called 'the father' of Bethlehem (1 Chron. 4:4). Hur's son Shobal was 'the father' of Kirjath-jearim, and his son Salma the 'father' of Bethlehem (1 Chron. 2:50,51). It was from Kirjath-jearim that David brought up the ark to Zion (1 Sam. 7:1,2; 1 Chron. 13:5,6).

We note David omits all the problems he had with the transport of the ark to Zion, the slaying of Uzzah, his own temporary disillusion with the whole project. In the bigger picture we look back upon our lives and see how our overall intention to serve God was blessed and all worked out- in the bigger picture and broader perspective.

Psa 132:7

We will go into His dwelling place. We will worship at His footstool-
Or, "let us go up...", as on a pilgrimage or procession (as in Is. 2:3; Mic. 4:2; Jer. 31:6; Ps. 122:1). This initially referred to David's invitation to the people to come up to Zion and worship once he had moved the ark there. But it becomes used as an invitation for the exiles to return to Zion.

The ark is called both the throne of God and also His footstool (Ps. 94:5; 132:7,8; 1 Chron. 28:2). Thus Zion was seen as Yahweh's footstool (Lam. 2:1; Ps. 99:5). But all this is deconstructed by Is. 66:1,2 stating that the whole earth is God's footstool, in that people who have humbled hearts and Him in those hearts are all over the earth. And there is no physical house that has Him dwelling in it. Above or sitting upon the cherubim, the pagan mind expected to see Israel's God. But there was (to their eyes) an empty throne. Yahweh had to be believed in by faith. And His supreme manifestation was through the blood of sacrifice. Cassuto gives evidence that the Egyptians and Hittites placed their covenant contracts in a box beneath the throne of their gods; and the tables of the covenant were likewise placed beneath the throne of Yahweh. This similarity begged the comparison yet stronger- Israel's God was *not* seated there. He had to be believed in by faith. Such a concept of faith in an invisible god was quite foreign to the pagan mind; and yet the whole tabernacle plan was designed to have enough points of contact with the pagan tabernacles in order to elicit this point in very powerful form: the one true God is invisible and must be *believed in*.

However it could also be argued that Yahweh was enthroned upon the cherubim, and the ark was His footstool, as in 1 Chron. 28:2. It was to the ark that Israel came to worship, although it was invisible to them, only visible to the priesthood. Or the footstool could be the entire sanctuary, as in Ps. 99:5.

The misconception that Yahweh somehow lived in Zion is continued. More discussion of this on 1 Kings 8:56. These are David's words, put in the mouths of the pilgrims. The reality is that God's own word says that the earth is God's footstool and specifically, the humbled hearts of His former enemies. God repeatedly destroyed the structures built on Mount Zion.

Psa 132:8

Arise, Yahweh, into Your resting place; You, and the ark of Your strength-
In :14 God apparently confirms this; but we never know if this is David as it were putting words in God's mouth: "this is My rest for ever; here will I dwell" (:14). And there is indeed a connection between the ark and God's resting place:
- Num. 10:33 "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them... to search out a resting place"
- 1 Chron. 28:2 "An house of rest for the ark"
However, the real resting place of God's Name is not in the literal ark, but in the hearts of people humble to God's Word. The exiles were told: "Where is the house that you build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?... to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word" (Is. 66:1,2).

It seems David thought that by bringing the physical ark to Zion, he was somehow establishing the Messianic Kingdom. But God is far beyond such external symbols of spirituality. Mark Vincent discerns how David thought that the bringing of the ark to Zion could have been its' final homecoming- although Solomon his son let everything down in reality: "["Arise O Lord into thy rest" in Ps. 132:8 alludes to "Rise up, O Lord" in Num. 10:35]... The words which Moses had to utter each time the ark journeyed through the wilderness would no longer be needed, for the ark had at last reached its final destination. This is why the Psalm says "Arise O Lord into *thy rest*". David and his people hoped that the ark had come here for ever, and that God would dwell among and reign over His people for eternity. Alas, because of the wickedness of Israel, this was not to be" (*Exploring The Psalms ,* Birmingham: CMPA, 2001, p. 144).

God is not a God at rest, as He had commented to David when declining David's offer of building a temple for Him. Nor are His people at rest now, our rest is to come, once the journey is done. Because God had given some rest to David, he assumed God too was at rest and the coming of the ark to Zion meant Yahweh entering His Sabbath rest of the Kingdom. But David was trying to force that situation by himself bringing the ark to Zion. David's frequent statements that the earth shall never be "moved" or removed, and Zion likewise would never be moved (Ps. 56:5; 125:1), reflect his fantasy that his kingdom and dynasty would last for ever. But the mountains, the great mountain of Zion, were removed. David admittedly did state that even if the mountains were removed he would still trust in God (Ps. 46:2), and it was this humility in the midst of his pride that it seems God accepted and loved, and therefore He kept David as His man. The prophets speak of how the land and mountain of Judah would be removed, but the covenant would not be broken (Is. 24:19; 54:10). So David wrongly conflated the presence of the ark with the establishment of the eternal Davidic kingdom. The promises to David explained that this would happen but through his great seed, Messiah. But still he retained his idea that his immediate fleshly dynasty and physical house would continue eternally. This is as naive as thinking that if you build a house on a plot you own, then your descendants will live there for eternal generations after you. David and the exiles thought that having the ark back with them would bring some kind of special blessing and make their worship the ultimate experience. But Ps. 78:61 points out that God sent "His strength into captivity", and surely "the ark of Your strength" is in view. David himself in more spiritual times whilst on the run from Saul had often reflected that he was dwelling beneath the cherubim, right on top of the ark. Despite being far from any place of organized religion. This psalm perhaps expresses the hope and prayer of the exiles that somehow they would find the ark and bring it back to Zion. But it was an unanswered prayer because they refused to understand that the old covenant was broken, and the new covenant they had been offered had no place for religious stuff like an ark. God's presence was to be in human hearts, and the whole earth rather than mount Zion was to be His footstool.

Psa 132:9

Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness, let Your saints shout for joy!-
The priests clothed with righteousness in Ps. 132:9 parallels them being clothed with salvation in Ps. 132:16. This reflects the Pauline teaching that salvation is brought about by being counted righteous by God's grace. And that is the basis for the joy of the saints. Ps. 24:5, like Ps. 132, is also in the context of the ark coming to Zion, and the same point is made- those who have salvation have received the gift of righteousness from God.

"Let your priests..." is a request from David and Solomon. The response in :16 [see notes there] appears to be that in fact this will be true only of the one great priest, Messiah, "the horn of David" (:17).

This is the language of God's Kingdom upon earth (Ps. 149:5). It was God who would make this happen (:16), rather than David's manipulation of the physical ark, and getting the people to shout for joy. But as discussed on Ps. 132:8, David mistakenly thought that merely bringing the ark to Zion meant this would come about.

Solomon prayed to God in the terms and language of his father (2 Chron. 6:41,42 cp. Ps. 132:1,8,9). He was familiar with his father's Psalms- after all, all Israel sung them. It must have been like being the son of a world-famous singer. The words were even in Solomon's subconscious it seems, for when he tells his son "Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids" (Prov. 6:4) he is alluding unconsciously, it seems (in that it is out of context) to David's promise not to give sleep to his eyes until he had found a resting place for the ark (Ps. 132:4).

Psa 132:10

For Your servant David's sake, don't turn away the face of Your anointed one-
This could have been David referring to himself, begging his prayer be heard; and others later praying that for David's sake the prayer would be heard, the ark would be located somewhere and then brought to Jerusalem and some kingdom of God would be established on earth. That didn't then happen, and the form of fulfilment was to be changed- perhaps the rest of the psalm is God's answer, showing that the fulfilment of all things promised to David was to be finally in the Lord Jesus. Whoever prayed Ps. 132:10 asked to be heard "for Your servant David's sake"- he or she believed that God would remember David and for *his* sake respond favourably [and how much more powerful is prayer uttered for the sake of the Son of God!]. This opens the question of how far will God accept others for the sake of the prayers of [or mere existence of] sympathetic third parties. But if these are the words of David himself, then we seem to have him here asking God to accept Solomon as the "anointed one", the Messianic seed. For Solomon is in view in :11. But this was not to be- for personal spirituality is

always required, no matter what good folks are praying for us. And Solomon ultimately lacked that.

Ps. 132:10,11 makes a play on the phrase "turn away": "For Your servant David's sake, don't *turn away* the face of Your anointed one. Yahweh has sworn to David in truth, He will *not turn away* from it: I will set the fruit of your body on your throne", literally "from the fruit of your womb". Solomon is asking God not to turn away from him because God had promised never to turn from His promise that from David's body / womb would come an eternal king. But that promise was to be fulfilled through a descendant born after David slept with his fathers, who would also be God's begotten son- through a woman in David's line. Hence the otherwise strange term "from the fruit of your womb". Solomon was twisting God's words yet again when he quotes them in 2 Chron. 6:42, and then on that basis pleading for God to never turn from Him because he was David's son. And it was this wrong assumption that resulted in Solomon himself turning away from Yahweh to idols; for the Divine comment is that his foreign wives turned his heart away from Yahweh.

It could be argued that Ps. 132:8-10 are full of allusions to Solomon's prayer and mention of the future apostacy and repentance of Israel (1 Kings 8:31,32,46-50; 2 Chron. 6:41,42). This would then have been a Psalm used by the repentant exiles- or that was the intention.

Psa 132:11

Yahweh has sworn to David in truth, He will not turn from it: I will set the fruit of your body on your throne-

We have here a classic example of the mutuality possible between God and man; David swore to God (:2), and God now swears to David. David wanted to build God a house, but God wanted to build David a house. The Bible, and our own lives, are full of examples of this two-way mutual relationship between God and each of His children.

From :11 onwards we have God's response to the prayers in the first part of the Psalm- something observable in many Psalms. This and the following verses could be extra revelation from God confirming David's understanding of the promises made to him in 2 Sam. 7. But they could also be David's speculations about what God intended rather than actual replication of some extra Divine revelation. For example, unlike the covenant with Abraham, God didn't "swear" in the sense of confirming those promises with an oath. Although Ps. 89:3,39,45 could be taken as saying that He did in fact do so, although unrecorded in 2 Sam. 7. David clearly has the view that his immediate son Solomon was to be the fulfilment of the promises of a Messianic seed reigning eternally on his throne. He indulges this speculation in Ps. 72, but it was not to ultimately come about in Solomon.

Psa 132:12

If your children will keep My covenant, My testimony that I will teach them, their children also will sit on your throne forever-
The promises to David were to have their fulfilment in a single individual, the Lord Jesus. But Solomon and David liked to imagine that they meant an unbroken line of kings from them. This verse may possibly be God's response to that- saying that yes, if you like, if your descendants are loyal to the covenant, then they will not be deposed from the throne by Me. But this Psalm goes on to explain that the ultimate fulfilment is in the singular promised son, the horn that will bud from David.

This repeats the conditional element in the promises to David, which Solomon failed to fulfil. But the covenant with David is here expanded into "My testimony that I will teach them", information not contained in the text of the promises to David. Those promises originally focused upon one individual, whom the New Testament interprets as the Lord Jesus. But David here in Ps. 89:30; 132:12 and Solomon in 1 Kings 8:25 chose to understand the "seed" as the Davidic dynasty down the generations. This loss of focus upon the future Lord Jesus was what led David and Solomon to focus instead upon their own dynasty, rather than upon the future individual son of David who would reign eternally upon David's throne. His personal immortality came to be interpreted as the eternal continuance of the Davidic dynasty as kings of Israel throughout future generations.

If David's descendants were obedient, then God would choose Zion as His dwelling place (:13). They weren't and so the throne of David's house in Zion didn't continue. Zion was plowed as a field for their sakes, Micah says. Any idea of "Zionism" in our age is therefore inappropriate. There is no obedient line of David's kings reigning there. Only when David's great son, the Lord Jesus, comes again will God choose Zion again (Zech. 2:12).

Psa 132:13

For Yahweh has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His habitation-
GNB "The LORD has chosen Zion; he wants to make it his home". The rest of the Psalm may well be God's interjection, reaffirming that He had never promised an unbroken line of kings from David, but rather the establishment of the eternal Kingdom of one of those sons, who would be His begotten Son. God wanted to make Zion His dwelling place, but the concept of "Zion" is developed in the Bible to refer to God's true people, the daughter of Zion. By contrast, David repeatedly speaks of Zion as God's actual dwelling place at his time: "bring me to thy holy hill and to thy dwelling [place]" (Ps. 43:3); "How lovely is thy dwelling place" (Ps. 84:1); "there is a river whose streams make glad the city

of God, the holy habitation of the Most High" (Ps. 46:5). Whereas it was God's plan to fulfil His promises not through Solomon's temple, but through the reigning of the promised seed from Zion over a house of people who manifested His Name in their hearts. The concluding verses of this Psalm are a description of God's future kingdom on earth with Zion as the capital.

God did choose Zion in a sense when He went along with the plan to build the temple there. But this doesn't mean He chose it for all time from then on. Zech. 1:17 says He will again choose Zion, implying that for now He has not chosen it, and as it were unchosen it. Solomon and David liked to assume that God had looked all over the earth and chosen the hill of Zion for an eternal dwelling from their time onwards. But He was to tear down their temple in fury, He was angry with it from the day it was built till the day He tore it down.

God's promise was that the Messianic seed would reign eternally upon David's throne in Jerusalem. But David appears to interpret this as meaning that God had some geographic preference for Zion and would desire to eternally live there. But the New Testament emphasizes that He has no such concept of sacred space. His dwelling is in the hearts of individuals. It seems to me that David's personal fondness for the hill of Zion was transferred by him onto God. See on Ps. 78:67. This is not to say that Zion has no significance for God; in the restored Kingdom, He will "choose Jerusalem again" (Zech. 2:12), although "Jerusalem" there is paralleled with "Judah". It is the people of Jerusalem and Judah in whom He shall dwell, rather than having some more intense metaphysical 'manifestation' on one geographical spot rather than on any other.

Psa 132:14

This is my resting place forever. Here I will live, for I have desired it-
As discussed on :13, it is hard to know whether these words are Yahweh's direct revelation to David, or his interpretation of what he thought the promises to him implied. Zion was not God's eternal resting place at that time; for Ezekiel sees the shekinah glory removing from Zion and going into exile. It seems to me that David's personal fondness for the hill of Zion was transferred by him onto God. The word for "desire" is always used of human desire, never of God; it is the word used of David's desire to drink water from the well in Bethlehem (2 Sam. 23:15). Solomon was to be a "man of rest" (s.w. "resting place"; 1 Chron. 22:9). David imagined therefore that Solomon was to be the king at the time of this eternal "resting place". But he seems to be confusing his desires for his son's glory with God's intentions in His own Son the Lord Jesus.

The place of God's rest is not on any hill nor in any building. Under the new covenant offered the exiles, it was in their hearts through His Spirit (Is. 66:1 "Where is the place of

My rest?"). Is. 11:10 says that the Messianic descendant of David will be the one who gives rest, but no geographical location of that rest is mentioned. David had wanted to build a "house of rest" for God but that desire to make God settle down in a geographical place, actually in David's back yard, was misplaced. At the Lord's return to Zion it is so that His special presence will indeed be there. But not now. The exiles and pilgrims chose to ignore all this and kept singing this prayer in hope of finding the ark and again worshipping there as in David's time. But that was the mere nostalgia of religious people for the old way of worship they or their ancestors once knew. We see the same mentality in declining denominations today.

Psa 132:15

I will abundantly bless her provision-

It was David who made provision for the building of the temple, and this was seen as a pattern for generations of Jews to materially support the temple on Zion. But David's request for this was really asking for God to bless him for his generosity. It was self seeking. But the pilgrims eagerly repeated it.

Or we can simply read this as meaning that the provisions in Zion will be so blessed that the poor of Zion will have abundant bread: "I will abundantly bless her provisions; I will satisfy her poor with bread" (ESV). GNB "I will richly provide Zion with all she needs". God is generous, as was His son in the provision of an abundance of bread and fish to feed the hungry. But Zion's real need is for salvation, and this has been abundantly provided, in "that great salvation" enabled by the cross.

"Bless her provision" is a phrase only used elsewhere about the blessing of Isaac given to his sons for their hunting venison / provision (Gen. 27:7,19,25,30,31,33). The phrase is used six times in Gen. 27. But that blessing of Isaac was later revealed not to be that significant; it was not the Messianic blessing of the true seed of Abraham. And Jacob effectively gives it back to Esau as unnecessary for him (see on Gen. 33:11). So again we get the hint that David is talking in very material terms.

I will satisfy her poor with bread-
Solomon speaks often of how hard work will "satisfy with bread" (Prov. 12:11; 20:13; 28:19). David his father uses the phrase in the context of saying that being 'satisfied with bread' is part of God's gracious blessing (Ps. 132:15). We see here how Solomon became focused upon works, rather than faith in the blessings which come from Divine grace. And yet he uses the words his father had used; but he interprets them as justification of works rather than acceptance of grace.

The ending of poverty meant a time when Israel were obedient to the covenant (Dt. 15:4). But they weren't, and the returning exiles experienced famine (Hag. 1:6). The fulfilment is therefore reapplied to the things of the Lord Jesus.

The reality was that there continued to be poor people in Jerusalem at the time of the restoration. People had to be forced by lot to go and live there.

Psa 132:16

Her priests I will also clothe with salvation, her holy people will shout aloud for joy- Clothing with righteousness is being clothed with salvation (:9). This is the path to salvation for us all; for all believers are the priests.

"Her priests" could be an intensive plural for her one great priest, Messiah, the "horn" who would sprout out of David of :17 [an image used of Messiah in Jer. 23:5, Zech. 6:12, and Ez. 29:2]. For these words are applied to the Lord Jesus in Is. 61:10, "My soul will exult in my God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation".

This is the language of God's Kingdom upon earth (Ps. 149:5). It was God who would make this happen, rather than David's manipulation of the physical ark (:8,9). But as discussed on :8, David mistakenly thought that merely bringing the ark to Zion meant this would come about. The exiles could have fulfilled this in a restored kingdom (Is. 61:10); but most preferred to remain in exile, and those who did return were impenitent and didn't build nor operate the temple system as commanded in Ez. 40-48.

Although there was a special priesthood, it was clearly God's intention that all Israel should be like priests; they were to be a "*Kingdom* of priests" (Ex. 19:6). Israel were all “saints”, and yet saints and priests are paralleled in passages like Ps. 132:16. Israel in the wilderness had clothes which didn’t wear out- just as the Priestly clothes didn’t, and were handed down from generation to generation (so Ex. 29:29 implies).

Psa 132:17

There I will make the horn of David to bud. I have ordained a lamp for my anointed-

The budding or sprouting of a horn from David refers to the Lord Jesus; it is an image used of Messiah in Jer. 23:5, Zech. 6:12, and Ez. 29:2. The reference is to the Messianic King. His appearance in the Lord Jesus would be the time when Zion would again have God's presence and be a holy location. But not before. In more humbler mode, David had recognized that God had not made his seed to grow / sprout in terms of his immediate family (2 Sam. 23:5). He looked forward to the future Lord Jesus. But he and Solomon came to expect the fulfilment through themselves and their immediate line and dynasty of kings. Yahweh is here correcting that.

David understood the Lord's anointed as his son Solomon, his horn who would bud in Messianic glory. Hence David is specific that this budding forth will be in Zion. He begins asking for this in :10, speaking of Solomon as Yahweh's anointed. But now he assumes his prayer has been heard, and this will indeed be the case. David is losing his focus upon the Lord Jesus, the seed who would be his great horn and eternal light in Zion. Lk. 1:69 defines the horn of David as the Lord Jesus; for Solomon failed to be as David hoped. He was the "branch of righteousness" which would "bud [AV "grow up"] unto David" (Jer. 33:15). In the context of the exiles, this individual who would "bud" could have been Zerubbabel, who could have rebuilt the temple as required for it to be filled with God's glory (s.w. Zech. 6:12). But he too failed. The fulfilment has to be in the Lord Jesus, the eternal lamp or light of the world. "Ordained a lamp" is the phrase only elsewhere used for the ordering of the lamps upon the candlestick (Ex. 40:4; Lev. 24:4). The idea is that this Messianic horn of David was to reign as a king-priest amongst the candlestick of the holy place; an image used in Rev. 1 of the Lord Jesus, as Solomon clearly didn't fulfil this.

But a burning lamp is a metaphor for the preservation of the dynasty (Ps. 18:28; 1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Sam. 21:17). David's idea was that his dynasty would not end; but this didn't come about, for the Davidic line of rulers ended at the captivity. It was only to come true in the person of the Lord Jesus. David was the light / lamp of Israel (2 Sam. 21:17), and this Messianic descendant was to be likewise as the seed of David.

The account of bringing the ark to Zion is prefaced by the record of David's sons who were born in Jerusalem. But we read nothing further about them. This could all be read as part of David's attempt to establish his own dynasty in Zion, which God responded to in 2 Sam. 7 by saying that He would establish David's Kingdom in His own way, through David's seed, the Lord Jesus. Ps. 87:5 expresses David's misunderstanding that physical birth in Zion meant Yahweh's establishment: "Yes, of Zion it will be said, This one and that one was born in her; the Most High Himself will establish her". Likewise in Ps. 132:17 David puts words in God's mouth: "There [in Zion / Jerusalem] will I make the horn of David to bud". But the budding of David's horn was fulfilled by God in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the great "son of David", rather than in David having many sons in Jerusalem. The promises of Divine establishment of David's dynasty through the Lord Jesus were therefore a corrective to David's thinking about establishing his dynasty in his own strength.

Psa 132:18

I will clothe his enemies with shame, but on himself, his crown will be splendid-
This again assumes that Solomon is to reign in glory and his enemies shamed. David reasons likewise in Ps. 72. These things were not fulfilled in Solomon, ultimately, for he turned away. But the words are not untrue; they come true in the Lord Jesus, although

this was not the fulfilment which David had in mind at the time. "Splendid" is the word usually translated "blossom", continuing the figure of 'budding' in :17.

The word for "crown" is unusual in that it is also used of the high priest's diadem (Ex. 29:6). The verb for "splendid" means also to sparkle or glitter, and is the word used of the glittering plate of gold bearing the inscription "Holiness to Yahweh" which the High Priest wore, called in Ex. 29:30, "the plate of the holy diadem". The impression is that this king will be a priest-king, after the order of Melchizedek (cp. Jer. 30:21; Zech. 6:11-13). Solomon and David liked to think that their crowns would eternally be upon their descendants, but the promise is not about that- it refers specifically to the Lord Jesus. Hence the disappointment and bitterness of Ps. 89:40: "You renounced the covenant with your servant, defiled his crown in the dust".

PSALMS CHAPTER 133

Psa 133:1

A Song of Ascents. By David-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

See how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to live together in unity!-
The songs of degrees or ascents were sung by the people as they ascended in unity to keep the feasts in Zion. This unity will now be likened to the anointing oil upon Aaron (:2), and the dew (:3). Dew and oil were symbols of the blessing of the Spirit (2 Sam. 1:21). This alone is the basis for true unity. The coming together of brothers in unity was at the feasts, and this is one of the songs of ascents which were sung as the pilgrims ascended to Jerusalem to keep the feasts. Possibly the specific living together in view is

that of the feast of tabernacles. The same unity at feasts looks forward to that to be experienced at the communion meal in our age. "When brothers live together" is a phrase taken from Dt. 25:5, speaking of a family living together on the same inheritance of land. We will comment on :3 that what was initially in view was the intended unity at the Jewish feasts between the northern and southern kingdoms. They were to recall that despite their differences, they were family. And Zion, the temple mount, should have been open to all Israel, whether of Israel or Judah. This was not really accepted by both sides. The ten tribes made their own worship centers, and Judah considered the ten tribes apostate.

"See" suggests an invitation to look at something remarkable. Family life has amazing potential for love and unity, but it is a simple fact that brothers very often fall out with each other, or remain at a distance from each other. There are so many Biblical examples- Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Jew and Arab, Joseph and his brothers, the divisions of the early church, the disunity between Paul and his converts… To see brothers living together in unity is indeed a sight worth drawing attention to.

Psa 133:2

It is like the precious oil on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard; that came down on the edge of his robes-
We note the internal agreement of the Biblical text; the oil was "poured" upon Aaron, so much so that it ran down his beard; but only sprinkled on the priests (Ex. 29:7; Lev. 8:12; 21:10). Aaron the High Priest is here likened to the whole community of Israel. They were all anointed, they were united "in him" by the oil of the spirit, looking ahead to the idea of the body of believers being "in Christ", the anointed one, the High Priest. The flowing down of the oil over Aaron's beard is explained as being like Hermon's dew flowing down the mountains of Zion. "The oil of joy" (Ps. 45:7) speaks of the huge joy amongst God's people when they receive eternal life (:3). Joy cannot really exist unless experienced in the context of others. Our joy will be shared with others who are immortalized, and their joy will be our joy. Aaron is mentioned specifically because there was no custom of anointing the High Priest with oil after the restoration. Oil represents the Spirit, and the Spirit is the basis of unity now and forever. Those who have the fruits of the Spirit and are responding to the Spirit's work will find "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace".

Psa 133:3

like the dew of Hermon, that comes down on the hills of Zion-
"Hills" may be an intensive plural for the one great hill of Zion, the temple mount. The Bible records things at times as they were perceived, even if they were scientifically wrong; the language of demons in the New Testament is an example. And here we have the myth that the dew of Hermon came down as rain in the Jerusalem area. But the idea

is that as Hermon and Zion were part of the same water cycle, so the keeping of the feasts was to be a sign of unity between the north and the south. This received a small fulfilment in Hezekiah's time, whose feasts were attended by the faithful in the northern Kingdom, mingling in unity with the faithful in Judah. "Comes down" is the word used in :2 of the coming down of the oil on Aaron's beard. Both the northern and southern kingdoms were all "brothers" (:1).

For there Yahweh gives the blessing, even life forever-
This may have been the potential at the time of the restoration or even possibly in Hezekiah's time. But the preconditions weren't met, and the whole scenario has been rescheduled and reapplied to the gift of eternal life from the Lord Jesus when He sits in judgment upon David's throne in Zion. This idea of receiving the blessing of eternal life in Zion is sure evidence that the Old Testament teaches conditional rather than inherent immortality. "Life forever" is to be given in the future, at a specific location; and not at death, nor as part of any "immortal soul". The blessing of life was part of the old covenant (Dt. 30:19). But here, "life forever" is the promised blessing, implying that a new covenant [different from the Mosaic covenant] was to be entered which gave life eternal.

The unity spoken of in :1,2 will be achieved "for", "because", eternal life will be granted to man in Zion. "Dew" is a symbol of blessing, hence the parallel here between dew and blessing. It is the blessed hope of eternity which binds men together. We will be eternally united by the grace of what will have happened at a spot here on planet earth known as Zion, the spot where we were changed, immortalized, and began [at least in a physical sense] our eternity. And the Hope of that should bind us together now. If I shall live eternally with you, then we had better be united now.

But all this was precluded by the exiles not living up to this prophetic dream. Ezra and Nehemiah cemented a division between the exiles of Judah who returned from Babylon, and the other Jews and also the Israelite remnants of the ten tribe kingdom. The wonderful picture of unity didn't happen. The eternal life spoken of here would be wonderful because of the unity between those who receive it. "We shall be changed". Mentally and physically, just as lion will still be lion, but shall eat straw like the ox, having been mentally and physically changed. To live for ever alone would be awful. Not even the worse narcissist would really want that. But to live for ever with others... makes us wonder who they are, and how they will be. Here the Gospel meets man at his acutest need; we want eternity, but we don't want it alone, nor with people who will irritate us eternally. The Gospel of the Kingdom meets and answers all those issues. To live in unity as brothers (:1) is indeed a wonderful thing- and it shall be eternally experienced. For now, we see even ourselves "through a glass darkly", and therefore inevitably we misunderstand others. Only then shall we know ourselves even as we are now known by God. We think of the two stage healing of the blind man: "He took hold of

the blind man by the hand and brought him out of the village; and when he had spat on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up, and said: I see men. But I see them as trees, walking. Then Jesus put his hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And his sight was restored, and he saw everyone clearly" (Mk. 8:23-25). As a blind man, he would have had very limited experience of people. He initially saw them merely as part of the landscape, as important to him as trees. But the aim of the miracle was to convict him of this, and lead him to understand people as more than trees, more than just part of the natural creation with as much meaning as trees. That man represented us all; part of coming to the light, of receiving spiritual sight, is to perceive the value and meaning of persons; to see the world of persons rather than a world of things. And in the Kingdom finally, we shall see people as we should, to understand the world as a world of persons rather than vague objects we encounter or collide with as we stumble through life.

PSALMS CHAPTER 134

Psa 134:1 A Song of Ascents-
Or 'degrees'. Hezekiah's response to being granted another 15 years of life was to edit and produce the Songs of Degrees, so named after the degrees of the sundial. Four of the 15 Psalms were by David, one by Solomon; and the other 10 it seems Hezekiah wrote himself but left anonymous. These ten Psalms would reflect the ten degrees by which the sun-dial went backwards. The point to note is that Hezekiah taught others in an anonymous way in response to the grace he had received. True preaching reflects a certain artless selflessness. These songs of ascents were presumably also intended to be sung by the exiles as they returned to Zion, and then every time they went up to Jerusalem to keep a feast. But there is no evidence this happened. For they didn't return in the kind of faith implied in these Psalms. The plural "ascents" would then be an intensive plural referring to the one great ascent, to Zion. Much of the language of these Psalms is typical of David's language when under persecution by Saul. But the Psalm was reapplied to Hezekiah, and then to the exiles on their return from Babylon, and then by extension to all God's people on their journey zionwards.

Look! Praise Yahweh, all you servants of Yahweh, who stand by night in Yahweh's house!-
The only feast kept at night was Passover. Perhaps that is the feast in view, and this Psalm was to be sung by those going up to Zion to keep it. However we note from 1 Chron. 9:33 that the priests served day and night in the first temple, possibly because David intended praise to be continually performed there. Alhough there is little evidence that happened.

Psa 134:2

Lift up your hands in the sanctuary. Praise Yahweh!-
This could be specifically about the priests, who were allowed into the sanctuary. Or it could be looking ahead to a day when all "servants of Yahweh" (:1), regardless of descent, could enter the sanctuary and praise Him there.

Psa 134:3

May Yahweh bless you from Zion; even He who made heaven and earth-
The blessing of Yahweh coming out of Zion was what was possible in the restored Kingdom of God; it would be associated with Yahweh Himself dwelling in Zion (Ps. 134:3; 135:21). This would be the time when the temple vision of Ez. 40-48 was obeyed by the exiles, and the city called Yahweh Shammah, "Yahweh is there". But at the time of the exiles' return, it was precluded by their impenitence and refusal to build the temple and city according to the commands of Ez. 40-48, and the fact the majority refused to participate in the program and remained in Persia / Babylon. The blessing from Zion is that spoken of in the preceding, matching Ps. 133:3- eternal life granted there at the day of judgment.

PSALMS CHAPTER 135

Psa 135:1

Praise Yah! Praise the name of Yahweh! Praise Him, you servants of Yahweh-
This opening verse is an invitation to the Levites or priests as Yahweh's servants to begin the praise at a feast, used also in Ps. 113:1.

Psa 135:2

you who stand in the house of Yahweh, in the courts of our God's house-
This therefore could be a Davidic psalm reused later when the temple was built. But the sanctuary could still be called God's house, and it had courts. Perhaps :2 refers to the worshippers in the outer court, and :1 to the priests and Levites. The idea is that the religious specialists praise God just as much as those who can only enter the courts, be they of the Gentiles, women etc. The psalm concludes with the same parallel between the Levites and the ordinary worshippers.

Psa 135:3

Praise Yah, for Yahweh is good. Sing praises to His name, for that is pleasant-
The grammar could imply that God's Name is "pleasant". Praise is to be motivated by

appreciating what we are praising. And the essence of Yahweh is summarized in His Name.

Psa 135:4

For Yah has chosen Jacob for Himself; Israel for His own possession-
An inheritance / possession was the most personal, intimate possession a man could have. And for Yahweh, the God of infinite possession, His wayward, tiny people were His "own possession". Yet they would only be this if they were obedient and loyal to Him (Dt. 7:6 cp. Ex. 19:5). They weren't; but here we see the triumph of His absolute love and the grace of imputed righteousness. For He counted them as "His own possession" anyway. And it is that grace which is to be praised (:1,2). AV "His peculiar treasure" sums up the idea. A king may have had storehouses of gold, but he had his "peculiar treasure", things of particular personal value like heirlooms. And that's us to God.

Psa 135:5

For I know that Yahweh is great, that our Lord is above all gods-
The invitation of :1 and :2 was for a mass of priests, Levites and ordinary worshippers to praise God together, *en masse.* But that praise was to be essentially personal; and so it should be or us today. The reference to Yahweh's supremacy above all other gods was because this Psalm was to be used when the exiles had been restored, and there was an appeal to the Gentiles to repent and accept Israel's God.

This is a quotation of Jethro's words in Ex. 18:11. The shift to the first person, "I know...", is putting the Gentile Jethro as representative of all singing the psalm. Possibly the reference to those who stand in the temple courts (:2) has in mind the Gentiles in the court of the Gentiles.

Psa 135:6

Whatever Yahweh pleased, that He has done, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps-
The reference to the seas is emphasized because they are representative of the Gentile nations. This Psalm is an appeal to them to repent; and to accept and perceive how God had worked His pleasure or will amongst the nations in history. And that was according to the same word of purpose which had created all things, towards the final outworking of His saving purpose.

Psa 135:7

who causes the clouds to rise from the ends of the land; who makes lightnings with the rain; who brings forth the wind out of His treasuries-
God's causative power in the natural creation was just as much at work in the path of the nations. "The ends of the *eretz*", the land promised to Abraham, were specifically Assyria and Babylon, the classical abusers of God's people. And His word could work amongst those peoples just as much as it caused the clouds and winds from those areas to come upon Israel. The Hebrew word for "clouds" is that elsewhere translated "prince", "governor" or "ruler". God's activity in the natural creation was to be seen in His work amongst people.

Psa 135:8

who struck the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and animal-
This otherwise awful act was to be the object of Israel's praise, just as the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea is to be praised as an example of God's grace enduring for ever (Ps. 136:15). One take on the situation is that God foreknew that if He had not killed those Egyptians, they would have killed the Israelites.

Psa 135:9

who sent signs and wonders into the midst of you, Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on all his servants-
We enquire why "Egypt" is addressed specifically, as if present. Perhaps the idea is that this Psalm was to be used when the exiles had been restored, and there was an appeal to the Gentiles to repent and accept Israel's God. They were being asked to perceive the wonder of God's hand in history and the rightness of His judgments upon them. "Pharaoh and... his servants" clearly contrasts with Yahweh and His servants, Israel (:1).

Psa 135:10

who struck many nations, and killed mighty kings-
The nations in view are presumably those of Canaan (:11), alluding to Dt. 7:1. Josh. 12:24 lists 31 nations / kings destroyed by Joshua.

Psa 135:11

Sihon king of the Amorites, Og king of Bashan and all the kingdoms of Canaan-
If this Psalm was used in the context of the exiles, the encouragement was that no matter how strong the Samaritan opposition appeared to be it would crumble easily. For no local peoples of the land would stop God's purpose to give the land to His people.

Psa 135:12

and gave their land for a heritage, a heritage to Israel, His people-
Israel were God's heritage (:4), and the land was their heritage. The idea of giving a heritage suggests the inheritance first belonged to the One who gave it. This would suggest God considered the land of Canaan as personally His in a way the rest of the planet wasn't. And He in turn gave it to Israel His people. Psalms 135 and 136 are clearly paired, and the parallel here is in the invitation to praise God for His grace in giving Israel the land as an inheritance (Ps. 136:21). It was by grace because they weren't obedient to the covenant, they didn't act as God's children and rejected Him for their idols; but still He gave them what was really the inheritance for His loving children.

Psa 135:13

Your name, Yahweh, endures forever; Your renown, Yahweh, throughout all generations-
God's Name is clearly not simply the lexical item "Yahweh". His Name is His "renown", His reputation and character expressed throughout history; and always characterized by His saving of His people by grace.

Psa 135:14

For Yahweh will judge His people, and be sorry for His servants-
We note the parallel between God's judgment of His people, and His saving pity for them. There is no need to fear judgment day; David in the Psalms often looks forward to it rather than fears it. Judgment day will be the articulation of God's Name or character (:13); which is dominated by His saving pity for people. This verse is read by some as meaning that God will firstly judge His people with punishment, and then be sorry for them. But that is to miss the parallelism in the Hebrew poetry here. His judging *is* His "being sorry for His people". All this said, it could be argued that the experience of judgment is for our benefit, to transition us from how we currently are to how we shall eternally be. Man comes before Divine judgment and is condemned. But God's pity saves us, just as the Divine whirlwind of condemnation came upon Job, but out of it came a conviction of sin unto his salvation. There we see the end of Yahweh, that He is very pitiful and of tender mercy. "Be sorry" is AV "repent Himself". We will be judged / condemned, but God re-thinks it and saves us, because He pities us. This is surely alluding to Dt. 32:36 "The LORD shall judge His people and repent Himself for His servants when He sees that their power is gone".

Psa 135:15

The idols of the nations are silver and gold, the work of men's hands-
The idea is that the Canaanite nations were destroyed because of their idolatry. But Ezekiel records that Israel left Egypt with the idols of Egypt; and we know they carried the tabernacle of their god Remphan as well as that of Yahweh, all through the wilderness. This is why the parallel Ps. 136 invites praise of Yahweh's grace for all these things. In the context of the exiles, the idols of Babylon / Persia were indeed dumb. And yet according to Ezekiel and the implications of the book of Esther, idolatry was rife amongst the exiles. So this may have been also an appeal to the exiles to see the idols for what they were, and to consider how they had been historically defeated at the conquest of Canaan.

Psa 135:16

They have mouths, but they can't speak; they have eyes, but they can't see-
The implication is that Yahweh has all these faculties. This implies that Yahweh is a personal God, and we are made in His image physically, although not morally.

Psa 135:17

They have ears, but they can't hear; neither is there any breath in their mouths-
See on :16. This mockery of idolatry is similar of that addressed to the exiles in Is. 44:9-20; and the context is the same. The exiles are being recalled from idolatry. The implication is that the God of Israel doesn't just have a dead semblance of human form, but actually is real and living, in human form; for we are made in His image. His word is spoken through His throat (Ps. 115:7), and elsewhere He is presented as speaking through lips (Job 23:12). His word has true breath / Spirit.

Psa 135:18

Those who make them will be like them; yes, everyone who trusts in them-
This is an abiding principle. We become like that which we worship and trust in. The process of trusting Yahweh will make us like Him. The requirement for faith and worship is therefore for our benefit. The idols have been portrayed as only appearing human; effectively they are dead, with eyes etc. which don't function. And those who worship them become likewise- not really alive as intended, not sensing reality as they are intended. Those who worship vanities become vain (Jer. 2:5). This was exactly the message to the exiles (Is. 44:9).

Psa 135:19 House of Israel, praise Yahweh! House of Aaron, praise Yahweh!-
As explained on :20, the house of Aaron are paralleled with that of all Israel. It could be

that this Psalm looks ahead to the day of the new covenant promised to the exiles, when there would be a new priesthood no longer simply predicated upon descent from Aaron.

Psa 135:20

House of Levi, praise Yahweh! You who fear Yahweh, praise Yahweh!-
As it was God's intention that Israel were to be a nation of priests to the rest of the world, so the new Israel likewise are to *all* discharge the priestly functions of teaching their brethren (Ex. 19:6 cp. 1 Pet. 2:5; Rev. 1:6; 5:9,10). Under the new covenant, we should *all* teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). Indeed, God told Israel [unrecorded in the historical records]: "Ye are gods [*elohim*] and all of you are sons of the Most High" (Ps. 82:6 RV). Further, Ps. 96:9 makes the paradigm breaking statement that even the Gentiles could come before Yahweh of Israel in holy, priestly array- they too could aspire to the spirit of priesthood (Ps. 96:9 RVmg.). Moses spoke of how all Israel should pray that God would establish the work of their hands (Ps. 90:17)- but this was in fact his special request for the blessing of Levi, the priestly tribe (Dt. 33:11). Ps. 135:19,20 parallels all Israel with the priestly family: "Bless the Lord, O house of Israel: bless the Lord, O house of Aaron: bless the Lord, O house of Levi: ye that fear the Lord, bless the Lord... praise *ye* the Lord". All Israel were to aspire to the spirit of priesthood. Indeed, the Psalms often parallel the house of Aaron (i.e. the priesthood) with the whole nation (Ps. 115:9,10,12; 118:2,3).

Psa 135:21

Blessed be Yahweh from Zion, He who dwells at Jerusalem. Praise Yah!-
The blessing of Yahweh coming out of Zion was what was possible in the restored Kingdom of God; it would be associated with Yahweh Himself dwelling in Zion (Ps. 128:5; 134:3; 135:21). This would be the time when the temple vision of Ez. 40-48 was obeyed by the exiles, and the city called Yahweh Shammah, "Yahweh is there". But at the time of the exiles' return, it was precluded by their impenitence and refusal to build the temple and city according to the commands of Ez. 40-48, and the fact the majority refused to participate in the program and remained in Persia / Babylon.

PSALMS CHAPTER 136

Psa 136:1

Give thanks to Yahweh, for He is good; for His grace endures forever-
This Psalm is paired with Ps. 135. It could be that it is the song of praise called for at the conclusion of Ps. 135.

Psa 136:2

Give thanks to the God of gods; for His grace endures forever-
The other idols are not baldly stated to be non-existent. But Yahweh is so far superior to them that they have no effective existence. Just as in the New Testament demons don't exist but they are spoken of as having some existence, so here the non-existent idols are assumed to exist, for a moment and for the purpose of the argument. But Yahweh is their God and Lord (:3). What makes Yahweh so far above any idols is the quality of His grace, His undeserved favour, a concept quite unknown to any idol, ancient or modern.

Psa 136:3

Give thanks to the Lord of lords; for His grace endures forever-
See on :2. This title of Yahweh is applied to the Lord Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). This is no evidence that "Jesus is God"; the titles of Yahweh can be justly shared with His Son without making Yahweh and His Son one and the same person.

Psa 136:4

to Him who alone does great wonders; for His grace endures forever-
As discussed on Ps. 71:19, the "great / wondrous things" performed by God were His forgiveness and salvation of a condemned sinner like David. This is described in Ps. 71:19 as God doing "great things", the phrase used of the great things worked in visible miracles in Egypt (Ps. 106:21) and at creation (Ps. 136:7). But the forgiveness of people like David is no less a great miracle. Such great things are done because of His mercy / grace (Ps. 136:4).

Psa 136:5

to Him who by understanding made the heavens; for His grace endures forever-
The same "understanding" and grace coded into the natural creation is manifest to us His sinful people. His grace is extended to us because He "understands"; just as we are more generous and forgiving to others when we understand their background issues. But Yahweh, whose sensitivity, awareness and understanding is seen throughout His creation, therefore exercises grace all the more.

Psa 136:6

to Him who spread out the earth above the waters; for His grace endures forever-
This was the same argument as used to the exiles in Is. 42:5; 44:24. But it was originally David's understanding of creation (Ps. 24:2). So again we see evidence that a Davidic

Psalm was rewritten under inspiration and used by the exiles. Creation itself is the great example of God's grace, a connection often made by David (e.g. Ps. 119:64). To create us and our environment was and is the ultimate grace.

Psa 136:7

to Him who made the great lights; for His grace endures forever-
The stress is as in LXX "To him who alone made great lights". There were multiple theories and myths about the origins of the sun and moon, as there are today. The emphasis is that Yahweh "alone" created them. He was not in league with other gods. And to create sun and moon, like all creation (see on :6), was itself a sign of grace.

Psa 136:8

the sun to rule by day; for His grace endures forever-
Perhaps the idea is that the very existence of light and darkness, good and evil, is not only of God's creation but is itself a sign of grace. Perhaps that is something we will only perceive once in God's Kingdom and sharing His nature.

Psa 136:9

the moon and stars to rule by night; for His grace endures forever-
All the surrounding beliefs and theories were to the effect that the night and darkness were controlled by radical evil. The grace of it all is that this isn't the case; the night / darkness is ruled, under God's control, by what He has created.

Psa 136:10

to Him who struck down the Egyptian firstborn; for His grace endures forever-
The slaying of the firstborn is here presented as praiseworthy because it reflects God's grace. One take on the situation is that God foreknew that if He had not killed those Egyptians, they would have killed the Israelites. Another is that without that plague, the Egyptians wouldn't have allowed the Israelites to leave (:11).

Psa 136:11

and brought out Israel from among them; for His grace endures forever-
The bringing out of Israel was of grace because they took with them the idols of Egypt, and carried the tabernacle of their gods as well as that of Yahweh. Yet Yahweh still brought them out, delivering and saving them by grace alone.

Psa 136:12

with a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm; for His grace endures forever-
"Outstretched" is the word for "incline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

Psa 136:13

to Him who divided the Red Sea apart; for His grace endures forever-
"Into parts". Passing between parts was the metaphor of covenant relationship. The passing through the Red Sea looked ahead to baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2), which likewise is the entry into covenant.

Psa 136:14

and made Israel to pass through its midst; for His grace endures forever-
See on :13. Perhaps the grace in this was that they were "made to pass through", when they actually wished to return to Egypt. "To pass through / over" is the Hebrew word from whence the word "Hebrew" comes, 'passers over'. But God made them His people, He made them 'Hebrews', 'passers over'. Passing through the Red Sea is like baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). There is likewise a sense in which we are baptized by God, by the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). He takes the initiative and 'makes us pass over'; by His grace.

Psa 136:15

but overthrew Pharaoh and His army in the Red Sea; for His grace endures forever-
The destruction of the Egyptians is cited here as an example of God's grace to Israel,

and it is likewise used in Ps. 106:11. One take on the situation is that God foreknew that if He had not killed those Egyptians, they would have killed the Israelites.

Psa 136:16

to Him who led His people through the wilderness; for His grace endures forever-
The people were led by the pillar of cloud and fire, the Angel / Spirit (Num. 14:14). This looked ahead to how after baptism (cp. the Red Sea crossing) we are led of the Spirit (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Mt. 4:1). But the leading of the Spirit is grace; and the Spirit and grace are often connected in the New Testament. We are not left to find our own way to God's Kingdom after crossing the Red Sea. We are led, and that is by grace.

Psa 136:17

to Him who struck great kings; for His grace endures forever-
The Hezekiah reference would have been to the king of Assyria surrounding Jerusalem, who was called by the same phrase, a "great king" (Is. 36:4,13). Yahweh's historical victory over "great kings" by His grace towards His people was to inspire the later Jews with hope that His grace would likewise render powerless the "great king" of Assyria. Always Biblical history is harnessed to encourage present faith; for "His grace endures forever", this is the constant theme in all God's dealings with his people.

Psa 136:18

and killed mighty kings; for His grace endures forever-
"Mighty" in the sense of many of them. Josh. 12:24 lists 31 nations / kings destroyed by Joshua.

Psa 136:19

Sihon king of the Amorites; for His grace endures forever-
The record in Num. 21 says that Sihon chose to attack Israel when they ought to have just let the people pass through their land. Israel defeated them and took their territory, which happened to include Moab, which Sihon had recently conquered (Num. 21:21-30). So by one battle with Sihon, Israel ended up conquering a large area. All this was of God's grace rather than their prowess in battle, or faith.

Psa 136:20

Og king of Bashan; for His grace endures forever-
As with Sihon (see on :20), Og attacked Israel and God gave them a victory over Og. But

this was by grace; although no details of the battle are recorded in Num. 21, we can assume that the victory involved some special grace from God. Or perhaps the grace of it all was in the fact that the territory of Sihon and Og was on the east of Jordan, and it had not been God's intention to give this to Israel at that time. But by grace He gave them more than originally intended. Such was His love.

Psa 136:21

and gave their land as an inheritance; for His grace endures forever-
It was by grace because they weren't obedient to the covenant, they didn't act as God's children and rejected Him for their idols; but still He gave them what was really the inheritance for His loving children.

Psa 136:22

even a heritage to Israel His servant; for His grace endures forever-
A people were "servants" of their gods. Israel had multiple gods whilst in the wilderness, and even carried the tabernacle of their god Remphan along with that of Yahweh. Yet by grace, God counted Israel as His servants; even though they were serving other gods.

Psa 136:23

who remembered us in our low estate; for His grace endures forever-
"Low estate" is the term often used for those humbled by God's condemnation, e.g. the proud who are brought low (2 Sam. 22:28; Job 40:11; Ps. 75:7; 147:6; Prov. 29:23 and very often in the prophets). And yet God by grace remembers and lifts up even those humbled by such condemnation. This is absolute grace; to save even those suffering condemnation for their sins.

Psa 136:24

and has delivered us from our adversaries; for His grace endures forever-
God "delivered" Israel into the hand of their "adversaries" (s.w. Neh. 9:27). But it was God who also delivered them *from* those adversaries, even [in the case of the exiles returning from Babylon] without their repentance. This again is "grace upon grace".

Psa 136:25

who gives food to every creature; for His grace endures forever-
This is an Old Testament anticipation of the Lord's teaching that if God feeds ravens, then how much more shall He provide for His beloved people. Indeed it would seem

that the Lord may have drawn His teaching in Lk. 12:24 from this verse. Again we see how grace is encoded within the entire creation.

Psa 136:26

Oh give thanks to the God of heaven; for His grace endures forever-
"God of heaven" is a phrase associated with the books dating from the exile. The contrast is with the idols; and Yahweh's abiding grace is what places Him in an altogether different category to them.

PSALMS CHAPTER 137

Psa 137:1

By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down, and yes, we wept when we remembered Zion-

We must note that the Psalm isn't describing what was happening at the time it was written. The perfect verb forms are clear that this is a recollection of the past. It is a 'look back in anger', recalling what had happened in Babylon; possibly a reference to the exiles being forced into slave labour digging the canals of Babylon. Ezekiel was by the river Chebar in Babylon, but Chebar was a man made canal. Hence "there" rather than "here" in :1,3. It would be most appropriate to the thoughts of someone who had been in exile in Babylon and had now returned. Some of the returned exiles were sad on their return (they wept at the small size of the rebuilt temple, Ezra 3:12). It is not a psalm of faith but rather of bitterness and regret; the good news of the restored Kingdom had failed to register with the author and there is no looking forward to the restored Kingdom. The only hope for the future appears to be in the final verses- hoping for judgment upon their abusers and not at all looking forward to future salvation. There is no gratitude for the grace of the restoration; the bitterness about the past has swamped any gratitude or praise. The exiles returned to Zion by grace alone, and were intended to return with joy and re-establish God's Kingdom. But here we have an example of where a past trauma or hurt is so great that no matter how blessed a person is, they remain angry and bitter. In contrast, Ps. 126 describes the joy of some who did return from Babylon: "When Yahweh brought back those who returned to Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing... Yahweh has done great things for us, and we are glad... Those who sow in tears will reap in joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed for sowing, will certainly come again with joy carrying his sheaves". And so there is a choice- to let God's grace psychologically transform us and to accept the prospect of eternity offered us, or to remain playing the

tape of the past to the point that not even the offer of restoration and life eternal will change us. If we want to remain rooted in the past, we will remain there even if God has moved us on. Ps. 137 is preceded by the Songs of Ascents, intended to be sung by the joyful, faithful exiles as they returned to Zion. I suggest Ps. 137 is inserted and inspired at this point to show that in fact this wasn't the case, and some [the majority, probably] returned in the grateful spirit of Ps. 137 rather than Ps. 126. Indeed all the songs of ascents have the element of worship and thanksgiving. Ps. 137 has no gratitude, the only joy being to fantasize about bashing the brains out of a child of one of those who had verbally abused the Jews in Babylon. This violent revenge fantasy is far out of proportion to the abuse suffered, which was verbal and not physical. It is the fantasy of someone embittered and distorted in their thinking, uninfluenced by God's grace. See on :8. Ezekiel saw the cherubim glory of Yahweh above the Chebar canal, with the implication it was going to return from there to Zion. This psalmist is ignorant of that and sees only bitter memories of words and actions, lost in himself rather than seeing the higher hand of God, working in glory towards the salvation and restoration of His people. Daniel likewise saw visions of Israel's final salvation and the destruction of her oppressors by a river of Babylon, the Ulai (Dan. 8:2).

Jer. 17:4 had prophesied that Judah would serve their enemies in a foreign land, with Babylon clearly in view. But having said that, Jer. 17:8 goes on to say that "They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit". This was what should have been happening spiritually by the rivers of Babylon. The psalmist precludes that by being so caught up in bitterness.

Prayer was made by the Jews by rivers (Acts 16:13) and synagogues in the diaspora were often built by rivers- the water was needed for the purification rituals. The memory is of a prayer and worship service that was disrupted by mocking locals. And it was a worship service that never happened because they hung up their harps and couldn't sing or worship. Their weeping was because they failed to perceive that they didn't in fact need "Zion", the temple, to worship God. The Boney M upbeat version of this Psalm has perhaps become a major barrier to its' correct popular interpretation.

Psalm 137 speaks of Judah in captivity, apparently initially as a result of Sennacherib's invasion as recorded in 2 Kings 18:13. And yet it seems to have been re-written with reference to Judah's captivity at the hands of the Babylonians some years later. This sort of thing would've happened with whole books. J.W.Thirtle claims that the original manuscripts of most Old Testament books were sealed with Hezekiah's seal, as they had been re-written and edited during his time (J.W. Thirtle, *Old Testament Problems* (Printland Publishers reprint, 2004 facsimile of the 1914 edition) p. 301). Scripture itself testifies to him and his men re-organizing the writings of David. Isaiah, with its initial

application to Hezekiah, and then its obvious reference to the captivity and restoration, is another example.

This weeping for Zion may have been intended to be in the spirit of Is. 30:19, where the weepers for Zion are to be restored to her. To "remember Zion" could mean that they were seeking to bring Zion to God's memory, in the spirit of Is. 62:6,7, so that He would fulfil the promises of her restoration.

Psa 137:2

On the willows in its midst we hung up our harps-
Their weeping was therefore not at the prison camps by the Chebar river, where Ezekiel was, but at the rivers in the midst of Babylon (:1). However it seems that the Psalmist is recalling two incidents- by the canals they were digging, and then in the midst of Babylon where there were also canals dug by the Jewish exiles. Perhaps they chose the willows in allusion to Is. 44:4, which predicted that the revived exiles would spring up like willows next to water. For these willows were next to the rivers of Babylon (:1). However, willows didn't grow in Babylon, and the only trees by the waters of Babylon appear to have been palms. Perhaps they are described as willows especially in order to highlight the connection with Is. 44:4.

The hanging up of harps was "for" or because they had been asked to sing the songs of Zion (:3). It speaks of a refusal to sing when asked. But they had harps with them and were possibly singing the songs of Zion as part of the weeping by the rivers in :1. But when asked to sing when mocked by their captors, they hung up their harps. However the fact they had their harps with them means they had been singing them. So this falsifies their excuse that they couldn't sing such songs on Gentile soil, "in a foreign land". Likewise the Psalmist on one hand refuses to sing, but then curses himself with being unable to sing and play the harp if he will forget Zion. The curse implies he is able to sing and play the harp and does so and will continue doing so, for Zion's sake. All this isn't the only hint within the Psalm that the author is not of complete integrity.

Psa 137:3

For there, those who led us captive asked us for songs. Those who tormented us demanded us songs of joy: Sing us one of the songs of Zion!-

As discussed on :1 and :6, the Psalmist is remembering words spoken and endlessly rehearsing them in his mind, even making up this song about them. And he came to exaggerate the dimensions of that verbal abuse. For he speaks of being "tormented", made to howl, tortured, by what perhaps only one person had said. For there is no

evidence the Babylonians abused the Jews in captivity, indeed we see that they soon rose to power in Babylon and then Persia [think of Esther, Mordecai, Daniel and his three friends, Ezra, Nehemiah]. It was their prosperity in Babylon which meant they were generally unresponsive to Cyrus' encouragement to return to Zion.

Most of the Jews were also idol worshippers, that was why they were in captivity. So it is somewhat hypocritical to so bitterly object to being mocked about the songs of Zion. And [s]he ought to have realized that the exile was deserved- Judah had sinned deeply against God with multiple chances to repent but had refused. As Ezra and Nehemiah reflected, they had been punished less than their iniquities deserved. The prophets had said that a sword would chase them into captivity and devour them there; but God relented and was so gracious to them. Indeed they were told to accept the 70 years captivity, “build houses and live in them, plant vineyards and eat their fruits” (Jer. 29:5). The Biblical picture of the exiles in captivity is not at all of torture and abuse, rather of quick prosperity. But the psalmist, like many today, picks upon one isolated, out of character incident, dwells upon, ignores God's huge grace, goes on to connect it with another abuse incident in the past [the words of the Edomites, :7) and becomes obsessed with the narrative, refusing to move on from it and dwelling upon it, even though he is apparently now back in Jerusalem.

What were the "songs of Zion"? Maybe the songs of ascents in the psalms preceding Ps. 137, that spoke of the exiles returning to Zion with joy. That return with joy seemed impossible of fulfilment as they slogged away digging the Chebar canal. Instead of looking forward in faith to that day when the exiles would return, this Psalmist is bitter. He will sing them, he refuses to not play his harp, but he does so with such bitterness. Just as we may pay lip service to the message of the restored Kingdom, but our bitterness is too great to feel the joy.

Another view is that the "songs of joy" were "Yahweh's song" (:4), the songs sung at the time of "the day of your gladness" (Num. 10:10; Ezra 6:22 s.w. "joy"). The exiles were unable to keep the feasts and so they didn't use these songs any more. But we may well enquire how their Babylonian captors knew about these songs. The prophets repeatedly point out that Israel prostituted Yahweh's religion with that of the gods of Babylon. This would explain why the Babylonians now mocked the Jews' religion.

Reasoning back from the addresses to the captives in later Isaiah, it appears they thought that Yahweh was a God who just operated in the land of Israel. The captives felt they couldn’t sing the songs of Yahweh in a Gentile land (Ps. 137). They thought that now they were outside His land and far from His temple, they were forgotten by Him (Is. 49:14,15), their cause ignored by Him (Is. 40:27) and they were “cast off” from relationship with Him (Is. 41:9). Hence Isaiah emphasizes that Yahweh is the creator and the God of the whole planet, and His presence is literally planet-wide.

"Tormented" is literally 'to make to howl'. But this kind of abuse was only on their initial reception in Babylon. By Esther's time, the Jews were a respected and prosperous community. "They that rule over them make them to howl" (Is. 52:5 s.w.). But the redemption was to be through the suffering servant which Is. 52 goes on to speak of. But this didn't happen. The soft life in Babylon meant that the exiles no longer wanted to be redeemed from it. Just prior to the captivity, the people had been asked to howl in repentance (s.w. Jer. 4:8; 25:34; Ez. 21:12; 30:2). They hadn't, and now they were made to howl in Babylon; but the intention was that they would do so in repentance, which would end the captivity.

"Joy" is the word used in :6 of how Jerusalem is his greatest "joy". And yet as noted on :6 the joy of the Psalmist is then sarcastically stated to be the smashing out of the brains of the children of those who asked for these songs.

Psa 137:4

How could we sing Yahweh's song in a foreign land?-
The Babylonians taunted the captive Jews with requests to sing them the temple songs, "Yahweh's song" (Ps. 137:3,4). This conscious mocking of Yahweh-worship shows how the Babylonians conceived of the conflict with Israel in terms of their gods being opposed to Yahweh, whom they claimed to have vanquished. Today's latter day Babylonians see their struggle within the similar construct of Mohammed against Israel's God, Yahweh.

The Jews seem to have believed that Yahweh was only active in the territory of Israel, and had failed to grasp the repeated teaching of the Psalms that Israel's God has universal power. So their refusal to sing Yahweh's song outside of the land reflected a serious lack of comprehension of His power and presence.

Again the arrogance and hypocrisy of the psalmist comes out in arguing that they cannot sing Yahweh's songs outside of Israel because they are in an unclean land. It was Judah's sins that had made them unclean, not their geographical location. Isaiah recognized he lived "in the midst of a people of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5), and God Himself spoke of them being "a polluted land". Haggai clearly states that the returned exiles were unclean and offered unclean offerings. So the psalmist is simply failing to accept the consequences of his own and his peoples' sinfulness.

Psa 137:5

If I forget you, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill-
The truth was that the exiles had 'forgotten' Zion in that they had adopted the local gods. Hence Is. 65:11: "You who forsake Yahweh, who forget My holy mountain". The Psalmist insists that he has not forgotten Zion. The attitude of the exiles was that God had

forgotten Zion, although He protests that despite the 70 year exile, He has not done so (Is. 49:14,15; Lam. 5:20 s.w.). So this protestation that *they* had not forgotten Zion could be taken as implying they were more passionate than God for the restoration. The reality was that the exiles forgot their God (s.w. Is. 51:13; Jer. 2:32; 13:25; 18:15; 23:27; Ez. 23:35; Hos. 2:13), but not the external trappings of their religion, epitomized in Zion. This difference between religion and true spirituality remains an ever abiding issue for us all.

The skill of the right hand may be an allusion to the harp playing of :2. Hence GNB "May I never be able to play the harp again if I forget you, Jerusalem!". The connection is perhaps with how the other Jews had hung up their harps (:2). The psalmist however refuses to hang up his harp. He differs from the rest of God's people in refusing to hang up his harp, because he took that as a sign of forgetting Zion. The others didn't forget Zion, but hung up their harps. He says he will only hang up his harp if he forgets Zion. So despite his bitterness, he has hope for restoration and perhaps believes that in fact worship is still possible even without Zion. The take away is quite simply that even if the rest of God's people mope and give up, we are to stand with our back to the world and to the brotherhood if necessary, and retain our hope.

Psa 137:6

Let my tongue stick to the roof of my mouth if I don't remember you; if I don't prefer Jerusalem above my chief joy-
Following on from :5, the Psalmist is cursing himself with the inability to play the harp and also to sing- were he to forget Zion. To be struck with dumbness was a curse for disobedience, experienced on behalf of the exiles by Ezekiel. The implication would then be that the psalmist felt personally innocent and undeserving of any curse. And this was the problem with the exiles; we compare this attitude with that of Nehemiah and Daniel, who fully accepted their personal part in the guilt of God's people. But as noted on :5, the context may still be that of worship and singing in :2,3. Although the captives refused to perform their songs for their captors, the psalmist implies he will continue praising God with the songs of Zion privately. hence GNB "May I never be able to sing again if I do not remember you".

This Psalm may well have originated in something David wrote about Jerusalem, perhaps whilst in exile from her at the time of Absalom's rebellion. I noted on Ps. 15:1 that "Yahweh, who shall dwell in Your sanctuary? Who shall live on Your holy hill?" was written before David took the hill of Zion from the Jebusites. He felt they shouldn't be living there because of how they lived so immorally, and was eager to make it his own inheritance by conquest; and it seems from Ps. 16:5,6 that David considered Zion his personal inheritance where he was to live. He considered Zion his great joy (Ps. 137:6), the ultimately pleasant place (Ps. 48:2).

On one hand, the Psalmist is right to long for Jerusalem above all, seeing that many of his brethren were caught up in love for Babylon and chose to remain there even after Cyrus commanded and enabled them to return. But the Psalmist mentions another joy-the happiness of smashing the brains out of the little children of the Babylonians and Edomites (:9). Here we see spiritual schizophrenia. Rejoicing in both the right thing and in the wrong thing. The call of the Father and Son is to wholehearted devotion to Him. And yet we are surrounded by examples of people who on one hand have great devotion to Him and yet in other sectors of their lives are devoted to what is wrong and evil. And we all have that tendency. The thoughts of this anonymous author are recorded here for our learning.

Psa 137:7

Remember, Yahweh, against the children of Edom, the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it! Raze it even to its foundation!-
"Remember" means to remember at the day of judgment in Neh. 6:14; 13:29. The Psalmist is playing the tape of the hard words that had been said to him whilst working in forced labour on an irrigation canal. But he also recites to himself the words of the Edomites, as they urged the Babylonian soldiers to remove even the foundation stones of the buildings in Jerusalem. Only the gift of a new spirit, a new heart, can remove this tendency to play the tape of others' hurtful words. And this psalmist demands an out of proportion punishment for these words. Perhaps Boney M got it right when they add to this Psalm the exhortation: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my mouth be acceptable in Thy sight". Get a grip on our thinking and replace bitterness with spirituality.

On one hand, the Psalmist is obsessed with the words of the Edomites, urging the Babylonians to raze Jerusalem to tis foundations. And his desire to smash the brains out of their little children is a response that is not proportionate. And yet Obadiah 10-13 describes God's anger with Edom as being more because of their mental attitudes and sins of omission, which He describes as their "violence", rather than for what they actually did: "For the violence done to your brother Jacob, shame will cover you… In the day that you stood on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots for Jerusalem, even you were like one of them. But don't look down on your brother in the day of his disaster, and don't rejoice over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction. Don't speak proudly in the day of distress. Don't enter into the gate of My people in the day of their calamity. Don't look down on their affliction in the day of their calamity".

"Raze it!" is literally to make naked, to denude. But this is the word used of how God would do this to His people, because they had made themselves naked to the nations around them and their gods, acting as a prostitute: "Because the daughters of Zion are

haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes, mincing along as they go, tinkling with their feet, therefore the Lord will strike with a scab the heads of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will lay bare [s.w. "raze", to reveal, make naked, expose] their secret parts" (Is. 3:16,17). The Psalmist should have recognized that wrong as the Edomites were, this was all part of God's just judgment of His people's sin. But the psalmist fails to see that sin has consequence, that Divine judgment is legitimate, and focuses solely on the consequences as it this is somehow unspeakably unfair.

As a bitter man does, the psalmist's mind went from one hurt to another. He remembered how when Babylon had invaded, the Edomites hadn't helped their Hebrew brethren (Obadiah 11,12). They had egged on the Babylonian soldiers in ripping down the temple, shouting [in a chorus?] "Raze it, raze it, even to its foundation". The Edomite mercenaries were not a major part of the Babylonian confederacy which sacked Jerusalem, but they are singled out for particular condemnation because "Esau is Edom", they were Jacob's brother. God particularly judges unbrotherly behaviour; we have a special responsibility to our brethren in the body of God's people. Any nastiness against them is especially culpable.

Psa 137:8

Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction, he will be happy who rewards you as you have served us-
The exiles were reminded that the Babylon where they lived had wasted God's people, and thus she was to be wasted (Ps. 137:3,8 AVmg.). But human beings are so fickle. Because life was easy there, the captives came to prefer Babylon to the distant Zion, and by the time of Esther they were a prosperous, comfortable community. And the majority therefore didn't return to the land and rebuild it even when given every encouragement by Cyrus.

They wept, initially, when they remembered Zion- and yet according to Ez. 8, back there in Zion there were awful abominations and idolatry being committed in the temple of Zion. Their weeping was mere nostalgia; their refusal to sing the temple songs was mere stubbornness, there was no genuine commitment to Yahweh's way. And it was because of this that God confirmed them in their desire to stay in Babylon. He had elsewhere predicted that He would stop them returning "to the land whereunto their soul longeth to return" (Jer. 22:27 RV). And He did this by confirming them in their desire to remain in Babylon. These prophecies of the destruction of Babylon therefore didn't come true as was potentially possible. Because Judah didn't want to judge Babylon. And so the language of Babylon's judgment is reapplied in Revelation to the destruction of latter day Babylon.

Psa 137:9

Happy shall he be, who takes and dashes your little ones against the rock-
The idea may be Happy / blessed is the one who... and the Psalmist has in view Yahweh. The construction is similar to Ps. 135:8,10 "The one who [Yahweh] struck the firstborn; the one who [Yahweh] struck the great nation"; and Ps. 136:23 "The one who [Yahweh] remembers us in our lowly state". Indeed God had said that He would punish Babylon and requite what she had done to Jerusalem (Is. 47:1-9; Jer. 51:24,56). Specifically there was the statement that Babylon would suffer "the loss of [her] children" (Is. 47:9). But the Psalmist takes these facts and goes on an immoral rampage of personal hate fantasy in response to words he had heard or which had been reported to him. God takes no joy / pleasure in the death of the wicked, and yet the Psalmist clearly does. He is some kind of a psycho. His psalm is included at the end of the songs of ascents to show the xenophobic mentality prevalent amongst the exiles. The prophecies of the restoration speak of the Gentiles returning with the exiles to Zion, along with their children and infants, to worship Yahweh. The fantasy of this Psalmist is that their little ones are brought to Zion and dashed to death against "the rock", a term used for Mount Zion, the temple mount. He is totally out of step with God's saving Spirit. He eagerly focuses not on the adult offenders and abusers, but upon their infant children. Whilst he proclaims a patriotic love of Zion above his chiefest joy. The Psalm isn't directed to God, it is the Psalmist's own thoughts, only engaging with God to ask Him to judge the Edomites who egged on the Babylonians. Instead of coming "with singing unto Zion" he has only bitter regret because he can't and won't stop the tape playing in his mind of the past words and actions of others; he was for ever re-enacting and re-experiencing the past rather than rejoicing in God's present grace and salvation. All this is so relevant to most humans alive today, for we all tend to do this, remembering and rehearsing over and over every detail of the act of betrayal, how the person was dressed, the smell in the kitchen as it happened, the hard words...

The Psalmist however has gone on to exaggerate what happened, calling the words 'torture', and his own integrity suffers. Thus he had been singing the "songs of Zion" in Babylon, the songs of ascents, but when asked to do so by his captors, hung up his harp and refused claiming he could not sing such songs in Babylon. His self-curse of not being able to pluck the harp nor sing any more if he forgets Zion implies he was doing those things and would continue... falsifying his claim that he wasn't permitted to sing such songs in a Gentile land. And likewise our own integrity becomes compromised, the envelope expands, we embroider the narrative of what happened, and our response becomes out of proportion [smashing infants' skulls against a rock in response to verbal abuse]. What should the psalmist have done? Recognize like other exiles that he was suffering for his own sins, and rejoicing in God's grace at having restored him.

The question is, 'Whose little ones? Those of Edom or Babylon?'. It could be argued that the Edomites were the daughter of Babylon. Or it could be, as discussed on :1, that the psalmist is so bitter that he refers back to those who mocked him when he was working by an irrigation canal, i.e. the Babylonians.

"The rock" could refer to Zion. The fantasy is to take the "little ones" of those who mocked them, bring them to Zion, and dash them to death against the foundation stones of the temple. As discussed on :1, if this were written by one of the exiles who returned, we have an insight into their mindset. No surprises that those who returned were filled with xenophobia and anger, rather than a desire to establish a multi-ethnic kingdom of God based upon Zion. By contrast the returned exiles were supposed to be singing Ps. 126:3 "Yahweh has done great things for us, and we are glad".

When we feel our enemies are unjust, we can:

1. Seek revenge. But this isn't a response we can make, Biblically.

2. Deny the feelings of hurt and anger. And yet, they surface somehow. And we join the ranks of the millions of hurt people in this world, who 'take it out' in some way on others.

3. Or we can do as David seems to have done. Take these feelings, absolutely as they are, with no rough edges smoothed off them...to God Himself. Pour them all out in prayer and leave Him to resolve the matter. In passing, this fits in with the conclusions of modern psychiatry- that we can't eliminate our feelings, so we must express them in an appropriate way.

This latter option is how I understand the imprecatory Psalms. Those outpourings of human emotion were read by God as prayers. The writer of Psalm 137, sitting angry and frustrated by a Babylonian riverside, with his harp hanging on a willow branch, being jeered ("tormented" Ps. 137:3 RVmg.) by the victorious Babylonian soldiers who had led him away captive... he felt *so* angry with them. Especially when they tried to make him sing one of the temple songs ("sing us one of the songs of Zion"). And, as a bitter man does, his mind went from one hurt to another. He remembered how when Babylon had invaded, the Edomites hadn't helped their Hebrew brethren (Obadiah 11,12). They had egged on the Babylonian soldiers in ripping down the temple, shouting [in a chorus?] "Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation". And so in anger and bitterness this Jew prays with tears, as he remembered Zion, "O daughter of Babylon... happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock" (:8,9 RV). God read those angry words as a prayer, and in some sense they will have their fulfilment. For these words are picked up in Rev. 18:8,21 and applied to what will finally happen to Babylon. Her spiritual children will be dashed against the rock of Christ, the stone of Daniel 2:44, at His return. He will dash in pieces the Babylon-led people that oppose Him.

PSALMS CHAPTER 138

Psa 138:1

By David-
According to the LXX titles, there were certain Psalms which were written for the dedication of the rebuilt temple, and others written by Haggai and Zechariah. They include: Psalms 96,138,147,148. These all seem to speak as if the time of a glorious temple was to be the time of God's Kingdom; this was the possibility, and it was the prevailing hope in the minds of the faithful minority. But the Psalms had to remain prophecies of the future day of Zion's glory, for the temple was not rebuilt by the returned exiles according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48. This psalm originally by David was reused and reapplied to later contexts.

I will give You thanks with my whole heart. Before the mighty ones I will sing praises to You-
David spoke of seeking and praising God's grace with his "whole heart" (Ps. 9:1; 119:58; 138:1). Solomon uses the phrase, but speaks of being obedient with the "whole heart" (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 6:14) and applying the "whole heart" to the intellectual search for God (Ecc. 1:13; 8:9). There is a difference. The idea of whole hearted devotion to God was picked up by Solomon, but instead of giving the whole heart to the praise of God's grace, he instead advocated giving the whole heart to ritualistic obedience and intellectual search for God. This has been the trap fallen into by many Protestant groups whose obsession with "truth" has obscured the wonder of God's grace.

Possibly the "mighty ones" are 'gods', and the psalm had its origin when David lived amongst the Philistines with their gods. In his heart he despised those gods, and trusted in God's word to restore him to the Kingdom. The psalm was then re-used by the exiles as they too lived amongst idolatry and longed for the word of kingship and restoration to be fulfilled. Possibly Ps. 138 is the answer to the question of Ps. 137 "How shall we sing Yahweh's song in a foreign land?".

Psa 138:2

I will bow down toward Your holy temple, and give thanks to Your Name for Your grace and for Your truth; for You have exalted above all things your name and your word-
The particular "word" David initially had in view was the word of God through Samuel that he would become king. That is what "the word" in Ps. 119 mainly refers to. Now that he was established king and could come before the sanctuary as he so longed to do whilst exiled, he thanks God. "Grace and truth" is a phrase which often refers to God's

promises. David perceived that the fulfilment of Samuel's prophetic word about these things was the articulation of God's Name, exalted in the fulfilment of God's prophetic word. However we will note on :7,8 that David seems to have prayed this time whilst still under persecution from Saul, so we could read these past tenses at the start of the Psalm as his confident expectation that one day he would be in the sanctuary praising God for fulfilling His word about the Davidic Kingdom. And this was to be a pattern for the exiles.

Or we can read with AV "for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name". This cannot mean that the book called the Bible is exalted above God's Name. Much of the Bible hadn't been written by that time. This Psalm is originally David's expression of trust in God's word that one day he would become king, possibly written whilst living amongst the idol worshipping Philistines. It was taken over by the exiles in idol filled Babylon, who likewise hoped in God's word of restoration of the Kingdom. But that restoration was achieved despite their refusal to return to God as required; the return of the Kingdom was to be in response to their return to God. God's Name is His characteristics of Ex. 34:5-7- His, love, grace, forgiveness, and yet also His justice and just punishment of sin. The idea may be that God had exalted His word of restoration above the basic core characteristics of His Name, according to which Judah should not have been restored. This raises the question of whether God breaks His own rules and principles in order to save man. If indeed the wages of sin is death, how then can sinful man live for ever? Romans 1-8 is read by some as a beautiful explanation of how God achieves this salvation of sinners whilst somehow remaining within the lanes and boundaries of His own basic moral principles. But we can equally read Romans 1-8 as demonstrating how grace and salvation by grace is a paradox. The judge, advocate for the defence and lead witness for the defence- is all the same person, namely God through the Lord Jesus. Sinners who are "in Christ" are declared spotlessly righteous. I cannot avoid concluding that there is, as the psalm puts it, an elevation of God's word of salvation above His Name, His principles. And that is in fact what love does. Ask any parent, let alone grandparent. This of course is not to say that God is like the president of a corrupt regime, who steals what he wants, sleeps with who he wants, and acts above his own laws.

Psa 138:3

In the day that I called, You answered me; You encouraged me with strength in my soul- David thinks back to his time in the wilderness, and how his desperate calls for help and for the fulfilment of the prophetic word about his becoming king has been answered. He recalls how God had answered his many requests recorded in Ps. 119, to encourage him with strength in believing that the prophetic word about his kingship would in fact come true. The application to the exiles was that their prayers for restoration would likewise

be heard- if they followed David's path of humility, repentance and restoration. But for the most part they didn't.

Verse 7 is clear that David is under persecution and urgently in need of God's deliverance. So we could also read :3 as him speaking in the past tense of a situation he is praying would come about. Using the prophetic perfect tense. By doing so, he would have been adopting God's perspective of speaking of future things as if they already exist. Or we can understand him to mean that when he prayed for deliverance, "in the day that I called", immediately, he was answered not by immediate deliverance [for :7 is clear that was not given], but by spiritual strength within him to endure.

Psa 138:4

All the kings of the land will give You thanks, Yahweh, for they have heard the words of Your mouth-
David's vision was of all the rulers in the *eretz* promised to Abraham glorifying God for making him king. And likewise there was the potential at the time of the restoration for the whole area of the *eretz* to come to accept Yahweh as their God because of the evident fulfilment of His prophetic word for His people. But this again didn't happen as potentially possible, and will come to full term only in the last days. And yet the principle is clear, that faith comes by hearing God's word. The kings would hear that word and submit to God, loving and praising Him.

Psa 138:5

Yes, they will sing of the ways of Yahweh; for great is Yahweh's glory-
Nations only accepted new gods because the nations who worshipped those gods had overrun them and forced them to accept *their* gods and reject their own. But Yahweh's envisaged spiritual conquest of the nations of the *eretz* was to be because they had "heard the words of Your mouth", seeing them fulfilled in the restoration of David and later of the exiles; and they willingly therefore were to perceive Yahweh's glory and sing of His ways. And so it is in the expansion of His Kingdom in this life; individuals willingly submit themselves to Him rather than due to coercion or being swamped with His power unavoidably.

Psa 138:6

For though Yahweh is high, yet He looks after the lowly; but the proud, He knows from afar-
What was intended to attract the nations to submission to Yahweh was the way that He works with the lowly, be they David or the exiles, and restores them and brings down the

proud (cp. Saul, the Babylonian empire). This love of the humble was a radical inversion of all accepted values, for the proud are glorified and the humble abused in secular life. And it was this which was one of Yahweh's unique and so attractive characteristics.

Psa 138:7

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me; You will stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies. Your right hand will save me-
The Psalm begins with David thanking God for having already restored him to Zion; but as noted on :2, it could be that he said this whilst still walking "in the midst of trouble" during Saul's persecution, as well as during his exile from Absalom. "The wrath of my enemies" is a phrase he uses about both those situations (Ps. 55:3). His confidence that he would be revived / restored is therefore a pattern for the exiles, who were in a similar situation. Ps. 119 is full of requests for God to "revive" or restore David according to His word of promise through Samuel that David would become king.

"Trouble" was the result of disobedience to the covenant, and God would not be in the "midst" of His people at this time (s.w. Dt. 31:17). This is very relevant to the exiles, but the Psalm reflects faith that even in the experience of judgment, God is still desirous to save His people. On a personal level, David may have in mind his bodily resurrection when he speaks of being 'revived'. "Your right hand will save me" is to be connected with the idea of the next psalm, that in the grave "Even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Ps. 139:10). Salvation ultimately is through the resurrection of the body.

Psa 138:8

Yahweh will fulfil that which concerns me; Your grace, Yahweh, endures forever. Don't forsake the works of Your own hands-

Rashi: "May the Lord agree with me / May He agree with my requests". Prayer is a way of developing our will to be that of God, so that our requests are agreed to by Him. The works of God's hands are us individually, and also God's collective people Israel (Ex. 15:16 "Your hands established"). See on Ps. 139:15. GNB better captures the sense that this refers to God's word of promise to restore David (and the exiles) even when that seemed impossible: "You will do everything you have promised; LORD, your love is eternal. Complete the work that you have begun". The work had been "begun" with David as it had with the exiles; but David is ever aware, as he is throughout Ps. 119, that the fulfilment of that word of the kingdom would be by grace. He and the exiles were personally undeserving of it. If we read "Don't forsake the works of Your own hands", we have another example of how David sees in creation, including that of his own body, an encouragement to faith that God will work intricately and powerfully with us to further

fulfil His ultimate intention with us. Our attitudes to creation therefore affect our present faith. This verse is alluded to in Phil. 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will keep working at perfecting it [AV "will complete it"], until the day of Jesus Christ". David's pattern is therefore our template. We too have been given the word of the Kingdom as he was, which appears so far from fulfilment; and yet it will be fulfilled, as with David, despite his sinfulness and weakness. David reflects "on the work of Your hands" (Ps. 143:5), and by that he refers to God's work in our lives as His people. He will never stop that work: "Yahweh will fulfil that which concerns me; Your grace, Yahweh, endures forever. Don't forsake the works of Your own hands" (Ps. 138:8), in the spirit of Phil. 1:6. Even those who walk away from God and His call will still have to experience His continual nudging of them until the day they die. Far better to totally surrender to His ways, and be "workers together with Him" toward our own salvation (2 Cor. 6:1). In this sense we "work out our salvation" (Phil. 2:12) in tandem with His work through the Spirit.

PSALMS CHAPTER 139

Psa 139:1
For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David-
"The psalm divides into four stanzas of six verses each—the first (:1-6) dealing with the omniscience of God; the second (:7-12), with his omnipresence; the third (:13-18), with his omnipotence; and the fourth (:19-24) containing the supplication".

The many similarities with the book of Job should be noted. It is possible that although edited by David, this Psalm began as Job's gratitude for deliverance, a kind of appendix to the book of Job.

Yahweh, You have searched me and You know me-
The language of Ps. 17:3, also written whilst in the wilderness and before the sin with Bathsheba, which revealed David to be somewhat overconfident as to the state of his heart. The phrase is used in Ps. 44:23 in the context of pleading innocence to any idolatry. However the thoughts are just as appropriate to David in his reflections after the sin with Bathsheba.

Psa 139:2
You know my sitting down and my rising up, You perceive my thoughts from afar-
Sitting down and rising up was a metaphor for daily life (Dt. 6:7), and is paralleled with his thoughts. The Bible continually parallels thought and action.

Psa 139:3

You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways-
The language of Ps. 119:168, also written whilst in the wilderness and before the sin with Bathsheba, which revealed David to be somewhat overconfident as to the state of his heart. However the thoughts are just as appropriate to David in his reflections after the sin with Bathsheba. The idea of "acquainted" is "You are accustomed"; God knows our habits of thought and mental response to situations. We aren't at all the out of the box thinkers we like to imagine we are. Our mental processes are habitual and on very narrow tracks. God knows and foresees our mental responses far ahead of time. We are psychologically predictable, although the influence of His Spirit can change those processes.

Psa 139:4
For there is not a word on my tongue, but, behold, Yahweh, You know it altogether-
Knowledge of thoughts (:2) is paralleled with knowledge of our words; because David rightly understood that thoughts and words are all the same before God. This is developed in the Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.

Psa 139:5
You hem me in behind and before, You have laid Your hand on me-
"Hem in" is the usual word for besieging. But David in Ps. 119 often rejoices in the freedom of walking in God's ways. So he doesn't at all suggest that God is constricting him, but rather that God's knowledge of his every thought, movement and word means that he is himself hemmed in to an appropriate way of living. This is the practical meaning of God's omniscience. We cannot profess to believe in God's omniscience without appropriately feeling and living, every moment of our lives.

Psa 139:6
This knowledge is beyond me. It is lofty and beyond me-
AV "too wonderful". Whilst the extent of God's omniscience is indeed beyond our full grasp, David doesn't mean that the things of God are too wonderful for him to understand, and he just quits in trying to handle them. Throughout the Psalms, David repeatedly speaks of the wonder of God, how he wishes to extol this, and how he mourns the tragedy of the fact that Israel generally had not grasped the wonder of their God. He asks for his eyes to be opened so that the wonder of God's ways might be made known to him (Ps. 119:18). The Hebrew word translated "wonder" or "wondrous" was evidently one of David's favourites. Yet he says that although he sees the wonder of the knowledge of God, he feels it is "too wonderful for me" - perhaps "for me" is where the emphasis should be. It may be that David spoke of the knowledge of God as being "too wonderful for me" with his eye on Job's experience. If Ps. 139 was written in the aftermath of his physical and spiritual crisis at the time of Bathsheba, David would have seen himself as coming out of it with the same sense of spiritual growth as Job after his

months of crisis: "Now mine eye seeth thee... I am vile... things too wonderful for me" all have a certain ring with the sentiments David expresses after Bathsheba. It can be demonstrated that the repentance and restoration of David after the Bathsheba incident is used, through New Testament allusion, as a prototype for the spiritual growth of each of us. This means that the terrible, crushing humbling of Job, of David, of Moses, must in some way at some time be replicated in the experience of every true saint, who struggles up the same graph of spiritual growth. From each of us there must be wrung the deep, essential realization: "I am vile... I know (now) that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from thee... therefore have I uttered that I understood thee; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not".

Ps. 139 reminds us how God knows us so well, psychologically as well as physically. David's response to this is that such knowledge is too wonderful for him and he cannot attain it (Ps. 139:6). The simple point being made is that we cannot know the extent to which God knows us. Nor do we know all God knows about us. He knows us better than we know ourselves. This is a huge comfort in a world where we beg more than anything: "Please understand me". It is common to throw in to our sentences: "Do you get what I mean? You get me?". And this desire is often ultimately not met in our human relationships. The priceless comfort of this Psalm is that this most basic human need is met in God's knowledge of us. Even our eternal future is unknown to us- "It does not yet appear what we shall be" (1 Jn. 3:2) but believing the truth expressed in this Psalm, we can be at peace about that too. The Lord gently commented on the request for a throne in His Kingdom: "You know not what you ask" (Mt. 20:22). Even though we shall sit on thrones in that age. We have His Spirit, but often we know not what manner of Spirit we are of (Lk. 9:55). The wonder of salvation is beyond us, and Ps. 71:15 states that this is the basis for our worship: "My mouth shall shew forth Your righteousness and Your salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof". We do not in fact know ourselves; God does. This is why the Psalm concludes with a request for God to "search me" and correct me- because it is outside my own ability to do so. In the same spirit, Paul admits that "we know not what to pray for as we ought", and trusts that the Lord Jesus transmits his essential spirit to God and mediates for him accordingly: "The Spirit also helps our infirmity. For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). Paul laments that he doesn't understand his own actions: "For why I do what I do, I do not understand. For I do not do what I intend, but instead I do what I hate" (Rom. 7:15). Likewise Ps. 19:12 "Who can discern his own errors? Forgive me from sins of ignorance". Paul admits that "I know nothing against myself" but he is not thereby justified (1 Cor. 4:4). We see ourselves in a darkened mirror ["through a glass darkly"] but only then, at the Lord's coming, face to face- with ourselves: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then shall I know fully, even as also I have been fully known" (1 Cor. 13:12). Only then shall we see ourselves as God sees us. And

that is surely the function of the day of judgment- it is for our benefit. All searching to 'find yourself' in this life is vain, because our natures are intrinsically limited so that we cannot, at least not ultimately. The wonder of salvation is that we shall find ourselves, we shall know ourselves as God knows. The unbeliever totally has no self knowledge; our self knowledge is insofar as we know that God knows us and we trust Him to examine, modify, transform and save us in the end: "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 4:19). And they don't even "know" their own idols; they "walk after other gods whom you know not" (Jer. 7:9); they worship what they "know not" (Jn. 4:22). Mankind is indeed in amnesia and darkness.

Psa 139:7
Where could I go from Your Spirit? Or where could I flee from Your presence?-
These may be the thoughts of David as he reflected upon his sin with Bathsheba. He had no place to flee from God. These words are likewise appropriate to Jonah. Jonah knew the Psalms, for his own psalm alludes to them constantly. His prayer from inside the fish is packed with allusion to them. And yet he thought he could flee from God's presence (Jonah 1:3)- even though Ps. 139:7-9 almost prophesies of Jonah, that nobody can flee from God's presence, and the sea itself, and geographical distance, won't hide enable such flight from God. Jonah knew this. But he simply acted in a way diametrically opposed to that knowledge. He didn't resist his own spiritual blindness. The relevance to the exiles is that they were not hidden from God in Gentile lands; the lesson Jonah had to learn (cp. Jer. 23:24).

The essence of judgment is ongoing now; "we make the answer now". God's present judgment is often paralleled with His future judgment. Thus "The Lord shall judge the people... God judges [now] the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day... He will whet his sword; He has [right now] bent His bow, and made it ready" (Ps. 7:8,11-13). We are come now "to God the judge of all" (Heb. 12:23); God is now enthroned as judge (Ps. 93:2; Mt. 5:34 "the heaven is God's throne"). We are now inescapably in God's presence (Ps. 139:7); and 'God's presence' is a phrase used about the final judgment in 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 24; Rev. 14:10. Hence "God is [now] the judge: He puts down one and sets up another" (Ps. 75:7) – all of which He will also do at the last day (Lk. 14:10).

Psa 139:8
If I ascend up into heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, You are there!-
The idea may be that neither height nor depth hides from God, and then :9 says that no length horizontally can remove us from Him either.

Psa 139:9
If I take the wings of the dawn, and settle in the uttermost parts of the sea-

See on :8. Perhaps after the sin with Bathsheba, David in his desperation had thought of leaving Israel, as Jonah did, and living in the "sea" of the Gentile territories. But he knew that even there, God was present just as much as in His land. And the exiles needed to appreciate this too.

Psa 139:10
even there Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will hold me-
I suggested on :7 that these were the reflections of David after his sin with Bathsheba, realizing that there was no place to run from God. Even in judgment and the experience of condemnation, he felt that God would still be present and would hold on to him and lead him to restoration. This was exactly relevant to the exiles in Babylon. Just as they were led by the hand in the wilderness (s.w. Ps. 77:20), so they would be in exile; the apparent wasting of time living there was in fact all part of being actively led towards the promised land. And so it is with us. David uses the same word in :24 in asking to be led himself, in the way to eternity.

Psa 139:11
If I say, Surely the darkness will overwhelm me then the light around me will be night-
Utter darkness may cover us, the darkness of our own sin, of depression, of feeling that we don't understand nor care about anything not even ourselves. But that doesn't stop God's knowledge of us. Even if we seek to end relationship with ourselves, even if we die and go to *sheol*, God still knows us.

I have suggested that originally, these words are the thoughts of David as he considered fleeing from both God and all Israel after his sin with Bathsheba. He concludes that even the darkness of sin cannot hide from God; there doesn't come a point where we sin so much that God is no longer involved with us. AV is better: "the night shall be light". Even that darkness can be brought to a glorious dawn by God. And the same imagery is used in later Isaiah, of the exiles' restoration being as a glorious dawn after the darkness of the exile. "Overwhelm" is the same word for "bruise" in Gen. 3:15; the victory of sin would only be a bruise, from which he would recover.

Psa 139:12
even the darkness doesn't hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness is like light to You-
As noted on :11, the darkness of sin doesn't totally hide a sinner from God, as Adam in his darkness of sin was still not hidden from God; He still seeks to lead through that darkness to the light of day; and can transform night into day. David experienced this, and the exiles were bidden follow the same path of restoration. The allusion may also be to death as darkness (Ecc. 12:2; Job 3:9; 18:6); the God of resurrection doesn't in this sense separate between life and death, in whose mind all His people live even after

death (Lk. 20:38). And the darkness is a frequent symbol of the Babylonian exile (Jer. 13:16; Am. 5:8; 8:9).

Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)?

Psa 139:13
For You formed my inmost being, You knit me together in my mother's womb-
Again, as so often, David appeals to the wonder of creation as a reminder that God is active for him, and everything in life has a purpose, geared toward our final salvation. "Knit me together" is better translated to cover / defend. He reflects on earliest existence as an embryo in the womb. There he had been covered by God, and so he would be all his life in accordance with God's saving purpose.

Psa 139:14
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful and my soul knows that very well-
The "works" of God at his earliest development in the womb continued seamlessly in his life. "Wonderfully" is the word for separate, set apart. We have here the idea of being known and set apart from the womb, as Jeremiah and Paul also felt.

Psa 139:15
My frame wasn't hidden from You when I was made in secret, woven together in the depths of the earth-
"Woven together" suggests the idea of the High Priestly garments woven of different colours. "The depths of the earth" may be a metaphor for the womb, but this Psalm comes to its ultimate fulfilment and perspective in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and all those in Him.

Our lives are not a chance. By rejecting chance-evolution and accepting the Biblical teaching of creation-with-a-purpose, we sign ourselves up to living a purpose driven life. It has been rightly observed that whilst there may be illegitimate parents, there are never illegitimate children; for our existence is not unplanned by God. Your race, the colour of your skin, your hair, the genetic and social background which you had, all this was planned and is usable by God. David marvelled that God had overseen his formation, bit by bit, right from the womb; and that this formation of character was ongoing. God "will fulfill his purpose for me" (Ps. 138:8). "You saw me before I was born and scheduled each day of my life before I began to breathe. Each day was recorded in your book" (Ps. 139:16). Now if this is the level of intention and planning which God put

into us, we at least can draw the conclusion safely and certainly: life is not aimless. God has a purpose for us and we therefore ought to be living a purposeful life, not just drifting from experience to experience as in a half-conscious dream. God is focused upon us- “Long before he laid down earth’s foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love” (Eph. 1:4). If we are the focus of His love, God ought to be the focus of our lives. This is a simple truth upon which to build and structure human life in practice. This means that we will be more likely to be instantly obedient to the Father’s principles; we will overcome the natural desire to delay doing God’s work today, rendering obedience right now, because we reason that we can do it later. The purpose driven life wants to respond now rather than later.

Psa 139:16
Your eyes saw my body. In Your book my body parts were all written and the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there were none of them-
"Body parts", AV "substance", appears to be the ancient Hebrew way of referring to the embryo. The body of the Lord Jesus has been “day by day fashioned, when as yet there was none of them” (Ps. 139:16 RV). For 6,000 years providence has been at work preparing the people who are now being called into the body. The world has been prepared. It’s waiting for the preacher to win it. "Ordained" is the usual word for "formed" or "fashioned" as a potter fashions clay. But as Jeremiah makes clear, we can resist the intended outcome of that fashioning, just as our names can be removed from the book of life in which they are written. The exiles needed to be reminded of this; the language of fashioning / ordaining is common in the addresses to them in later Isaiah and Jeremiah (e.g. Is. 45:9). not only were the exiles being fashioned and brought together as a new creation, a rebirth of the body parts of Israel seen by Ezekiel in the vision of the dry bones; but in fact God had been at work with them from the womb and had not at all forgotten them or ceased working with them whilst they were in exile. The same message is stated more bluntly in Is. 44:2,24; 46:3; 49:5.

Psa 139:17
How precious to me are Your thoughts, God! How vast is their sum!-
Perceiving these things was indeed precious. Every occurrence of the word for "precious" is in the context of the value or preciousness of the human life and person (1 Sam. 26:21; 2 Kings 1:13,14; Ps. 49:8; 72:14; Is. 13:12; 43:4; Zech. 11:13). David's value of God's ways and desire to save people as being "precious" was reflected in how he considered the life of his enemy Saul to be likewise "precious" (1 Sam. 26:21). The extreme value attached by God to every human life must be our attitude, in likewise perceiving the value and meaning of persons.

The LXX in this and the following verses is very different, but continues this theme of the value of God's people: "But thy friends, O God, have been greatly honoured by me; their

rule has been greatly strengthened". This makes sense of likening them to the numberless grains of sand (:18) which represent the seed of Abraham, who was the "friend of God" James 2:23).

The vastness of the sum of God's thoughts may be related to how He knows the thoughts of every man. Verse 18 relates this knowledge to His thought capacity being more in number than the sand, a phrase used of the seed of Abraham. The idea of the "sum" is found in reading of how God speaks of taking "the sum of the Israelites" (Ex. 30:12).

Psa 139:18
If I would count them, they are more in number than the sand-
LXX "I will number them, and they shall be multiplied beyond the sand, clearly alluding to the promises to Abraham. See on :17. God's thoughts are parallel with the seed of Abraham; He has thought for every one of us, the thought David marvelled at in :16.

When I wake up, I am still with You-
See on :17. The idea may be that when David awakes from counting the innumerable thoughts of God for the seed of Abraham, he himself is still with God.

Psa 139:19
If only You, God, would kill the wicked-
David's common request for the destruction of Saul (Ps. 5:6,10; 7:9-13; 9:19; 10:15; 21:8-12). And yet when Saul did die, David was heartbroken (see on 2 Sam. 1). We learn therefore to be more careful what we pray for, because in essence it will be given to us. Perhaps part of his great grief was because he realized he had prayed for this destruction.

Get away from me, you bloodthirsty men!-
This is the word for how God had 'departed' from Saul, and maybe this was initially behind David's desire that Saul leave him alone. But it is also the word used for how violence would never depart from David because of his sin with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:10). David prayed for this to "depart" but it never did. David was open to the possibility that through prayer, God can remove the consequences of sin in this life; but such prayer is not always answered.

David's prayer of repentance and request to be saved from "blood guiltiness" (Ps. 51:14) is literally 'from blood'. He was a man of blood and was guilty of Uriah's innocent blood. David had asked for 'men of blood' to be slain (Ps. 55:23 s.w.), those who had taken the blood of the innocent (Ps. 94:21), and for 'men of blood' to be expelled from his presence (Ps. 139:19). And it is not at all clear whether all those Psalms were written

before his sin with Bathsheba. God was trying to teach David that he was the type of person whom he condemned. And yet it is unclear if he learned that lesson. Solomon liberally condemns the man who sheds innocent blood (Prov. 6:17; 28:17), refusing to recognize that his much lauded father had done just this, and was only saved by grace and not by any obedience to wisdom. There is so little grace in the book of Solomon's Proverbs because Solomon had failed to perceive the grace shown to his father.

Psa 139:20
For they speak against You wickedly, Your enemies take Your name in vain-
LXX "For thou wilt say concerning their thought, that they shall take thy cities in vain". Perhaps the Psalm was rewritten and reapplied to later crises such as the Assyrians taking all Judah's cities apart from Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. "Your name" is not in the original, and the same phrase is used in Ps. 24:4 of lifting up / taking the name of vanities, idols. The wicked enemies in view appear to initially be Saul and his men (:19), but then they refer to the idolatrous Babylonians. The problem was that the exiles seem to have initially worshipped those very idols.

Psa 139:21
Yahweh, don't I hate those who hate You? Am I not grieved with those who rise up against You?-
The language of 'rising up' suggests David may have in view the rebellion of Absalom. But he sees whoever was currently arisen against him in the context of all who had previously arisen against him. It was Goliath who 'rose up against' Yahweh and His people (s.w. 1 Sam. 17:48) just as a lion had 'risen up' against David in his youth (s.w. 1 Sam. 17:35). Later, Saul 'rose up' against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29; 26:2), and then evil men 'rose up' against David out of his own family (2 Sam. 12:11 s.w.), especially Absalom who rose up against his father (2 Sam. 18:31,32 s.w.). But David has a tendency to assume that all who rose up against him were arising against God. It's not always so that our enemy is God's enemy. Relationships and the hand of God in human affairs and relationships is more complex than that. And David in Ps. 139:21,22 goes further, to assume that his hatred of people is justified, because they must, he assumes, hate God because they are against him. Solomon seems to make the same mistake when he alludes to such 'risings up' in Prov. 28:28. We must note that "all in Asia" turned away from Paul personally (2 Tim. 1:15), and yet according to the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Rev. 2,3, there were many faithful individuals amongst them.

Psa 139:22
I hate them with complete hatred; they have become my enemies-
David reached a great depth of hateful feeling for Saul here in :20-22. David also grieved for them, and in this sense his "hatred" of false ways was complete or "perfect" (AV).

The same mixture of anger and yet grief is found in the Lord Himself; He looked round about upon them in anger, being grieved for their hard hearts (Mk. 3:5). We must ask ourselves whether we don't have merely an indignant reaction at others' unspirituality; the looking round on them with anger, and yet without the unpretended grief for the whole situation.

Psa 139:23
Search me, God, and know my heart; test me, and know my thoughts-
Reading through the book of Psalms in one or two sittings reveals that frequent and intense self-examination was a leading characteristic of David, especially while on the run from Saul; as if he began to pick up false guilt from how he was being treated, wondering if it was all in fact justified (Ps. 4:4; 7:3; 17:3; 18:20-24; 19:12; 26:1; 39:1; 59:3; 66:18; 77:6; 86:2; 101:2; 109:3; 139:23,24).

Psa 139:24
See if there is any wicked way in me-
We're either led out and put to death for the sake of eternal life, or for eternal death. The logic is glaring. The Hebrew of Ps. 139:24 reveals a telling play on words which makes the same point: "Wicked way" is rendered in the AVmg. as 'way of pain'; the way of wickedness is itself the way of pain.

And lead me in the everlasting way-
This could simply mean "the way that leads to everlasting life", or "the way which has always been of everlasting, God's way". This is the same leading commented upon on :10.

PSALMS CHAPTER 140

Psa 140:1

For the Chief Musician. A Psalm by David.
Deliver me, Yahweh, from the evil man. Preserve me from the violent man-
David may be personifying a group of opponents as one evil and violent man. Or he may specifically have Saul in view (David uses the term "violent man" about him in Ps. 18:48), although the Psalm may have been reapplied by him to other later adversaries.

The word for keep or preserve is found here and in :4. It is commonly used for keeping God's laws and covenant. Here again is the mutuality between God and man. Ps. 141:3 will ask God to keep David's lips from sinning. It is a picture of the believing life, keeping God's ways and Him keeping us.

Psa 140:2

and those who devise mischief in their hearts-
We observe that David sees the evil of his enemies in terms of their hearts / thoughts, and their words. This is exactly God's perspective. Things which are insignificant in human judgment are of such paramount importance to Him.

They continually gather themselves together for war-
As in Ps. 120:7, this could apply to how Hezekiah sought to make peace with the Assyrians. But he gave them the gold of the temple for that peace treaty which they broke; but here he appears to whitewash that lack of faith as his love for peace. We can understand the initial reference to David, who truly sought to live at peace with Saul. And perhaps it has application to the returned exiles and their conflicts with the local Samaritans.

Psa 140:3

they have sharpened their tongues like a serpent. Viper's poison is under their lips. Selah-
Drinking venom is a figure for condemnation (Dt. 32:33). By speaking with venom, their words were actually their own condemnation. Truly by our words will we be judged, and men live out their own condemnation by how they now soeak and act.

The idea is that hard words are as bad as weapons of violence, spear and arrow tips with poison upon them. As noted on :2, David adopts God's perspective of condemning words and thoughts as toughly as actions. He so often laments the hard words of his enemies (Ps. 52:2; 57:4; 59:7; 64:3). We see here his hyper sensitivity to words. But David was to later plot the destruction of Uriah by his words; and when he repented of this in Ps. 32:2, he says that lack of deceit / guile (s.w.) in our words is only possible through imputed righteousness. David's intolerance of persons with deceitful tongues (Ps. 52:2; 101:7; 120:3) must be compared with the fact that he himself was only counted as not deceitful by grace; for he was very deceitful regarding Uriah. Ps. 64:3,7 speak of how *men* "aim their arrows, even bitter words"; and God responds by shooting arrows from His Heavenly control room. The language of sharpening could suggest that David wrote this as he sensed the oncoming insurrection of Absalom

Psa 140:4

Yahweh, keep me from the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from the violent men who have determined to trip my feet-
This may have originated in his thoughts about Saul, then reapplied to David's need for salvation from Absalom and Ahithophel. Saul tried to trip David up through using his daughters. But this verse becomes the intended appeal of the exiles for deliverance

from Babylon, then Haman, and indeed from all their captors. "The hand of the wicked / unrighteous" is the term used for the Babylonians in Ez. 7:21.

Psa 140:5

The proud have hidden a snare for me, they have spread the cords of a net by the path, they have set traps for me. Selah- The cords were attached to the net and were used to pull the net over the bird or animal in the pit dig for them. Often David likens his enemies' plans to catch him as snares, gins etc. set for birds (e.g. Ps. 84:3; 102:6; 124;7; 140:5)- all the language of hunting birds. He had probably done plenty of this as a youngster caring for the sheep, and the influence of those formative years remained.

David felt as if he had been a sacrifice bound to an altar, and therefore about to be pulled into the grave (Ps. 18:5,6; 116:3; 140:5). The allusion is to Isaac and his miraculous deliverance from such cords, thanks to the ram in the thicket whom David is later to understand as representative of the future Messianic saviour; for the Lord quotes David's "My God, why have You forsaken me?" (Ps. 22:1) as the Aramaic *sabachthani*, "entangled", the word used of the ram entangled in the thicket.

Psa 140:6

I said to Yahweh, You are my God. Listen to the cry of my petitions, Yahweh-
David remembers the words he had used in prayer. He was so sensitive to words, including his own words. We need to pray these words slowly and thoughtfully. "You". "My". We will thus get a sense of our location in relationship to Him. He is. I am. He is there. I am here. But He is mine. I am His. The Lord taught the same style in prayer: "Our Father who is in Heaven".

Psa 140:7

Yahweh, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle-
David recalls how he had defeated Goliath without armour. That victory was intended to be programmatic for the rest of David's conflicts. Likewise, circumstances repeat in our lives, all according to God's plan of development tailored to each life. See on Ps. 144:5.

Psa 140:8

Yahweh, don't grant the desires of the wicked. Don't let their evil plans succeed, or they will become proud. Selah-
Often, "desire" is seen by God as prayer (Ps. 10:17; 21:2; 27:4; 59:10; 92:11; 140:8; 145:19; Mt. 18:32; Rom. 10:1; 1 Jn. 5:15). God interprets that inner desire as prayer, even if it is not articulated in specific requests. David's prayer was that Saul would not succeed in his plans, but his final reason is so that Saul doesn't become proud. He

shares God's perspective of hating pride above all things. We perhaps see here a desire by David that even the wicked will be saved from the further sin of pride, and might even therefore repent. Although David goes on to wish condemnation upon them. So perhaps he doesn't want them to be proud so that God's glory is somehow maximized.

Psa 140:9

As for the heads of those who surround me, let the mischief of their own lips cover them-
Their "heads" are contrasted with that of David (:7). Again David sees their worst sin as their proud words; this is the basis upon which they are to be judged; see on :2. David here confidently states that the "mischief" (s.w. "burdens") of men would return upon their own heads at death and judgment (Ps. 7:16; 140:9). But in Ps. 73:5 he momentarily doubts this (s.w.). Our understanding of basic truths can suddenly be eclipsed by moments of doubt, just as we see happening with the disciples on the lake during the storm.

Psa 140:10

Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise-
This is very much the language of Gehenna. Elsewhere, David clearly understands that eternal, unconscious death is punishment for the wicked. So he here is using "fire" as a symbol of Divine wrath, but he isn't suggesting that they will consciously suffer eternal fire. Pits of fire may allude to the judgment upon Sodom. He wishes them the same kind of judgment. Or we could argue that he uses two distinctly different symbols here- pits of mud, and fire. Neither the fire nor the mud are literal; they cannot both be literally intended. Therefore both are figurative.

There's a link between David and us is in Ps. 140:9,10, which speaks of burning coals falling on the head of David's enemies; yet those words are effectively quoted in Rom. 12:20 concerning all believers. David sets himself up in the Psalms as our pattern. He speaks of himself and then applies the point to all of his readers. In other words, we really are to see David as representative of ourselves; we need to change our minds and lives so this really is the case.

Psa 140:11

An evil tongue won't be established in the land; evil will hunt the violent man to overthrow him-
David refers to how Saul would not be established as king, and he would replace him.

But the lead reason for this, David felt, was Saul's words. We have a strong exhortation here to perceive the importance of words in how men are judged; see on :2. David believes that evil, from God, would overthrow Saul; and he would not therefore consider killing Saul himself. AV: “Let not an evil *speaker* [s.w. tongue] be established”. Because a man’s words are counted as who he is. Words *can* be controlled. We *are* culpable for them.

It makes a good exercise to read through one of the crucifixion records, especially John 19, and make a list of the adjectives used. There are virtually none. Read a page of any human novelist or historian: the pages are cluttered with them. Hebrew is deficient in adjectives, and because of this it often uses 'Son of…' plus an abstract noun, instead of an adjective. Thus we read of a "son of peace" (Lk. 10:5,6), or "a man of tongue" (Ps. 140:11 RVmg; AV "an evil speaker"). The Hebrew language so often reflects the character of God. And His artless self-expression is no clearer seen in the way He inspired the records of the death of His Son.

Psa 140:12

I know that Yahweh will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and justice for the needy-
Again David reflects his understanding of a court of heaven, considering the situations upon earth. And David is "the afflicted… the needy". He often uses these terms of himself in the Psalms. His "cause" or case was that he had been chosen as king to replace Saul. And however unlikely seemed the fulfilment of that word, David believed it would be maintained and come true.

Psa 140:13

Surely the righteous will give thanks to Your name. The upright will dwell in Your presence-
David understands eternity as being in God's presence. He also believed in the resurrection of the body and the establishment of his Davidic kingdom in an eternal form upon earth. He therefore understands that God personally must come to dwell on earth. This is envisaged in the vision of Yahweh dwelling in a restored Zion, named "Yahweh is there" (Ez. 48:35); and is the picture presented in the final chapters of Revelation. "Presence" is the word for "face". Revelation concludes with the glorious vision of God's people seeing His face. And we will "dwell" eternally in that experience.

PSALMS CHAPTER 141

Psa 141:1

A Psalm by David.
Yahweh, I have called on You. Come to me quickly! Listen to my voice when I call to You-
David repeatedly asks God to "hurry to help me" (Ps. 22:19; 38:22; 40:13; 70:1,5; 141:1). But David had hurried (s.w.) to be obedient to God, always wanting to 'say yes straight away' (Ps. 119:60). Our response to God's voice is therefore related to His response to our voice; if His words abide in us, then we experience positive experience in answered prayer (Jn. 15:7).

Psa 141:2

Let my prayer be set before You like incense; the lifting up of my hands like the evening sacrifice-
"Set before" is also "established", and the idea may be "with the regularity of the incense". Regular prayer is part of the discipline of the spiritual life, and David is a great example in this. It seems David prayed with the literal lifting up of his hands, seeing this as the essence of sacrifice. He perhaps learnt this whilst in exile from the sanctuary under persecution by Saul. He perceived that the essence of sacrifice was the lifting up of our hearts and words to God.

Psa 141:3

Set a watch, Yahweh, before my mouth, keep the door of my lips-
As we see throughout Ps. 119, David believed that God could grant spirituality and self control; the Old Testament equivalent to the work and possibility of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. David recognized that he had anger and temper issues, and asks God to act as a guard [a "watch"] over his mouth, lest any bad words come out. James rightly comments that "the tongue can no *man* tame"; but God can.

Psa 141:4

Don't incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice deeds of wickedness with men who work iniquity; don't let me eat of their delicacies-
As noted on :3; Ps. 119:36, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and away from evil. This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go. Solomon often appeals for us to incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

"Incline" is the word used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

Whatever the primary reference of this Psalm, it is a reworking of David's feelings when persecuted by Saul and likewise on the run from him. For circumstances repeat in our lives, and it would be natural for David to reconsider Psalms written at the time of one exile and apply them to another, just as these Psalms were also used for others in their times of exile. "Wickedness" is the word used about Saul's persecution in 1 Sam. 24:13. We can render "I shall not sit at their feasts".

Psa 141:5

Let the righteous strike me, it is a kindness; let him reprove me, it is like oil on the head- David was open to Nathan's "rebuke", which was not given in God's anger so much as in His appeal for David to accept His grace. The allusion is to "the oil of welcome, such as was poured upon the head of favored guests" (Lk. 7:36); the hospitality culture of the day meant that a guest should not be insulted with criticism. But David turns all that around and says that he would welcome rebuke as a welcome. This is so relevant in our day, when friendship is so constrained by the fear of offending the friend. It becomes the club of mutual admiration. Only friendship in the Lord can allow of this kind of genuine criticism and rebuke.

Don't let my head refuse it; and my prayer will be for them in their calamities-
Again we see God being asked to directly grant spirituality and Godly attitudes. LXX: "The righteous shall chasten me with mercy, and reprove me: but let not the oil of the sinner anoint my head: for yet shall my prayer also be in their pleasures". David's habit of praying for Saul in his calamities in stated specifically in Ps. 35:13.

Rashi "may the oil of the anointment of my head not turn my head away". This suggests he asks that the fact he has been anointed king not make him impervious to correction. Perhaps this request was answered in his humble response to Nathan's rebuke of him.

Psa 141:6

When their judges are thrown over the cliff, then they shall hear my words, for they are pleasant-
Throwing off a cliff was a punishment for apostacy, as the Jews tried to do to the Lord Jesus. David was perhaps imagining how Saul and his government would come to an end; and then the prophetic words about David becoming king would be accepted as true. "Pleasant" is AV "sweet"; Ps. 119:103 records David praising the prophetic word about his kingship (see note there) as being sweet.

In the moment of condemnation, these men would as it were have replayed to them David's gracious words to them during their lifetimes. Somehow the judgment process will involve a replaying of words spoken in this life.

Psa 141:7

As when one ploughs and breaks up the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol-
The idea is that stones were visible on the surface of newly ploughed soil, and so were the bones of God's true people. This has perhaps been added by the exiles when this Psalm of David was appropriated by them. But it was those same bones which would be revived at the restoration, according to the dry bones vision of Ez. 37.

Psa 141:8

but my eyes are on You, Yahweh, the Lord. In You I take refuge; don't leave my soul destitute-
Although God's people were to be slain in heaps (:7), the psalmist asks that he shall be saved. It is a characteristic of the faithful that they hold on even when all God's people have fallen away. It sometimes seems only a minority of a minority may finally be saved. Heb. "do not pour out my soul". The Lord's servant was to pour out his soul unto death (Is. 53:12). David wanted to be king as promised, and not a sacrifice.

Psa 141:9

Keep me from the snare which they have laid for me, from the traps of the workers of iniquity-
The implication is that the snares laid would have meant going astray from God's precepts. The initial reference may have been to Saul laying snares for David through getting him to marry his daughters and thereby seeking to kill him; and in Ps. 119:110

David is proud he has not fallen into those snares. But that Psalm finishes with David saying bluntly that he has "gone astray" (Ps. 119:176), as if to say that earlier he had far overrated his own obedience to God's law.

Psa 141:10

Let the wicked fall together into their own nets, while I pass on by-
This is part of a major Biblical theme that the wicked are self-condemned, more than being condemned by God as it were against their own will. In Ps. 140:10 David envisages his opponents as being "Cast into fire, into miry pits, no more to rise"; pictures of final condemnation at the last day. But effectively, they had fallen into that which they had themselves wished upon David. Those who condemn, or seek to condemn, will themselves be condemned (Mt. 7:1).

PSALMS CHAPTER 142

Psa 142:1

A contemplation by David, when he was in the cave. A Prayer-
David was sensitive to words, and here recalls and edits the words he remembers praying in the cave. We recall that there he had the opportunity to kill Saul, but didn't. See on Ps. 143:1.

I cry with my voice to Yahweh, with my voice I ask Yahweh for mercy-
This is absolutely psychologically credible. When we are in material distress and pray to God for help, we are immediately aware of our sins and unowrthiness. And so before asking [s.w. "plead"] God for immediate practical help, David asks firstly for mercy-toward his sins. Any spiritually minded man will go through the same path. He cries, pleads, pours out and "tells" God. The art of spiritual life is to have that intensity in prayer when we aren't under the pressure of immediate issues. We assume it was imperative for David in the cave to keep quiet. But in his heart he had cried loudly to God "for mercy". He felt Saul could have found him and murdered him at any time; he had no human escape, apart from to trust in Yahweh.

Psa 142:2

I pour out my complaint before Him-
Literally, 'I gush out my babbling'. He was so frightened and emotionally broken down that his spirit or mind was overwhelmed (:3). And yet there in the cave he felt he was before Yahweh, in His very presence.

I tell Him my troubles-
Whilst God knows our exact position in life, it is part of childlike relationship with Him to tell Him our troubles. There in the cave with no human way of escape, David did just this.

Psa 142:3

When my spirit was overwhelmed within me-
I noted on :2 how David felt that 'I gush out my babbling' to God. He was so frightened and emotionally broken down that his spirit or mind was overwhelmed.

You knew my path-
Rashi: "And You know my path how many snares are in it". God knows our path and all likely temptations in it; hence the Lord foresaw Peter's stumbling blocks in his path, and prayed that Peter's faith would not fail. Although this Psalm is David's prayer in the cave, it has clearly been edited by David afterwards. He felt there was no path out of his problem, for the cave had no exit. But God knew a path for him, as he now can later reflect. And we have all been in such situations.

In the way in which I walk, they have hidden a snare for me-
The implication is that the snares laid would have meant going astray from God's precepts. The initial reference may have been to Saul laying snares for David through getting him to marry his daughters and thereby seeking to kill him; and in Ps. 119:110 David is proud he has not fallen into those snares. But that Psalm finishes with David saying bluntly that he has "gone astray" (Ps. 119:176), as if to say that earlier he had far overrated his own obedience to God's law.

Psa 142:4

Look on my right hand and see; for there is no one who is concerned for me. Refuge has fled from me, no one cares for my soul-
In the cave, David did have some of his men with him. But he feels, as he looks to the men on his right hand [the place of supposed help] that they were with him from their own agenda, not because they were really concerned for him or could "deliver" him (s.w. "concerned"). The cave had been his refuge, but that refuge was now his trap; or so it seemed. Or this could be David ruefully reflecting how none of his former friends or family really cared for him; all were in submission to Saul. For sure he was therefore overlooking the faithful friendship of Jonathan.

Psa 142:5

I cried to You, Yahweh. I said, You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living-
He had made the cave his refuge, and it had become his trap. But he doesn't give up hope that God can still be his ultimate refuge. Verse 4 has lamented in depression, ignoring Jonathan's loyalty, that of his men willing to give their lives so he could drink of Bethlehem's water, the loyalty of his "mighty men", Ittai and Hushai's loyalty at the time of Absalom's rebellion and probably that of many others like Abiathar: "no one takes notice of me… no one cares for my life, I have no refuge". This speaking out loud of his feelings leads him to "*You* are my refuge".

Psa 142:6

Listen to my cry, for I am in desperate need; deliver me from my persecutors, for they are stronger than me-
David knew that he and his men couldn't fight their way out of the cave, and likely suspected his men would hand him over to Saul in return for their own lives being spared. He was indeed in desperate need, snared in that cave, with the only way out blocked by Saul and his men. That he didn't give up hope but begged God to somehow deliver him is a fair indication of his great faith. It was surely motivated by his respect for God's prophetic word, that somehow, some day, this too would pass and he would be king and Saul would be removed.

Psa 142:7

Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to Your name. The righteous will surround me, for You will be good to me-

The purpose of all deliverance is to be so that we can praise God's Name. We think of Peter's mother in law being cured and immediately then serving the Lord and His men. David imagines salvation as being together with other righteous people, even though earlier in the psalm he laments that he has not one true spiritual brother. This is the path of so many- perceived spiritual isolation in this life leading to the hope of eternal and true fellowship with others in the Kingdom.

The cave had become a prison for David. He begs for deliverance by some miracle, so that he could praise God for it; and instead of being surrounded by men of very doubtful loyalty (see on :4), he believed the prophetic word that one day he would be king, surrounded in government by "the righteous". His faith that he would be rescued from such a dead end, no exit situation is remarkable.

Most of the Psalms have clear reference to the exiles, and being brought out of a hopeless position in prison is an image used by the restoration prophets. And David's feelings likewise have ultimate application to the Lord Jesus. As He hung in the

darkness of the cross, He too was depressed by the weight of His mental burden, a burden so great it must have pushed His brain to maximum neurological capacity. The spirit of the crucified Christ is here; His hope that "the righteous shall compass me about" is used in the famous crucifixion Psalm of Ps. 22:22. The Lord Jesus poured out His soul unto death; "he was taken away by distress" (Is. 53:12,8 AVmg.) suggests that it was the mental crisis in the brain of the Lord on the cross which resulted in His death. This is why Pilate marvelled that He died so quickly. It is evident from this that the physical process of crucifixion did not kill the Lord, but rather the heart burst (both figurative and literal) which it brought upon Him. Do we not sense that striving in our minds as we fellowship His sufferings? Surely we do, but from a great distance.

PSALMS CHAPTER 143

Psa 143:1

A Psalm by David-
We have here another example of the pairing of Psalms, for Ps. 143 has many points of contact with David's prayer when hemmed in within the cave of Ps. 142.

Hear my prayer, Yahweh. Listen to my petitions. In Your faithfulness and righteousness, relieve me-
David trapped within the cave apparently faced certain death. But he pleads with God to be faithful- to His prophetic word that David would be king and Saul would be deposed. In this sense, faith came by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17).

Psa 143:2

Don't enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous-
Facing apparent death, and in great panic and psychological crisis (see on :7), David assumed that the prophetic word that he would live to become king wasn't going to be fulfilled because he had sinned. The Lord Jesus passed through a similar crisis on the cross when He felt forsaken by God. And so David asks for every grace to be shown to him. Closer, more rational analysis however reveals a weakness in his argument; he seems to be saying that because all men sin, and none are justified, therefore God shouldn't judge David for his sins. That doesn't follow, but we can put this down to his understandable panic in extremity.

LXX "for in thy sight shall no man living be justified". David is asking for salvation because of God's righteousness (:1). Yet David is a sinner. But he asks for salvation because of God's righteousness. Romans 3 explains how this can come about for every man. Paul quotes or alludes to this in the middle of Rom. 3:20: "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin".

And Paul will develop the same argument- that we are not righteous, no man is, even David wasn't. And yet in Christ we are counted righteous, and therefore we have no fear of judgment in the sense of condemnation. No man is righteous, and so every man will be condemned by God's judgment. And so David asks God not to enter into judgment with him. Yet man cannot just ask not to be judged for his sin. And Romans 3 gives us the answer as to how David's otherwise unreasonable request can be granted- through being "in Christ", we are counted righteous and so will not be judged / condemned.

Psa 143:3

For the enemy pursues my soul; he has struck my life down to the ground-
"Struck" is s.w. "broken". This is clearly relevant to the actions of the Babylonians (s.w. Lam. 3:34). But it was true also of David's enemies within Israel, especially Saul, who is likely in view here, having chased him into the cave where he now expected to be struck down at any moment. The truth is that the exiles were broken because they had broken each other in pieces (Is. 3:15 s.w.). Yet that brokenness was intended to bring forth the humility which would enable them to repent and be restored (s.w. Is. 57:15 "contrite"). And it was the suffering servant as representative of Israel who was broken, as their representative (s.w. Is. 53:5,10).

He has made me live in dark places, as those who have been long dead-
David in the dark cave, which he understood as a kind of tomb hewn in the rock, felt as if he were already dead, so apparently certain was it that Saul would find and slay him.

Psa 143:4

Therefore my spirit is overwhelmed within me. My heart within me is desolate-
Here we have an exact repetition of David's prayer in the cave recorded in Ps. 142:3. I suggested on :1 that Ps. 143 is paired with Ps. 142 and refers to the same time. His spirit failed, he was mentally broken down, 'I gush out my babbling', he remembered (Ps. 142:2). He was so frightened and emotionally broken down that his spirit or mind was overwhelmed (Ps. 142:3). The relevance to the exiles is that the land was left "desolate" whilst they were in exile (s.w. Lev. 26:34; 2 Chron. 36:21 etc.), as was the temple (2 Chron. 7:21) and the heart of the exiles themselves, just like David at this time (Jer. 4:9 s.w.). But God could save them from such extremity, if they had David's faith, and restore them according to His prophetic word and intention with them. Jeremiah uses the same word translated "overwhelmed" to describe what happened to God's people under the hand of the Babylonians (Lam. 2:11,12,19). It is the very phrase used to describe Ezekiel's feelings in Babylonian exile (Ez. 3:15).

Psa 143:5

I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your doings, I contemplate the work of Your hands-
David recalls in his own life "of old", in his youth and childhood, how God had saved him by grace; and asks for this to be continued. We should never therefore disregard God's hand at work in our childhood and youth. But as in Ps. 77:12, the Divine work and doings being considered are also His historical grace to His people. For all His work for Israel was by grace, seeing that for the most part they didn't strongly believe in Him and were unfaithful to His covenant; and yet He had still worked for them so mightily, towards their salvation.

David reflects "on the work of Your hands" (Ps. 143:5), and by that he refers to God's work in our lives as His people. He will never stop that work: "Yahweh will fulfil that which concerns me; Your grace, Yahweh, endures forever. Don't forsake the works of Your own hands" (Ps. 138:8), in the spirit of Phil. 1:6. Even those who walk away from God and His call will still have to experience His continual nudging of them until the day they die. Far better to totally surrender to His ways, and be "workers together with Him" toward our own salvation (2 Cor. 6:1). In this sense we "work out our salvation" (Phil. 2:12) in tandem with His work through the Spirit.

Psa 143:6

I spread forth my hands to You. My soul thirsts for You, like a parched land. Selah-
In the cave that night, David would have likely been unable to drink. He was thirsty, dry as the parched land outside the cave. And in the silence of the cave that night, he spread forth his hands to God.

And again these things look forward to the experience of the Lord Jesus. The thirsty land surrounding Him on the cross represented spiritually barren Israel (Is. 53:1; Ps. 42:1-3); but the Lord Jesus so took His people upon Him, into His very soul, that His soul became a thirsty land (Ps. 143:6); He felt as spiritually barren as they were, so close was His representation of us, so close was He to sinful man, so fully did He enter into the feelings of the sinner. In the same way as Christ really did feel forsaken as Israel were because of their sins, so He suffered thirst, both literally and spiritually, which was a punishment for Israel's sins.

The application to the exiles is in how the faithful yearned for the rain of the Spirit; and indeed it could have been sent upon the dry bones of the exiles (Ez. 37).

Psa 143:7

Hurry to answer me, Yahweh. My spirit fails-
We can take "fails" as better "pines". He so longed for an answer, but above all he pined

to see God's face, he pined for God not to hide His face or withdraw His presence. This is the pining of every truly spiritual soul. David in the cave that night (see on :1) needed immediate answers and deliverance. His spirit failed, he was mentally broken down, 'I gush out my babbling', he remembered (Ps. 142:2). He was so frightened and emotionally broken down that his spirit or mind was overwhelmed (Ps. 142:3).

Don't hide Your face from me-
Recognizing the existence of the new and old men within him, Paul can speak in Rom. 7 as if he is two different people; "I myself serve the law of God", but "my flesh" serves sin. Likewise David asked God not to hide his face from him, David personally, (Ps. 27:9; 69:17; 102:2; 143:7), but to hide His face from David's sins (Ps. 51:9). And one wonders whether the way the records of the Lord's temptations are written implies some similar recognition by the Spirit of the two 'men' within the Lord.

So that I don't become like those who go down into the pit-
There in the cave it would have seemed as if David was alive in the pit or tomb of the grave. He was earnestly begging for his life to be saved.

Psa 143:8

Cause me to hear Your grace in the morning, for I trust in You. Cause me to know the way in which I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You-
This has obvious reference to David lying silent and unable to move that night in the cave (see on :1). He begged for deliverance in the morning, by grace alone. For he had no human way out. And now, as he writes up his experience in this Psalm, he makes this his prayer *every* night, as it had been that desperate night in the cave.

David expected to be caused to hear God's lovingkindness every morning, and to be taught the way he should take- all because he would every morning 'lift up his soul unto God'. All this was the pattern of daily life for the Lord Himself, who was noted for rising up early and praying (Mk. 1:35). Is. 50:4 prophesies of the Lord Jesus that morning by morning, God awoke His ear "to learn as a disciple". That last phrase is surely to signal the intended similarities between the Lord's path of growth, and that of all disciples.

Just as is true today, and as is often mentioned in Ps. 119, God is willing to operate directly on the hearts of men in a way over and above His written word. David realized this, and asked to be taught and shown God's ways (Ps. 25:4; 143:8). "Cause" is the usual word for 'to know'. Knowledge in its ultimate, spiritual sense is not attained simply by reading or hearing the text of the Bible; not that I am at all decrying that. But there is a higher, Divine hand at work in making us know Divine knowledge. Moses had prayed the same words in Ex. 33:13: "Show me [make me to know] Your way, that I may know [s.w. "show"] You [and] find grace in Your sight". The gift of knowledge, in the Hebraic sense of

relationship, is related to God's grace. That knowledge which is in view is not the same as technical, theological knowledge. Moses' prayer was answered; the same words are used in saying that God "made known His ways to Moses" (Ps. 103:7).

Psa 143:9

Deliver me, Yahweh, from my enemies. I flee to You to hide me-
David had fled into the cave for deliverance and hiding, but it had turned out to be his snare and prison (see on :1). And so he desperately flees, in his mind, to Yahweh as his true hiding place, begging to be hidden from Saul, sleeping only a short distance away from him.

David responded to their seeking of him by seeking God more. He uses the language of the hunt and chase to describe how he was drawing closer to God: "My soul followeth hard after thee" (Ps. 63:8; Ps. 63 is a wilderness psalm, see title). “Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul… let all those that seek thee rejoice" (Ps. 40:14,16). In this sense, David felt he wasn't fleeing *from* his enemies as much as fleeing *to* God: "Deliver me, O Lord, from mine enemies (from whom he was running): I flee unto thee to hide me" (Ps. 143:9 AV). Both David and Jesus had a real sense of direction, they could see that their mental, emotional and physical sufferings were leading them towards an altogether higher relationship with the Father. They took those sufferings as an almost welcome push towards the Father. They had a sure sense of spiritual direction in all their afflictions; this accounts for the human loneliness which they both felt.

Psa 143:10

Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God-
David's begging for deliverance was because he vowed to use his subsequent life to do God's will, and he asks God to teach him this.

Your Spirit is good; lead me in the land of uprightness-
David asked: “Let thy good spirit / Angel lead me in the plain country” (Ps. 143:10 RVmg.)- as if he realized that there were Angels / spirits of evil, as well as of good. Thus we too pray not to be lead into temptation- but rather, lead in the way of life. Angels do lead us in life, but they can lead us in either the downward or the upward spiral. In the immediate context, David trapped in the cave (see on :1) longed to be outside of it, in the open country again.

Psa 143:11

Revive me, Yahweh, for Your name's sake. In Your righteousness, bring my soul out of trouble-
David in the cave had no way of being 'brought out' (see on :1), apart from by God's direct intervention. He asks for this not because of his own righteousness, but throws himself upon God's grace.

Psa 143:12

In Your loving kindness, cut off my enemies, and destroy all those who afflict my soul, for I am Your servant-
We are bidden praise God for smiting David's enemies, and also for smiting the firstborn babies of Egypt, because this is a sign of His eternal mercy (Ps. 138:10 cp. 143:12). This is proof enough that His view of mercy and ours are quite different. If as suggested on :1 this Psalm is David's reflections within the cave, then his request for *God* to cut off his enemies is all the more appropriate. For he had the chance to cut off Saul's life and refused to, exactly because of his faith in this Divine promise- that *God* and not man would see to this.

David often talks about the perishing [s.w.] of *his* enemies (Ps. 9:3,6, 41:5; 143:12). But in Ps. 92:9 he speaks of them as God's enemies. He considers *his* enemies to be God's enemies. That may well have been true, seeing that God did indeed become the enemy of Saul, who was clearly the great enemy of David in his earlier life (1 Sam. 28:16). But we must sound a caveat; because it can be that those within the body of believers whom we consider our enemies are in fact loved by God. We cannot automatically assume in times of inter-personal strife that our enemies are also God's enemies.

PSALMS CHAPTER 144

Psa 144:1
By David-
The LXX title says that it concerns the fight with Goliath of 1 Sam. 17.

Blessed be Yahweh, my rock, who teaches my hands to war, and my fingers to battle-
David gives full credit to Yahweh for the victory. The mention of hands and fingers is appropriate to his use of a sling to kill Goliath, but he attributes his skill to Divine training. He had likely learned to sling stones with accuracy from a child. He attributes that training to Yahweh, showing that God is active in preparing human life from early childhood experiences.

Psa 144:2

my source of grace-
David recognizes that the victory was through Divine grace, not his bravery or skill as a slinger.

My fortress, my high tower, my deliverer-
These are all defensive terms. And yet David is presented as the bold aggressor who proactively seeks out the duel with Goliath. He did so refusing all human armour; because he saw Yahweh as his defence. David sees that Yahweh will be a "high tower" or place of refuge at the day of future judgment (Ps. 9:8,9, quoted about this in Acts 17:31). But David feels God has been like this to him in this life (2 Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2; 46:7; 48:3; 59:9,16,17; 62:2; 94:22; 144:2). He therefore sees a seamless experience in his relationship with God in this life, and at the future day of judgment. God saves us right now and is a refuge for us in countless life situations; and this is the guarantee that He will be likewise at the last day.

My shield and He in whom I take refuge-
Again a reference to his refusal to take Saul's shield and defensive armour with him into battle.

Who subdues my people under me-
David's victory over Goliath was what brought the people under him. But instead of basking in any personal glory about that, David thanks God for having given that to him.

Psa 144:3

Yahweh, what is man, that You care for him? Or the son of man, that You think of him?-
This repeats Ps. 8:4, and as commented there, that Psalm is clearly, as here, David's thoughts as he marvelled at how he had been used to achieve the victory over Goliath. But as explained on Ps. 8:3, he becomes a symbol of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate "son of man". David is here alluding to the earlier words of Job. Probably the only extant scripture at David's time was the book of Job and the Pentateuch, which explains why he so often alludes to the book of Job. Job came to deeply marvel at the fact that despite God's highness, He tests us and meditates upon us every moment of our lives: "What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him?... that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?" (Job 7:17,18). These words became the basis of the thoughts of the Lord Jesus as prophesied here. Like Job, the Lord learnt from the depth of His own inner struggles about the moral greatness of the Father. So even God's own Son, peerless and spotless lamb of God that He was even in mortal nature, recognized that such was God's moral splendour that He was surprised that during His mortality, God was so intensely interested in Him.

As God was "mindful of" (Ps. 8:4) or 'cared for' David and thereby all men in Israel through the victory granted over Goliath, so David urged that in response, they should be "mindful" of God (s.w. 1 Chron. 16:12,15). But "mindful" implies 'to remember', and is a term used for answer to prayer (Jud. 16:28; 1 Sam. 1:11 and often). David is acknowledging that he had prayed for victory, and been granted it- but felt unworthy to have received such an answer.

Psa 144:4

Man is like a breath, his days are like a shadow that passes away-
"Breath" is the word for "vanity". So this may not be a general reflection upon all humanity, but upon the unrighteous, upon whom the judgment of :5,6 is to come. The word is used in Ps. 94:11 "Yahweh knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile". "Vanity" is the word commonly used of idolatry. And this indeed is where modern day idolatry is committed- through having an empty mind, filled with vanity, rather than the things of God's Spirit. And yet all the same, the parallel in Psalm 8 seems to suggest that David marvelled that God had wrought so much through him, a mere mortal man. And his allusions to the language of idolatry and apostacy could effectively be saying that 'Seeing I am a mere mortal, there but for God's grace go I, I am not so much higher than those apostates'. An attitude we all need to remember as we mix with those others would consider the dregs of our societies.

Psa 144:5

Part Your heavens, Yahweh, and come down; touch the mountains, and they will smoke-
It seems at this point that David is praying for a dramatic deliverance from apparently certain death, and he has reminded himself in :1-4 of the victory and salvation granted him over Goliath as an inspiration. He has done this previously in this section of the Psalms; see on Ps. 140:7. He asks for a theophany to save him, no less that what happened at Sinai (s.w. Ex. 19:18-20), when again God had as it were made the mountains smoke by His touch. We marvel at David's spiritual ambition, unafraid to ask for a similar theophany to save him. And he reflects at the end of his life that this prayer was in fact answered (Ps. 18:9). The relevance to the exiles is that Yahweh was prepared to "bow" (s.w. "stretch out") the heavens and "come down" to restore the exiles; but they chose not to make use of that huge potential (s.w. Is. 40:22; 42:5; 64:1).

Psa 144:6

Throw out lightning and scatter them-
This continues the request for a saving theophany of the magnitude of what was seen at Sinai; see on :5. At the end of his life, David was thankful that this prayer had in fact been answered (Ps. 18:14). David rejoices that Divine "arrows" were sent to destroy his

enemies (Ps. 7:13; 18:14; 45:5; 64:7; 144:6), in fulfilment of God's promise to do so to the sinful within Israel (Dt. 32:23,42). But David was to later realize that those same arrows had been fired by God into him in judgment for his sin (Ps. 38:2). This realization was perhaps to help David understand that his rejoicing in Divine arrows of judgment being fired at his enemies had not been mature; for he himself had to realize that he was worthy of the same.

Send out Your arrows and defeat them-
Again the prayer was answered and David thanks God for this at the end of his life (s.w. Ps. 18:14). We cannot locate any particular historical incident of fulfilment; perhaps it was too personal and wonderful to be recorded. Just as a Christian man or woman might feel it inappropriate to record God's most dramatic salvation of them when they write their autobiography. The shooting or sending forth of arrows is only elsewhere used of God doing so against an apostate Judah (s.w. Ez. 5:16). The phrase is also repeatedly used of how Jonathan shot arrows to signal to David that his father Saul was going to try to kill him (1 Sam. 20:20-22). Perhaps the enemies in view are therefore Saul and his men.

Psa 144:7

Stretch out Your hand from above, rescue me and deliver me out of great waters, out of the hands of foreigners-
The "foreigners" may be literal Gentiles, represented as often by "waters". But I suggested on :6 that it is perhaps Saul and his men (such as Doeg, the Gentile Edomite) who may be initially in view. This would continue a major Biblical theme; that the apostate amongst God's people are as Gentiles. See on :8.

As noted on :5,6, Ps. 144 has many points of contact with Ps. 18, here to Ps. 18:16 "He sent from on high. He took me, He drew me out of many waters". At the end of his life, David felt his prayer of Ps. 144:7 had indeed been answered. "Waters" are usually symbolic of armies or nations. David felt he had been surrounded and faced with certain death, but had been as it were airlifted to safety by God. The language here says that God has done this, but it is parallel with David's prayer for this to happen in Ps. 144:7. The triumphant song of Ps. 18 is therefore praise for the prayer of Ps. 144 being answered.

Psa 144:8

whose mouths speak deceit, whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood-
The language of deceit is more appropriate to the apostate within Israel than to Gentiles. See on :7. The mouths who spoke deceit and falsehood are often those of Saul and his men (see s.w. Ps. 7:14; 27:12; 31:18; 35:19; 119:69,78, 86,118 etc.)

Psa 144:9

I will sing a new song to You, God, on a ten-stringed lyre I will sing praises to You-
This is the song of Ps. 18; see on :5-7. Even in the Old Testament, the idea of living in a spirit of newness of life is to be found. David six times invites us to sing with him "a new song" (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1 cp. Is. 42:10). Invariably these songs are associated with the experience of God's redemption (cp. Rev. 5:9). Obviously those 'new songs' were intended to be repeatedly sung. Our regular experience of forgiveness and redemption should urge us onwards in the spirit of 'newness of life'. Like Paul we die daily with the Lord, and the power of His resurrection life likewise daily breaks out in us.

Psa 144:10

You are He who gives salvation to kings, who rescues David His servant from the deadly sword-
Again the allusion is to the victory over the deadly sword of Goliath. David is praying for a dramatic deliverance from apparently certain death, and he has reminded himself in :1-4 of the victory and salvation granted him over Goliath as an inspiration. He has done this previously in this section of the Psalms; see on Ps. 140:7. We note how David on one hand recognizes that he is indeed a king, but more than that, Yahweh's servant. In the thinking of his time, kings didn't need salvation. They were themselves seen as saviours, self sufficient. But David broke this paradigm of thinking, considering himself to be the humble king.

Psa 144:11

Rescue me, and deliver me out of the hands of foreigners, whose mouths speak deceit, whose right hand is a right hand of falsehood-
This repeats :7,8, where I suggested that the people in view are not necessarily Gentiles but Saul, acting as a Gentile, and whose entourage included Gentiles like Doeg the Edomite. "Redeem / deliver me from the hand..." is again a quotation from Jacob's words when he found his relative Esau [not a complete Gentile, although acting like one] barring his path back home (Gen. 32:11,30). And the word is used of David's desire for deliverance from Saul (1 Sam. 26:24); and yet this was a redemption unappreciated by him as it ought to have been (2 Sam. 12:7). Finally David recognized that this prayer was answered (2 Sam. 22:18,49). As David had earlier prayed for redemption / deliverance from Saul and his enemies (Ps. 31:15; 59:1; 144:7), he would later pray for redemption / deliverance from his sins (Ps. 39:8; 79:9).

Psa 144:12

Then our sons will be like well-nurtured plants, our daughters like corner stones carved to adorn a palace-
If indeed Saul and his followers are in view in :11 (see note there), then this will be David's anticipation of what the kingdom of God in Israel would be like when he became king and Saul was deposed, as had been promised by Samuel. This vision of that Davidic kingdom didn't fully come about, partly because of David's own imperfections; but it looks ahead to how things will be in the ultimate Davidic kingdom of the Lord Jesus. Solomon and David's other sons were hardly like "well nurtured plants". The potential was that David's sons would be "planted" eternally (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:10), but this only came finally true in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. God's people were indeed "planted" in the land (Ps. 80:8) but were uprooted; and the prophecies only come true in the person of the Lord Jesus who is as the plant which grew in the dry land (Ps. 80:15).

Psa 144:13

Our barns will be full, filled with all kinds of provision; our sheep will bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our fields-
As noted on :12, this is a picture of the kingdom which David hoped to establish after the death of Saul. It is expressed in terms of the blessings for obedience to the covenant; and throughout Ps. 119 David had vowed to be personally obedient to the laws of God which formed the old covenant. But he was overconfident of both his own obedience and that of Israel. And so as explained on :12, these things are reapplied to the final reestablishment of the Davidic kingdom by the Lord Jesus.

Psa 144:14

Our oxen will pull heavy loads, there will be no breaking in and no going away, and no crying in our streets-
The reference is to the breaking in of the Philistines upon Israel and their going away in flight from them, and the crying in the streets after the Philistines had sacked the Israelite villages. This would now be no more, thanks to David's victory. But this vision of the Davidic kingdom didn't last and didn't even fully come about. See on :11,12.

Psa 144:15

Happy are the people who are in such a situation. Happy are the people whose God is Yahweh-
This kingdom of God on earth under David's rulership was indeed the ideal projection of how God's Kingdom in Israel could be. But the people didn't retain Yahweh is their God in a meaningful sense, and so its realization was precluded; it will only come fully true in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus, which will be a restoration and extension of the Davidic

kingdom, with Him reigning eternally on David's throne. This is indeed "the Hope of Israel".

PSALMS CHAPTER 145

Psa 145:1

A praise psalm by David-
This psalm is alphabetic, like other Psalms, but the letter *nun* is omitted. It is good homework for the enthusiast to work out why. The Psalm appears to be David looking forward to how his kingdom would be once he had taken over from Saul as promised; in this sense it follows on from the end of Ps. 144, which is all about this. However, as noted on Ps. 144:12-15, this didn't come about as David hoped and envisioned. But it will do so in the future Kingdom of God, where the Lord Jesus will sit upon David's throne and rule over a revived Davidic Kingdom. This Psalm therefore becomes a prophecy of God's future Kingdom, and praise for how it shall be.

I will exalt You my God as the King. I will praise Your name forever and ever-
As noted above, David is looking ahead to his kingdom becoming the Kingdom of God which would be eternal, with him praising God forever. And David emphasizes that God and not himself is the ultimate king of the Kingdom. Samuel had well instilled this into him.

Psa 145:2

Every day I will praise You, I will extol Your name forever and ever-
This was David's vision of the Davidic kingdom; praising God's name daily for ever, implying he would live endless days.

Psalm 145 is David's reflection upon Yahweh's declaration of His Name in Ex. 34:5-7. And it inspires him to praise, and to share with others the news of the God who so glories in forgiving and saving the weak. We note that Ex. 34 doesn't describe the actual passing by of God and Moses' seeing God's back, as promised in Ex. 33. The record reflects the focus God wanted Moses and all of us to have- that getting a physical peek at God is neither here nor there. And as explained on Ex. 33, these wonders are all just the back side of God, and He shows His back rather than His face because of displeasure with human sin, as Jeremiah makes clear. David's reflctions on the implications of Ex. 34 are worth thinking through:

"Every day I will praise You, I will extol Your name forever and ever.
Psa 145:3 Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! His greatness is unsearchable [the grace shown here is indeed unsearchable especially given the context, of God's grace to

an Israel who had as it were committed adultery on their wedding night]
Psa 145:4 One generation will commend Your works to another, and will declare Your mighty acts [this refers to how Yahweh had said that His grace continues to 1000 generations of those who fear Him]
Psa 145:5 Of the glorious majesty of Your honour, of Your wondrous works, I will meditate [the wondrous worksand awesome acts (:6) were in His grace to Israel and all men, rather than miracles]
Psa 145:6 Men will speak of the might of Your awesome acts; I will declare Your greatness.
Psa 145:7 They will utter the memory of Your great goodness and will sing of Your righteousness [Yahweh had said that instead of Moses seeing His face, He would make His goodness pass before Moses].
Psa 145:8 Yahweh is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great grace [an exact quotation from Ex. 34].
Psa 145:9 Yahweh is good to all, His tender mercies are over all His works ["All" implies that the declaration of who God essentially is therefore applies to all men, not just Israel at the point of their shameful adultery against their God. Jonah got this when he quoted Ex. 34 as applying to the Ninevites, and said he felt repulsed by it- whereas David marvels at the global scale of God's grace. Hence the Psalm concludes with an appeal for "all flesh" to praise Yahweh for His Name].
... make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, the glory of the majesty of His kingdom [knowing Yahweh is like this motivates us to share the news with all men]
Psa 145:13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Your dominion endures throughout all generations. Yahweh is faithful in all His words, and loving in all His deeds. [This alludes to His mercy lasting to 1000 generations, and may hint that the eternity of God's Kingdom is implied in His being so saving, gracious and forgiving]
Psa 145:14 Yahweh upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down [Those bowed down by sin, the spiritually fallen, are those who will be comforted by this declaration of how God's grace triumphs over the side of His necessary judgment].
.... Psa 145:17 Yahweh is righteous in all His ways, and gracious in all His works [the declaration of the Name was in response to Moses' request to know Yahweh's ways, Ex. 33:13, in response to how at the golden calf sin, Israel had turned out of His way “They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them” (Ex. 32:8 ESV)]

Psa 145:18 Yahweh is near to all those who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth.
Psa 145:19 He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him, He will also hear their cry and save them". [This again is comfort for all who seek God but feel their sin and weakness is a barrier].

Psa 145:3

Great is Yahweh, and greatly to be praised! His greatness is unsearchable-
The eternity of David's praise (:2) is related to the unsearchable greatness of God which he is praising. Paul appears to allude to this in Rom. 11:33, where the unsearchable greatness refers to the greatness of God's grace in saving sinners. David is quoting Job 5:9; 9:10, which also talk of God's unsearchable grace in human salvation. Job and the Pentateuch were likely the main scriptures known by David. The same unsearchable nature of God's grace was available to the exiles (s.w. Is. 40:28).

Psa 145:4

One generation will commend Your works to another, and will declare Your mighty acts-
This is how David imagined his kingdom being. God's word is a living word. Unlike other history, we can see the intense personal relevance of all God's past dealings with men. David at times gets ecstatic for what God had done at the Red Sea; one generation would tell accounts like the Passover story to another, they too would sing as Miriam had done (Ps. 145:4-7). The "works" retold would be of God's saving grace; that will be our talk throughout eternity, and we should begin living the Kingdom life now.

Psa 145:5

Of the glorious majesty of Your honour, of Your wondrous works, I will meditate-
This is defined in :12 as the glory of God's Kingdom. David was about to become king as promised by Samuel, and he hopes that his kingdom shall be God's Kingdom. He is commendably full of thought and meditation of *God's* Kingdom rather than his own; and there we have an abiding principle. But David used the same words in Ps. 8:5 when meditating upon his victory over Goliath; he had been crowned with glory and honour. That victory was the basis upon which he became king, in the eyes of Israel; and he meditates how the glory and honour given him was in fact God's and not his own. The glory and majesty of the kingship and kingdom was "laid upon" him (Ps. 21:5 s.w.). But David's kingdom didn't fully become God's Kingdom on earth, and the final glory, honour and majesty will be in the future Kingdom of God on earth, when the Lord Jesus reestablishes David's kingdom and reigns on his throne (s.w. Is. 35:2).

Psa 145:6

Men will speak of the might of Your awesome acts; I will declare Your greatness-
It was David who was doing just this, especially through his Psalms. But he imagines the Kingdom of God as being a time when all men will have his uninhibited desire to speak and declare God's greatness.

Psa 145:7

They will utter the memory of Your great goodness and will sing of Your righteousness-
As noted on :6, it was David who was the singer, and he looked forward to all men having his same attitude to open and uninhibited praise. Hence this Psalm, which was intended for all men to sing even now. Thus David consciously sets himself up as the parade example to all who shall be in God's Kingdom.

Psa 145:8

Yahweh is gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and of great grace-
This repeats Yahweh's declaration of His Name to Moses, when He listed His characteristics. We note that "grace" is His lead characteristic. And this will be the more apparent when we are in God's Kingdom, for this is how David imagines us praising God in the Kingdom.

Psa 145:9

Yahweh is good to all, His tender mercies are over all His works-
This will be the praise offered to God in His Kingdom. The struggle of modern man is indeed to believe that God "is good to all". Issues of the justice of God cloud so many attempted relationships with Him. Only in the Kingdom will we finally perceive that He has been good to all, and all His works are encoded with His tender grace. Those issues are left unresolved in this life in order to teach is humility, and trust that there will come a day when all shall be clarified and God's essential goodness and tenderness will be finally perceived.

Psa 145:10

All Your works will give thanks to You, Yahweh; Your saints will extol You-
God's "works" may refer to the natural creation, which will be endued with a capacity to praise Yahweh in His Kingdom. In this sense all of creation groans for that day of His Kingdom (Rom. 8:22). But we can also interpret His "works" as a poetic parallel with His "saints", His people. We will then realize that God worked with us to prepare us for the final and eternal day of His Kingdom.

Psa 145:11

They will speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk about Your power-
Again we see David aware that his kingdom was essentially God's Kingdom; although he imagined his kingdom being established as God's Kingdom, he realizes that all the glory

and power was related to God and not himself. The descriptions here of how life will be in God's Kingdom do not focus upon the physical environment which will then be experienced; but rather upon what we will be doing and thinking, particularly focusing upon our praise of Him. And the idea is that this Psalm is to be sung and felt today; we can begin to live the Kingdom life now. In that sense, as we learn in John's writings, we even now "have eternal life".

Psa 145:12

to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, the glory of the majesty of His kingdom-
See on :5. We note in this Psalm David's continual desire to tell others of God's majesty. David knew his sinfulness, he knew his reliance upon the grace of God, more and more as he got older. One would have thought that after the Bathsheba incident, David would have kept his mouth shut so far as telling other people how to live was concerned. But instead, we find an increasing emphasis in the Psalms (chronologically) upon David's desire to teach others of God's ways- particularly the surrounding Gentile peoples, before whom David had been disgraced over Bathsheba, not to mention from his two faced allegiance to Achish (1 Sam. 27:8-12). There is real stress upon this evangelistic fervour of David (Ps. 4:3; 18:49; 22:25,31; 35:18; 40:9,10; 57:9; 62:8; 66:5,16; 95:1,8; 96:5-8,10; 100:1-4; 105:1,2; 119:27; 145:5,6,12). Indeed, Ps.71:18 records the "old and greyheaded" David pleading with God not to die until he had taught "thy strength unto this generation". As with Paul years later, the only reason he wanted to stay alive was in order to witness the Gospel of grace to others. David therefore coped with his deep inner traumas by looking out of himself to those around him, eagerly desiring to share with them the pureness of God's grace. He didn't do this as some kind of self-help psychiatry; it came naturally from a realization of his own sinfulness and God's mercy, and the *wonderful willingness* of God to extend this to men.

Psa 145:13

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, Your dominion endures throughout all generations. Yahweh is faithful in all His words, and loving in all His deeds-
The particular "words" and "deeds" David has in view are that despite all odds, God's word of promise that he would become king and Saul deposed had come true. We see this faith expressed in this word so often in Ps. 119. David perceived that his kingdom would be everlasting, because it was to be God's Kingdom. And whilst that didn't come true in his times, it will do finally, because the Lord Jesus will reign over the restored Davidic Kingdom, on David's throne, for ever.

Psa 145:14

Yahweh upholds all who fall, and raises up all those who are bowed down-
The Psalms were likely rewritten by David over the years. The upholding of the lowly could have referred initially to how he was exalted from the persecution under Saul, to be king of God's kingdom (s.w. Ps. 3:5; 37:17,24). It was at that time that he was "bowed down" (s.w. Ps. 57:6). But it also has reference to how he was 'upheld' after he temporarily lost his kingdom after his 'fall' in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba (s.w. Ps. 55:12).

Psa 145:15

The eyes of all wait for You; You give them their food in due season-
"Wait for" or "wait upon" is a term used for serving or praising God. As the eyes of servants look to their master, so the eyes of God's people look to Him (Ps.123:2, and the eyes of David are described often in the Psalms as waiting upon God (e.g. Ps. 121:1; 123:1). David sees encoded in the natural creation a prophecy of how things shall eternally be in God's Kingdom; all turning their eyes to God as the animal creation subconsciously does.

Psa 145:16

You open Your hand to satisfy the desire of every living thing-
LXX "Thou openest thine hands, and fillest every living thing with pleasure". But the idea is that the natural creation turns its eyes to God (:15) and He opens His hand to satisfy their desire. As noted on :15, David sees in this a prophecy of how God's true people would turn their eyes to Him and have their desires satisfied by His opening hand. In the context of the exiles, the idea is that their desire for restoration would be fulfilled when they turned their eyes to their God. Opening the hand is an idiom for generous response to the cry of the poor (Dt. 15:8,11); our generosity is to reflect the open handed generosity we have received and yet hope for from God. "Satisfy" translates word often used to describe how God's people in His land would be "filled" or satisfied"; if they were obedient to the covenant (Dt. 6:11; 8:10,12; 11:15 and very often).

Psa 145:17

Yahweh is righteous in all His ways, and gracious in all His works-
This is evidenced in the natural creation (:15,16), and will finally be proven true in the lives of God's faithful people. Whether God was just / righteous and gracious was under question in the mindset of the exiles, as Ezekiel's prophecy reflects. And it has always been questioned. But David sees the Kingdom as a time when people shall finally accept and perceive His justice and grace. This means that the challenges arising from His perceived injustice is all designed to elicit our faith in the Kingdom; for according to David, there will be no answer to the questions until then. The very existence of those

questions is therefore a test of our humility, the all important characteristic God looks for.

Psa 145:18

Yahweh is near to all those who call on Him, to all who call on Him in truth-
Literally, 'next to', 'neighbour / relative to'. This is how close God feels to the broken hearted and crushed; and conversely, how far He is from the self satisfied and self congratulatory, 'the strong' in secular terms. It is this feature of Yahweh which makes Him unique; no other God has this characteristic of 'nearness' (s.w. Dt. 4:7). Only those who call upon Him "in truth", with "unfeigned lips" will he heard (Ps. 145:18). Men repeatedly 'sought for' the Lord Jesus (Mk. 1:37; Jn. 6:26), but He told them to *truly* seek Him (Mt. 6:33; 7:7; Lk.12:31).

Psa 145:19

He will fulfil the desire of those who fear Him, He will also hear their cry and save them-
Often, "desire" is seen by God as prayer (Ps. 10:17; 21:2; 27:4; 59:10; 92:11; 140:8; 145:19; Mt. 18:32; Rom. 10:1; 1 Jn. 5:15). God interprets that inner desire as prayer, even if it is not articulated in specific requests. In the context of the exiles, the idea is that if they truly desired the restoration, it could come in response to their cry. But the problem was that the Kingdom was not their heart's desire.

Psa 145:20

Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy-
See on Ps. 146:9. David felt preserved by God from Saul and his other enemies (1 Sam. 30:23; 2 Sam. 22:44), because he had preserved or obeyed [s.w.] God's ways (2 Sam. 22:22,24; Ps. 18:21,23); whereas Saul didn't obey / preserve them and was destroyed (1 Sam. 13:13,14; 1 Chron. 10:13). Hence Ps. 145:20: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy". Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David

his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Psa 145:21

My mouth will speak the praise of Yahweh; let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever-
Several times in the Psalms, David's poetry matches 'myself' with "all men"; he wants all men to share in *his* experience of Yahweh. He sees his thankful attitude in this life as characteristic of how all in God's Kingdom will eternally live.

PSALMS CHAPTER 146

Psa 146:1

Praise Yah! Praise Yahweh, my soul-
A case can be made that the whole of book 3 of the Psalter (Psalms 73-89) was written / edited in Babylon. The Psalms of Korah (83-87) seem to reflect the longing of the righteous remnant in Babylon for the temple services. And it is just possible that the entire Psalter was re-edited there in Babylon, under inspiration- for so *many* Psalms have elements of appropriacy to the exiles in Babylon and the restoration. The LXX titles of Psalm 56 ["Concerning the people that were removed from the Sanctuary"] and 71 ["Of the sons of Jonadab, and the first that were taken captive"] speak for themselves. Likewise the LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah. Although I suggest they are all initially Psalms of David, relevant to his experiences, but used under inspiration in these later contexts.

Psa 146:2

While I live, I will praise Yahweh. I will sing praises to my God as long as I exist-
This is why David and Hezekiah asked to be preserved from death exactly because this life is the time to praise the Lord, and that was impossible in death. We see their implicit understanding that death is unconsciousness, and not praising God in heaven afterwards.

Psa 146:3

Don't put your trust in princes, each merely a son of man in whom there is no help-
The parallel between princes and men is also found in Ps. 118:8,9. Princes are but men, no more than men, and nothing compared to Yahweh. I noted on Ps. 118:8 the application to Hezekiah. Yet he failed in putting confidence in princes, turning to Egypt

for help. Yet he repented and was rewarded for his sole faith in Yahweh alone. And yet afterwards, he put his confidence in the princes of Babylon. His intensity of faith was not maintained. The relevance to the exiles (see on :1) would have been that the "princes" like Cyrus who appeared to have brought about the restoration were not of themselves to be trusted. They were mere men, used by Yahweh. There may also be some reference to a Jewish leader who tried to free the exiles but not in God's strength.

Psa 146:4

His spirit departs, and he returns to the dust. In that very day, his thoughts perish-
As noted on :2, the Psalmists clearly understood death to be unconsciousness. Whilst a specific "son of man" may be in view in :3, that individual is only human and shares the experience of mortality which all humans share. This would explain why the ambiguous term "son of man" is used, referring both to an individual as well as generic humanity.

Psa 146:5

Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in Yahweh his God-
This hope and happiness is posited in contrast to the mortality which affects all humanity in :4. By implication, therefore, we can assume that the hope in view is that of resurrection to eternal life in a bodily form, the ultimate victory over human mortality. The only other person claiming Yahweh as his "hope" [with this particular Hebrew word] is David under persecution by Saul (Ps. 119:166). In the context of the exiles (see on :1), the hope and help was in the ultimate restoration of the Kingdom and David's throne.

Psa 146:6

who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever-
As so often in the Psalms, God's creative power is seen as the guarantee that he will keep "truth", His covenant and His promises. It is no hard thing for the creator of all to raise the death (:5) or restore the exiles and His Kingdom. Encoded in creation all around us we therefore see the absolute ability of God to fulfil His promises of salvation. Disbelief in His creative power will therefore mean disbelief in our personal salvation.

Psa 146:7

who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. Yahweh frees the prisoners-
The word is used for the loosing or freeing / deliverance of Joseph by the edict of a powerful king, which looked forward to the deliverance of the captives by the decree of Cyrus (s.w. Ps. 105:20). "Freed" is "loosed". The exiles were prisoners who could have

been loosed from Babylon- had they wished. The book of Esther makes clear that the Jews were far from impoverished prisoners. The imagery of being in prison and slavery is therefore in spiritual terms; and most of the exiles refused that great deliverance because they didn't perceive their condition. And that's exactly why folks today turn down the great offer of freedom made to them in Christ.

Psa 146:8

Yahweh opens the eyes of the blind, Yahweh raises up those who are bowed down, Yahweh loves the righteous-
The Psalms were likely rewritten by David over the years. The raising up of the bowed down could have referred initially to how he was exalted from the persecution under Saul, to be king of God's kingdom. It was at that time that he was "bowed down" (s.w. Ps. 57:6). But he was to be a pattern for the exiles, if they followed his later example of repentance and restoration.

Psa 146:9

Yahweh preserves the strangers, He upholds the fatherless and widow, but the way of the wicked He turns upside down-
This parallels Ps. 145:20 [see note there]: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him, but all the wicked He will destroy". Those who love God are the marginal, the foreigners and widows; and in preaching the Gospel in wealthier areas, this truth is realized time and again. In the context of the exiles (see on :1), this was appropriate; for the exiles were treated as strangers in Babylon, and after the horrors of the Babylonian invasion there would have been many widows and fatherless amongst them.

Psa 146:10

Yahweh will reign forever; your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise Yah!-
The exiles (see on :1) were to praise God that the God of Zion, the temple mount, would have an eternal kingdom. They were directed not to rejoice in any particular Davidic king, but in Yahweh who was their ultimate king. But the Psalm was originally David's reflections on his own Kingdom; he correctly perceives Yahweh and not himself as the ultimate king of Israel.

David saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). This is how we are to make sense of suffering- by understanding that it

plays a role in the salvation of others, and is part of a wider nexus of Divine operation. We suffer so that we may be able to minister the comfort we receive to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Job likewise came to realize that his sufferings were not so much for his personal maturing, but for the teaching and salvation of the friends.

PSALMS CHAPTER 147

Psa 147:1

Praise Yah, for it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant and fitting to praise Him-
The LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah. According to the LXX titles, there were certain Psalms which were written for the dedication of the rebuilt temple, and others written by Haggai and Zechariah. They include: Psalms 96,138,147,148. These all seem to speak as if the time of a glorious temple was to be the time of God's Kingdom; this was the possibility, and it was the prevailing hope in the minds of the faithful minority. But the Psalms had to remain prophecies of the future day of Zion's glory, for the temple was not rebuilt by the returned exiles according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48. Although I suggest they are all initially Psalms of David, relevant to his experiences, but used under inspiration in these later contexts.

Psa 147:2

Yahweh builds up Jerusalem, He gathers together the outcasts of Israel-
The Jews returned from Babylon to the land of their own volition; but it was Yahweh who *gathered* them back, as if He called them almost of *His* volition rather than theirs. But the majority resisted this gathering of God and chose to remain in Babylon, for all the strength of His will for their restoration. Just as many do today in their rejection of the Gospel. Those who returned rebuilt Jerusalem; but actually, Yahweh did, through His confirmation of all the freewill effort of men like Haggai and Nehemiah (see on :1).

This verse is alluded to by the Lord in Lk. 13:34, where He how He would fain have gathered together the children of Jerusalem, "but you would not". The words of the Psalm speak as if this is what the Lord God is going to do. But Jesus understood it as being impossible of fulfilment if the outcast children would not allow themselves to be gathered. Likewise the statement that the Lord will build up Jerusalem was made in a restoration context; but again, it was dependent upon the Jews' obedience for its fulfilment. God was and is potentially ready to work with us.

Psa 147:3

He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds-
The broken hearted and wounded were the exiles; see on :1. But they were comfortable in Baylon-Persia, as the book of Esther confirms. They were no longer broken hearted, and took their healing from material prosperity rather than God's Spirit. They were warned in Is. 6:10 that the potential healing of their hearts would not happen unless they were open to it. The broken hearted were those who had broken their own hearts in recognition of their sins as David had done (Ps. 51:17; 69:20 s.w.), and had followed his path to repentance and restoration. But the exiles generally were impenitent; and so the good news announced to them of healing of broken hearts was rejected (s.w. Is. 61:1).

Psa 147:4

He counts the number of the stars, He calls them all by their names-
The stars which can't be numbered by man refer to the true seed of Abraham. Each have their own individual name in God's mind, reflecting His appreciation of their unique characteristics. The tragedy was that God called each of the exiles back to the land, desirous to fulfil the promises to Abraham; and the majority of them refused that call.

Psa 147:5

Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite-
This infinite understanding develops the thought of :4; God knew every unique characteristics of His potential people, the stars of Abrahams potential seed. David sees his sins and their consequences as "without number", but he uses the same word for God's "infinite" or "without number" "understanding" (s.w. Ps. 40:12). God understands better than we do the nature of our sins and their consequences. And His power to deal with all that is limitless, as David discovered in his experience with his sin. The exiles too had sinned, and God infinitely understood every nuance of that; but His power was such that He would restore each of them see on :4). But they rejected such mighty power, for He allows it to be circumscribed by human freewill.

Psa 147:6

Yahweh upholds the humble; He brings the wicked down to the ground-
"Brings... down" is the term often used for those humbled by God's condemnation, e.g. the proud who are brought low (2 Sam. 22:28; Job 40:11; Ps. 75:7; 147:6; Prov. 29:23 and very often in the prophets). And yet God by grace remembers and lifts up even those humbled by such condemnation (Ps. 136:23). This is absolute grace; to save even those suffering condemnation for their sins. This was all exactly relevant to the exiles (see on :1).

Time and again, the Biblical contrasts are between the sinners and the humble- as if humility is the epitome of the acceptable. It is the meek who shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:11). This is how significant humility is. God right now puts down one and lifts up another– all of which He will also due at the last day (Ps. 75:7; Lk. 14:10 alludes here). The essence of judgment is ongoing now; “we make the answer now”.

Psa 147:7

Sing to Yahweh with thanksgiving, sing praises on the harp to our God-
LXX "Begin the song with thanksgiving", clearly an indication that this Psalm was to be sung in the sanctuary. This had only just been rebuilt at the time of this Psalm (see on :1).

Psa 147:8

who covers the sky with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass grow on the mountains-
As God prepares the earth for the grass and manipulates the clouds above, so the *eretz* / land / earth was prepared for the restoration to happen (s.w. Is. 45:18; 62:7). The tragedy was that the majority of the exiles preferred to stay in Babylon rather than return to the land prepared for them. By contrast, the land / kingdom was prepared for David (Ps. 119:90) whilst he was in exile, and he received it. The sending of the rain represents the power of God's word of restoration coming down and producing growth (Is. 55:10,11). And yet this was precluded by the exiles, and will come true fully at the last day.

Psa 147:9

He provides food for the livestock, and for the young ravens when they call-
The hint is that if the exiles truly called to God for help, He would respond. The fact He responds to calls for help is encoded throughout creation; for when even the ravens call, God answers their needs. The fact God "provides food" to His people far more than even to "the livestock" means that we should be faithful to covenant with Him (Gen. 28:20 s.w.). His provision of food to the natural creation is a reason to praise God for His grace to men (s.w. Ps. 136:25). Constantly, the natural creation is read as an encouragement to faith in God.

The raven was considered a bad omen. But still God cares for them; and how much more for His people. This is the force of the Lord's argument in Lk. 12:24, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them". Clearly God doesn't simplistically punish the evil and bless the righteous immediately in this life. His grace reaches out to all.

Psa 147:10

He doesn’t delight in the strength of the horse, He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man-
The Psalm was in the context of the restoration (see on :1). Perhaps the allusion is how the wicked Haman 'delighted' in the strength of a horse (Esther 6:9,11 s.w.). Haman and those like him all came to nothing, and couldn't thwart the glorification of God's captive people.

Psa 147:11

Yahweh takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His grace-
This was originally David who hoped in grace (Ps. 33:18). But the exiles are asked to hope in God's grace (Ps. 130:7); for their restoration was by grace, in that their judgment was absolutely called for.

Psa 147:12

Praise Yahweh, Jerusalem! Praise your God, Zion!-
The situation in the time of Haggai and Zechariah (see on :1) was not apparently worthy of so much praise. But the Psalm asks the exiles to praise God, as David did, for that which was promised and was yet to come.

Psa 147:13

For He has strengthened the bars of your gates, He has blessed your children within you-
As noted on :1, this Psalm was relevant to the exiles. Nehemiah's record stresses how the exiles themselves strengthened the bars of the gates of Jerusalem; but it was Yahweh working with them to achieve this. But the blessing of their children was only potentially available; for Haggai (see on :1) records how there was much suffering amongst the exiles from famine and plague, because they had not truly returned to their God.

Psa 147:14

He makes peace in your borders, He fills you with the finest of the wheat-
But at the time of Haggai and Zechariah (see on :1) they experienced famine and opposition from within their borders. The great potentials possible for the exiles who returned didn't come about; their impenitence precluded the reestablishment of the Kingdom as was prophetically possible. "Fills you" translates word often used to

describe how God's people in His land would be "filled" or satisfied"; if they were obedient to the covenant (Dt. 6:11; 8:10,12; 11:15 and very often).

Psa 147:15

He sends out His commandment to the earth; His word runs very swiftly-
LXX "He sends his oracle to the earth: his word will run swiftly"; as in :19 "He sends his word to Jacob". A word running swiftly was an idiom for the fulfilment of that word (see on Hab. 2:2). See too on Jer. 23:18,22. The idea was that the word of restoration was now coming true for the exiles (see on :1). But tragically their impenitence precluded it coming true at that time as it might have done.

Psa 147:16

He gives snow like wool, and scatters frost like ashes-
The idea is that God turns the water into snow, and then His word melts the snow, and the waters flow. The water changes from one state to another. The idea is that Judah went into captivity by God's word, they were as it were frozen in captivity, but God's word would melt them and change their state, so that they would flow again, back to Zion. But most of them preferred to remain frozen in captivity.

Psa 147:17

He hurls down His hail like pebbles- who can stand before His cold?-
See on :16. "Who can stand before" Yahweh is the language of men facing condemnation (1 Sam. 6:20; Ps. 76:7; Nah. 1:6; Mal. 3:2). Only those forgiven by Him can stand before Him (Ps. 130:3). The exiles had been judged, and were now forgiven. As noted on :16, the freezing of the waters into ice was seen as their judgment in Babylon, and God's word of restoration was to change their state (:18). It was Babylon who was now to be unable to stand before Him (s.w. Jer. 49:19; 50:44).

Psa 147:18

He sends out His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow-
See on :16. Note the parallel between God's word and His wind / Spirit. The exiles could have been released from their frozen condition in exile, their state could have been changed from snow to flowing waters. The idea of God's wind / Spirit blowing over the waters is that of creation. A new creation could have been brought about; but they refused.

Psa 147:19

He shows His word to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel-
As in :15 LXX has "He sends his word to Jacob". The reference there was to how God's prophetic word of restoration could have come true for Jacob / Israel; but they had to be obedient to His statutes. And they were not, for the most part, as the sad record of the restoration makes clear.

Psa 147:20

He has not done this for any other nation; they don't know His ordinances. Praise Yah!-
The gift of God's laws was not to be perceived as onerous, but the greatest blessing a nation could have. To perceive that God's word is shown to us… leaves us with an awesome impression. This is what grasping the meaning of an inspired Bible should do for each of us. Whoever wishes to believe in that word has had God's word shown to them (:19); and thereby become God's new Israel.

PSALMS CHAPTER 148

Psa 148:1

Praise Yah! Praise Yahweh from the heavens! Praise Him in the heights!-
The LXX attributes Psalms 146-148 to Haggai and Zechariah. According to the LXX titles, there were certain Psalms which were written for the dedication of the rebuilt temple, and others written by Haggai and Zechariah. They include: Psalms 96,138,147,148. These all seem to speak as if the time of a glorious temple was to be the time of God's Kingdom; this was the possibility, and it was the prevailing hope in the minds of the faithful minority. But the Psalms had to remain prophecies of the future day of Zion's glory, for the temple was not rebuilt by the returned exiles according to the specifications of Ez. 40-48. Although I suggest they are all initially Psalms of David, relevant to his experiences, but used under inspiration in these later contexts.

Psa 148:2

Praise Him, all His angels! Praise Him, all His army!-
The praise in the context of the exiles (see on :1) was not for what God had already done, but for what they believed and hoped He would do in the ultimate restoration. Because at the time of the restoration, the exiles were experiencing famine and judgment for their impenitence.

Psa 148:3

Praise Him, sun and moon! Praise Him, all you shining stars!-
The praise is because of their creation by a Divine word (:5). The stars and heavenly bodies were representative of the exiles in Ps. 147:4 (see notes there); who were to be part of a new creation according to God's prophetic word of restoration. This is why otherwise inanimate bodies are presented as praising God.

Psa 148:4

Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, You waters that are above the skies-
The "heaven of heavens" seems to refer to the dwelling place of God personally. There was to ecstatic praise there because of how God would restore His people and forge a new creation out of them by the means of His word. That the exiles largely refused this great potential is tragic; the joy of Heaven itself was precluded by their disinterest.

Psa 148:5

Let them praise the name of Yahweh, for He commanded, and they were created-
The Genesis creation is unique amongst creation accounts for the way that the true creation was called into being by Divine words. As explained on Ps. 147:18, a new creation was envisaged at the restoration. And the exiles were bidden praise God for this; even though ultimately that restoration to its full extent was not to be at that time, due to their general impenitence.

Psa 148:6

He has also established them forever and ever. He has made a decree which will not pass away-
The reestablishment of a new heavens and earth at the time of the return from Babylon is a major theme of the restoration prophets. A Divine decree would eternally establish them. The decree of Cyrus to return and rebuild the temple could have been that decree. But it was not to be, because Israel refused to repent and truly return to their God and their land. Perhaps God did indeed make the decree, and that of Cyrus was a human articulation of it upon earth; but Israel failed to respond, and so God's eternal decree would therefore have a later and different fulfilment.

Psa 148:7

Praise Yahweh from the earth, you great sea creatures, and all depths!-
The "waters" would refer to the Gentiles around Israel; see on Rev. 16:5. LXX "serpents" supports the idea that it is the mythical creatures feared by the Middle Eastern peoples who were finally to praise God. The intention was that the exiles would be restored,

judgment would come upon Babylon, and this would lead to Babylon and the other great nations repenting and praising God. Their destruction would be in allusion to God's division of the Red Sea and destruction of the "monsters" of Egypt. The chariots of Pharaoh are likened to sea monsters. The same idea is presented to the exiles in Is. 51:9. People of the time found the sea mysterious, and believed in a vast sea dragon lurking there which was invincible, rather like folks tend to believe in a supernatural devil figure. The simple point was that God has and can destroy such entities at ease, to the point that effectively God's people need not believe in them.

Psa 148:8

Lightning and hail, snow and clouds; stormy wind, fulfilling His word-
LXX "the things that perform His word". Hail and lightning (AV "flaming fire") are the words used for the destruction of Assyria / Babylon (Is. 30:30; and see on Ps. 105:32). They are also associated with theophany (Ps. 18:12,13). Hail and lightning could have been used to destroy Babylon and thereby fulfil God's prophetic word of restoration for the exiles. But these great potentials were not realized because the Jews didn't repent and didn't for the most part actually want the restoration of the Kingdom. They preferred the good life in Persia. Ultimately all the elements of the natural creation will be used in the last days to bring about the reestablishment of the Kingdom, although not exactly in the terms initially envisaged for the restoration of the exiles from Babylon.

Psa 148:9

mountains and all hills; fruit trees and all cedars-
The Psalm looks ahead to a time when the entire creation would praise God's Name. This could be simply poetic language representing a general situation of praise. But the restored Kingdom could well be a time when the natural creation realizes some latent spiritual potential within it, and praises God's Name (Rom. 8:22,23).

Psa 148:10

wild animals and all livestock; small creatures and flying birds-
See on :9. The list of things which will praise Yahweh's Name here and in :9 is taken from the record of the Genesis 1 creation. Perhaps what is envisaged here is a new creation, where all the components of that creation have a spiritual potential, which is used to praise God's Name (:13).

Psa 148:11

kings of the earth and all peoples; princes and all judges of the earth-
The kings of the *eretz* promised to Abraham are typically presented in the Bible as being against God's people. But here we have then envisioned as praising Yahweh's Name. Or we could read this Psalm as an invitation to them to do so. The prophetic intention was that the nations in the *eretz* would repent; this Psalm may be looking forward to that time, or it could be read as an appeal to them to accept Yahweh and praise His Name (:13).

Psa 148:12

both young men and young women; old men and children-
The praise of the entire Gentile society within the *eretz* promised to Abraham (:11) is to parallel the praise of God's people Israel (:14). The impression given is of Jews and Gentiles united in a new multiracial people of God, giving the same praise to the same God. We note that "children" are equally invited to praise the name of Yahweh (:13); they are felt to be capable of appreciating His Name / characteristics.

Psa 148:13

let them praise the name of Yahweh, for His name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the skies-
Heb. 12:8: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to day, and for ever” suggests that the three tenses of the Yahweh Name were supremely manifest in the Lord Jesus. Which is surely why ‘Jesus’ in the NT becomes the Name above every Name (Phil. 2:9,10; Eph. 1:21); for only ‘Yahweh’ was exalted above every other name (Neh. 9:5; Ps. 148:13). It is praise of Yahweh through the Lord Jesus which will be the scene of the eternally reestablished kingdom of Yahweh.

This Psalm may well have originated in the victory over Goliath, for it is very similar in spirit to Psalm 8, and here quotes from Ps. 8:1,10. After that, it was David's name which was much set by (1 Sam. 18:30); but David's desire was that it should be Yahweh's Name which was now made majestic after the defeat of Goliath, and not his name.

Psa 148:14

He has lifted up the horn of His people-
The idea of the horn of the righteous being exalted is used about what David envisaged happening for God's people in this life (s.w. Ps. 148:14), although the final fulfilment was to be at the last day, when the horn of the wicked is cut off (Ps. 75:10). But there are potential foretastes of the last day in this life. Jeremiah appears to struggle with the Psalms which taught that the horn of the righteous would be lifted up, lamenting that instead the horn of their enemies had been lifted up (s.w. Lam. 2:17). The truth was that

the horn of God's people would only be lifted up if they were identified with the lifting up of the horn which was Messiah (Ps. 89:17,24). And because this didn't happen, their horn was not exalted.

David is here alluding to Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:10). He appropriates her words to himself personally in Ps. 92:10, but there he also bids all Israel apply the words to themselves every Sabbath (Ps. 92:1). Hence "*our* horn shall be exalted... *his* horn shall be exalted" (Ps. 89:17,24). Israel were to see themselves as somehow "in" David, as we are "in Christ".

Inspiring the praise of all His saints, even of the children of Israel, a people near to Him. Praise Yah!-
The reason why space is so deep and huge may simply be because God wants to show us His humility: in that although He is so far from us, He will come to us, such an infinite distance in human terms, and live here with us. And this Almighty, so distant God... describes Israel as "a people near to Him"- using the very word elsewhere translated "near of kin" or "kinsman". This is *how* close He comes to His people. The Hebrew means literally, 'next to', 'neighbour / relative to'. This is how close God feels to the broken hearted and crushed; and conversely, how far He is from the self satisfied and self congratulatory, 'the strong' in secular terms. It is this feature of Yahweh which makes Him unique; no other God has this characteristic of 'nearness' (s.w. Dt. 4:7).

PSALMS CHAPTER 149

Psa 149:1

Praise Yahweh! Sing to Yahweh a new song, His praise in the assembly of the saints-
Even in the Old Testament, the idea of living in a spirit of newness of life is to be found. David six times invites us to sing with him “a new song” (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1 cp. Is. 42:10). Invariably these songs are associated with the experience of God’s redemption (cp. Rev. 5:9). Obviously those ‘new songs’ were intended to be repeatedly sung. Our regular experience of forgiveness and redemption should urge us onwards in the spirit of ‘newness of life’. Like Paul we die daily with the Lord, and the power of His resurrection life likewise daily breaks out in us.

Psa 149:2

Let Israel rejoice in Him who made him, let the children of Zion be joyful in their King-
I noted on Ps. 147:4; 148:3,4 that there is a major theme of God working a new creation in the restored exiles. In this sense, Israel would be "made" by God (Is. 44:2; 51:13), who would then be accepted as the king enthroned in Zion. The exiles resisted this, largely

preferring to remain in exile in Babylon-Persia. And so no Davidic king was reestablished as had been potentially possible.

David saw his sufferings as being bound up with those of Israel; those who hated him hated Zion, those who blessed him blessed Zion, and God's salvation of Israel was being expressed through God's deliverance of him in the daily vicissitudes of life; as God had chosen Zion, so He had David His servant; David's joy was Zion's joy, and her exaltation would be David's (Ps. 51:18; 69:35; 87:2; 106:5; 121:3,4; 125:1; 128:5; 146:10; 149:2). This is how we are to make sense of suffering- by understanding that it plays a role in the salvation of others, and is part of a wider nexus of Divine operation. We suffer so that we may be able to minister the comfort we receive to others (2 Cor. 1:4). Job likewise came to realize that his sufferings were not so much for his personal maturing, but for the teaching and salvation of the friends.

Psa 149:3

Let them praise His name in the dance! Let them sing praises to Him with tambourine and harp!-
David asks Israel to join him in his praise on tambourine and harp (s.w. 2 Sam. 6:5,14-16) for the ark returning to Zion. It is based upon Israel's rejoicing after the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 15:20). But these images all had special relevance to the possibilities at the restoration of the exiles. The young woman taking the timbrel and rejoicing in the dance once again is presented as the epitome of the restoration (Jer. 31:4,13), after the years of exile when Judah's dance had been turned to mourning (Lam. 5:15). The invitation to "let" this happen confirms the great theme observed so often- that the restoration from Babylon could have led to the restored Kingdom of God, but was precluded by Judah's impenitence. But the Psalm urges them to "let" these things happen by as it were fulfilling the prophecies.

Psa 149:4

For Yahweh takes pleasure in His people, He crowns the humble with salvation-
This renewed "pleasure in His people" suggests the effective remarriage of God and Israel, the exiles, based upon a new covenant seeing they had broken the old covenant (Is. 54:7,8; 60:10). But they refused that new covenant, seeking justification by the old covenant [the law of Moses] which they had broken. And they never therefore remarried God as intended, and so he turned to form a new people for relationship, the Gentile-Jewish mix of the body of Christ. The crowning or adorning of God's people is that spoken of in the restoration prophecies, when Zion itself would be glorified (Is. 55:5; 60:7,9,13). But again, this didn't happen at the restoration from Babylon as was

potentially possible. The prophecies are rescheduled and reapplied to God's final salvation of a new, multiethnic people in Christ.

Psa 149:5

Let the saints rejoice in glory-
"Rejoice" is s.w. "triumph" in Ps. 94:3, where the psalmist has asked how long shall the wicked triumph. Now finally is the day when the "How long...?" question has been answered.

Let them sing for joy on their beds-
David rightly perceived that what a man thinks alone on his bed is a litmus indicator of his essential spirituality (Ps. 4:4; 149:5), and he condemns Saul for plotting sin on his bed (Ps. 36:4). And yet the same phrase "on his bed" is used for how David plotted the sin with Bathsheba on his bed (2 Sam. 11:2). David was surely taught by his sin that he had been too quick to condemn others for their wicked thoughts upon their beds.

This is all the language of God's Kingdom upon earth, and it has some similarities with how David brought the ark to Zion; see on :3. But it was God who would make this happen (Ps. 132:16), rather than David's manipulation of the physical ark, and getting the people to shout for joy (Ps. 132:8,9). But as discussed on Ps. 132:8, David mistakenly thought that merely bringing the ark to Zion meant this would come about.

Psa 149:6

May the high praises of God be in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hand-
Literally, a two mouthed sword; as if the praise coming out of their mouths was parallel with the mouth of the sword they were wielding. The restoration of the exiles was intended to coincide with the judgment and fall of Babylon, which was to be effected on the ground by a glorified, Spirit empowered, repentant Judah. But they didn't repent, Babylon didn't fall as the "fall of Babylon" prophecies in the restoration prophets envisaged. Instead those prophecies were reapplied and rescheduled to the fall of a latter day Babylon as described in Rev. 18.

Psa 149:7

to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples-
To pray for this to happen was effectively asking for the Kingdom to come. For David is always careful to emphasize that vengeance belongs to God and not man (see on Ps. 94:1). The stress that vengeance belongs to God was of course a major theme with David, in that he refused twice to take Saul's life when he easily could have done-because vengeance belongs to God and not man. And likewise it was stressed to the

exiles that vengeance upon the Gentiles who had abused them belonged to God, and they were to pray for the time of *His* vengeance to come. This time of vengeance could have come at the restoration from Babylon (Is. 61:2; 63:4); but most of the exiles preferred to remain in Babylon and were quite comfortable there. And so again, these prophecies were reapplied and rescheduled to the fall of a latter day Babylon as described in Rev. 18.

Psa 149:8

to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron-
At the restoration, a revived Judah could have bound their overlords with chains (Is. 45:14). There was to be a radical inversion; they the prisoners, the bound ones (s.w. Ps. 146:7; Is. 49:9; 61:1) were to be loosed from exile, and were instead to bind their captors. But they were themselves the leaders / nobles of Babylon-Persia (as the book of Esther demonstrates) and didn't want at all to come out of Babylon.

Psa 149:9

to execute on them the judgment written. All His saints have this honour. Praise Yah!-
The judgment written was, in the context of the exiles, the judgments upon Babylon written at such length in the restoration prophecies such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. But these prophecies were not fulfilled by the exiles as envisaged. Most of them preferred to remain in Babylon-Persia, and didn't "come out from among them" as commanded. They didn't want the "honour" spoken of here; and so those prophecies were reapplied and rescheduled to the fall of a latter day Babylon as described in Rev. 18.

PSALMS CHAPTER 150

Psa 150:1
Praise Yah! Praise God in His sanctuary! Praise Him in His heavens for His acts of power!-
We note one of several connections between the sanctuary and the "heavens". The sanctuary was intended to be a shadowy reflection of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:24). The joy of heaven itself at Israel's final salvation was to be reflected in the restored sanctuary upon earth. The Psalm therefore has relevance to the exiles and their hope and potential for restoring the kingdom of Heaven upon earth in Israel.

Psa 150:2
Praise Him for His mighty acts!-
The "acts" retold with praise would be of God's saving grace in human history (as in

Ps. 145:4,11,12); that will be our talk throughout eternity, and we should begin living the Kingdom life now.

Praise Him according to His excellent greatness!- The phrase used by David when dedicating the plans for building the first temple (1 Chron. 29:11). This makes the Psalm easily usable by the exiles rebuilding that temple.

Psa 150:3

Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet! Praise Him with harp and lyre!- The trumpet was sounded at the proclamation of the feasts (Ps. 81:3 s.w.), and this Psalm was likely used on those occasions. The sounding of the trumpet recalls the proclamation of a new king (1 Kings 1:39; 2 Kings 9:13). The situation in view may be the final proclamation of Messiah Jesus as King in the Kingdom.

Psa 150:4

Praise Him with tambourine and dancing! Praise Him with stringed instruments and flute!-

David asks Israel to join him in his praise on tambourine and harp (s.w. 2 Sam. 6:5,14-16) for the ark returning to Zion. It is based upon Israel's rejoicing after the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. 15:20). But these images all had special relevance to the possibilities at the restoration of the exiles. The young woman taking the timbrel and rejoicing in the dance once again is presented as the epitome of the restoration (Jer. 31:4,13), after the years of exile when Judah's dance had been turned to mourning (Lam. 5:15). The invitation to actually do this confirms the great theme observed so often- that the restoration from Babylon could have led to the restored Kingdom of God, but was precluded by Judah's impenitence. But the Psalm urges them to do these things, to "let" these things happen (Ps. 140:3) by as it were fulfilling the prophecies.

Psa 150:5

Praise Him with loud cymbals! Praise Him with resounding cymbals!-

The reference to cymbals again suggests the bringing of the ark to Zion as the initial reference of this Psalm (s.w. 2 Sam. 6:5). But it looks ahead to the coming of the Lord Jesus, the ultimate dwelling place of Yahweh, to Zion- and being proclaimed king (see on :3), at His second coming.

Psa 150:6

Let everything that has breath praise Yah! Praise Yah!-

This looks ahead to a time when all that has breath, which includes the natural creation, praising Yahweh. The picture is of all creation being spiritually aware and entering into the conscious spirituality of God's children (Rom. 8:22,23).

The LXX concludes with an extra Psalm:

"This Psalm is a genuine one of David, though supernumerary, composed when he fought in single combat with Goliad. I was small among my brethren, and youngest in my father's house: I tended my father's sheep.

Psa 151:2 My hands formed a musical instrument, and my fingers tuned a psaltery.

Psa 151:3 And who shall tell my Lord? the Lord himself, he himself hears.

Psa 151:4 He sent forth his angel, and took me from my father's sheep, and he anointed me with the oil of his anointing.

Psa 151:5 My brothers were handsome and tall; but the Lord did not take pleasure in them.

Psa 151:6 I went forth to meet the Philistine; and he cursed me by his idols.

Psa 151:7 But I drew his own sword, and beheaded him, and removed reproach from the children of Israel".

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: PROVERBS

PROVERBS

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

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Duncan Heaster

PROVERBS CHAPTER 1

Pro 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon-
Proverbs is a collection of various statements from Solomon, some of which in later chapters were apparently edited in the time of Hezekiah; with the words of Agur added to the anthology. The "Lemuel" of Prov. 31 may also be Solomon. I will argue that in fact all the chapters are either by or edited by Solomon. They are the result of Solomon being given "wisdom" when he became king. That wisdom was to enable him to govern Yahweh's people Israel, hence they are so practical. However, I will observe time and again that although they are all inspired and true, this Divine truth is used by Solomon to justify himself in his various political tensions with other pretenders to the throne, from the house of Saul and from the supporters of his various half brothers. He comes to elevate his "wisdom", true as it is of itself, far above God's word, and ends up playing God. And this leads to glaring contradictions between the truths and wisdom he writes down, and his personal life. This is especially true in relation to women. And so we have in this book a unique message to those within Christian communities who pride themselves upon "truth" which they have received. The truth of that truth, as it were, is unquestionable. But the lesson is that academic truth and knowledge must be personally applied; and when it isn't, the mere possession of that truth leads to hypocrisy and eventual downfall, of which Solomon is the parade example. The possession of those truths will not of itself save us; and yet Solomon appeared to think that it would, and therefore failed to apply these things to himself personally.

Are the Proverbs really like precious stones that must be emptied out of the bag and rearranged by theme? In which case, why didn't God do so at the start when inspiring the book? My comments are as follows:
- Some of the Proverbs are basic truisms and maxims which have equivalents in any culture. Solomon wrote the book at the start of his reign when God gave him his wisdom.
But Solomon loved Egyptian and Gentile women right from the start of his reign. There are strong similarities both in content and genre between Proverbs and e.g. the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope*. It could be that Solomon took various things from the literature of his father in law in Egypt… or of course it could be that Solomon's book of Proverbs was designed to preach to the Egyptians and surrounding nations in their own terms and in a familiar genre. Much is written by Solomon about about the establishment of the throne on the basis of truth and justice; and this is commonly found in Egyptian literature about the Pharaohs.
- The text hangs together far better in the original Hebrew. Most people were illiterate, and so the book was designed to be memorized. There are many patterns in the book which
depend upon the alliteration and rhyming of words and ideas to enable memorization. This was typical of wisdom literature of the time. There are similar initial syllables of

words and verses, or beginning with the same letter. There's much word play, similar sounds repeat between verses if read out loud. Thus the root *sdq* [righteousness] occurs in various words which connect various proverbs which appear unrelated to each other in English translation. These sound patterns form a chain which enables memorization. Thus Prov. 16:27-29 all begin with the word *ish*, 'a man'. Catchwords link adjacent verses.
- Watch out for clusters of verses which do have the same theme; the verses which don't appear to be in a cluster are likely connected by alliteration etc. for easy memorization.
- My own hunch is that although the Proverbs are inspired by God, they were also presented by Solomon with a strong hint of self-justification. He wrote them when he had just inherited the throne from his father David, whom he idolized and was obsessed with. He sought to justify his father against all the various factions who were in Israel who were not sympathetic to David and therefore to Solomon. Almost every other verse in the book appears to have some such sideways swipe at the likes of Saul, Nabal, Absalom or Joab- whilst presenting Solomon as the wise son with whom alone David was pleased. Solomon should've sought his self-worth and value in God's opinion of him; and he should've trusted the promises to David of God establishing his throne and line, rather than seeking to as it were fulfill them for himself by using God's Truth and Wisdom to establish himself at others' expense.

The son of David, king of Israel-
Solomon speaks about him being King in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:1,12; Prov. 1:1) as if this was the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Consider the implications of 2 Chron. 1:9: "O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth…give me now wisdom, that I may go out and come in before (i.e. lead) this people". Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the Kingdom).

Pro 1:2 to know wisdom and instruction; to discern the words of understanding-
Solomon's book of Proverbs is presented by him as having the power to discern truth from "the words of understanding". Whilst indeed the Proverbs do open up the words of God which were then available [mainly the Pentateuch and the book of Job], always in Proverbs we sense Solomon harnessing his wisdom to some more human agenda. Just as we can use God's truth to support our own agendas and personal justification. This opening introduction appears to be saying that this collection of wisdom is necessary in

order to know wisdom *in toto* , and is the crucial key to understanding or discerning God. By setting up the book in this way, Solomon is as it were claiming a personal monopoly over Israel's understanding of God. That understanding could only come through his book. And true and Divinely inspired as everything is in it, Solomon appears here to give a hint of spiritual control over his people which was inappropriate.

Pro 1:3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity-
Instruction and wisdom are the terms used by David in Ps. 2:10, where being wise and instructed effectively means to repent. True wisdom is to repent; knowledge in the Hebraic sense refers to relationship with God, rather than technical knowledge of information. In fact the first sin was to partake of the fruit which would apparently make men "wise" (Gen. 3:6). It was a short cut to 'wisdom' in the sense of relationship. And too often the same mistake is made today, whereby knowledge is confused with the wisdom and instruction of repentant relationship with God. And this was the mistake Solomon was to make; he saw "wisdom" as bites of knowledge, like segments of computer memory. All of it was true, but in his own life it didn't come to the synthesis of 'repentant relationship with God' which is true "wisdom".

Pro 1:4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young man-
David likens himself to the simple who was made wise by God's word (Ps. 19:7; 119:130), and was therefore preserved (Ps. 116:6). To be taught by God's word we have to become "simple", unlearning and placing to one side all our perceived knowledge and understandings. Solomon repeats David's theme by saying that wisdom makes wise the simple (Prov. 1:4; 8:5; 9:4). But he is equating "wisdom" with the words of God, although for Solomon, "wisdom" seems to be what he personally is saying and teaching. Solomon doesn't direct his listeners back to God's word, as David did, but rather towards loyalty to his teaching. Inspired as it was, his lack of extended reference to God's law places his own teaching of "wisdom" above that law. This is in sharp contrast to David's attitude in Ps. 119, where David gives advice to the simple and the young man- and urges attention to God's word, whereas Solomon directs them instead to *his* wisdom, inspired as it was.

Pro 1:5 that the wise man may be obedient, and increase in learning; that the man of understanding may attain to sound counsel-
The wise men of understanding may refer to the governors of Israel (s.w. Dt. 1:13,15; 16:19). See on :20. They were to learn wisdom in how to judge God's people through all the truths expressed in this book. David had called Solomon a "wise man", and indeed he was made wise by God (s.w. 1 Kings 2:9; 3:12; 5:7). But the logic of what Solomon seems to be saying is that the possession of wisdom makes a man obedient. And this is where he got it wrong; for his mere possession of wisdom didn't do so. And comparing

Proverbs with Solomon's personal life as revealed in Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and the historical records- all indicates that in fact Solomon's possession of wisdom didn't at all make him obedient. Solomon failed to appreciate what David did- that the wise man also dies (Ps. 49:10). What is critical is having the hope of God's Kingdom and the resurrection of the body. But Solomon's possession of "truth" blinded him to this desperate need of all men. The mere possession of wisdom was no guarantee of itself of inheriting glory, as Solomon wrongly thought (Prov. 3:35).

Pro 1:6 to understand a proverb, and parables, the words and riddles of the wise-
This appears to be saying that Solomon's proverbs are required to understand every proverb. The words of the wise are only to be understood through Solomon's proverbs. However this, as noted on :2, appears to be just slightly manipulative; as if Solomon's teaching, inspired as it was, is to be the key to absolutely all understanding and interpretation.

Pro 1:7 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and instruction-
Solomon repeats his father David's conclusion that wisdom begins with the fear of Yahweh (Ps. 111:10 = Prov. 1:7; 9:10). This statement is in sharp contrast with the accepted view of the times, that wisdom was held by the sages, and was accessible only by sitting at their feet. But this idea (and it is common enough today too) is subverted by this idea that wisdom begins in each individual heart being in fear of Yahweh- so that wisdom from Him can be personally experienced, taught directly through relationship with Him rather than sitting at the feet of a human sage. "Wisdom" is parallel with getting "a good understanding" by 'doing His work' or obeying His commandments (Ps. 111:10b). The work we are to do for God in obeying His ways is not simply a test of our obedience; it is designed to give us wisdom. Wisdom therefore comes from experience of obedience and relationship with God, rather than from picking up nuggets of 'truth' from human sages. The fear of God is therefore not so much referring to a fear of the consequence of our sins; but the fear or reverence expressed through keeping His commandments (see on Ps. 112:1).

Pro 1:8 My son, listen to your father's instruction, and don't forsake your mother's teaching-
David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them

as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah*. This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people. We should note that Solomon's wife, the mother of the sons addressed, as a Gentle and idolater. Solomon says things which are true enough, but there is always an underlying element which is not so spiritual and of integrity when we think how it all applied to him and his family personally.

Pro 1:9 for they will be a garland to grace your head, and chains around your neck-
Again Solomon reasons as if the mere possession of truth is what will adorn us before God. But it is personalization of the wisdom, not mere possession of it, which is required. And Solomon was a stellar example of failure in this. It was rulers who had chains around their necks, and Solomon has himself obliquely in view here; and he considers that the fact he was taught truth by his parents qualifies himself as king. That is not altogether untrue, but his personal example shows that it was not the right attitude.

Pro 1:10 My son, if sinners entice you, don't consent-
Solomon's idea of avoiding sin was in resisting the enticement of very sinful people. He pays no attention to the heart, whereas the Biblical message is always that sin is to be avoided in the heart. Spiritual mindedness, rather than mere disassociation from sinners, is of the essence. Dt. 11:16 warns that our heart should not be enticed (s.w.); but Solomon sees enticement as merely from very sinful individuals.

Pro 1:11 If they say, Come with us, let's lay in wait for blood; let's lurk secretly for the innocent without cause-
"Lie in wait" is the word for ambush. Solomon often uses the word, as if it is for him a major characteristic of sinners (Prov. 1:11,18; 7:12; 12:6; 23:28; 24:15). But it's a rather specific word to use so often. It's as if Solomon is consciously alluding to his father's experiences at the hands of the house of Saul (s.w. Ps. 10:9; 59:3), whom Solomon considered a threat to his own kingship. And so he seems to rather like using the term about sinners, as if using his wisdom to have a dig at his immediate opposition. "Innocent blood" refers to Saul's persecution of David's "innocent blood" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5).

Pro 1:12 let's swallow them up alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who go down into the pit-
The reference may be to Ahithophel's plan to swallow up David at the time of Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 17:12,16 s.w.), and to David's prayers of Ps. 35:25; 69:15 against Saul.

Pro 1:13 We'll find all kinds of wealth. We'll fill our houses with spoil-

The wealth or substance of a man's house is the phrase used in Prov. 6:31, of the adulterer who must pay all the wealth of his house. Solomon presents a perhaps simplistic caricature of the wicked; they use violence, steal, commit adultery etc. And the righteous are consistently wise and righteous, according to Proverbs. Whereas in reality, sin and righteousness is far more subtle. A man like Solomon's father David was righteous and yet also sinned.

Pro 1:14 You shall cast your lot among us, we'll all have one purse-
The phrase "cast your lot" is always used elsewhere in the Bible, 12 times, for the literal casting of lots. "Purse" is the word for "cup", and it seems there is an allusion to casting lots as to which victim or crime to choose.

Pro 1:15 My son, don't walk in the way with them. Keep your foot from their path-
The idea of walking in the way, with feet on the path, is commonly used for walking in the way of God's commandments (Dt. 8:6; 10:12 etc.). David spoke of feet in the pathway of obedience to God's word (Ps. 119:1,3; 128:1 and very often). But Solomon interprets this as not walking in the way with criminals (Prov. 1:5; 16:29). That is somewhat easier than personally walking with God in His way. Again, what Solomon says is not untrue; but he is turning personal, internal spirituality and obedience into a matter of simply avoiding external company with gross sinners. And he suggests that walking in the right way is a matter of externally associating with the path of the righteous (Prov. 2:20).

Pro 1:16 for their feet run to evil. They hurry to shed blood-
David's feet almost ran and hasted to evil (s.w. Ps. 73:2). Solomon simplistically condemns this. But this is not how it was in reality with his father David. Solomon's proverbs seem to fail to address this complexity of situations because of his own self-righteousness; and yet all he says is inspired and true so far as it goes. These words are quoted in Is. 59:17 and applied to the wicked amongst the exiles.

Pro 1:17 For in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird-
David said that the snare was dug "before me" (Ps. 57:6). Solomon alludes to this here. All Solomon says is inspired truth, but clearly he has a subtext of justifying his father David; this was an obsession with him.

Pro 1:18 but these lay wait for their own blood. They lurk secretly for their own lives-
This repeats the major Biblical theme, that men condemn themselves rather than God forcing condemnation upon them. The trap they set for others is what destroys them. In this sense, judgment day is ongoing now. "We make the answer now".

Pro 1:19 So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its owners-
In the sense that those "greedy for grain" destroy their own families (s.w. Prov. 15:27). Hab. 2:9 likewise speaks of the "greedy for gain" as being so because they wish to enrich their own families. This desire for wealth "for my family" is a very powerful and subtle temptation.

Pro 1:20 Wisdom calls aloud in the street. She utters her voice in the public squares-
This may be an allusion to Solomon's wisdom being publically taught throughout Israel. For he asked for it in order to teach Israel, and I noted on :5 that the Proverbs were intended for the teachers / governors of Israel.

Pro 1:21 She calls at the head of busy places, at the entrance of the city gates she utters her words-
See on :20. AV "the chief place of concourse" may refer to the temple, and "the city" would be Jerusalem; as if Solomon's Proverbs were taught there especially.

Pro 1:22 How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? How long will mockers delight themselves in mockery and fools hate knowledge?-
The "simple" are made wise by God's word, David repeatedly taught in the Psalms, especially Ps. 119. But Solomon seems often to effectively replace God's word with his Proverbs, as if they were all sufficient, and obedience to his teaching was all that was required, rather than directing attention to God's whole body of revelation. The Hebrew for "knowledge" admittedly has a wide range of meaning, but we get the impression that Solomon is advocating hearing academic theory and giving intellectual assent to it. And it was solely doing this, rather than personalizing it, which led to his demise.

Pro 1:23 Turn at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you, I will make known my words to you-
This associates a true understanding of God’s word with the action of His spirit upon us- reading the Book without understanding is of no avail, seeing that the spirit/mind of God is not being revealed to us.

Pro 1:24 Because I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no one has paid attention-
This is very much the language of the later prophets concerning God's appeals to Israel which were refused. Although I may appear to take a critical approach to Solomon,

there is no doubt that what he writes is inspired truth; the problem I am highlighting is in the subtexts he attached to it all, and his slanting of it all towards his own self justification. See on :27.

Pro 1:25 but you have ignored all my counsel, and wished none of my reproof-
This appears to be an out of context allusion to David's words in Ps. 38:14, reflecting on his sin with Bathsheba, and how he felt unable to give reproof to others: "Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs". Solomon was obsessed with David his father, speaking hundreds of times of "David my father". But he failed to have his humility; he endlessly dishes out reproofs in Proverbs, indeed he sees his Proverbs as reproofs to people (e.g. Prov. 1:25; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5,31; 29:15); whereas David humbly felt unable to do so because of his awareness of his sins. And at the time David wrote the Proverbs, when he received wisdom at the start of his reign, he was sinning likewise [in essence] by marrying foreign women.

Pro 1:26 I also will laugh at your disaster. I will mock when calamity overtakes you-
This sounds out of step with the God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, even if it is brought about by the whirlwind of Divine judgment (:27). Again Solomon appears to use his truth, his wisdom, to gleefully condemn those who will not accept it; rather than lament from the heart their refusal.

Pro 1:27 when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when your disaster comes on like a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come on you-
See on :26. As noted on :24, this is very much the language used by the prophets about Judah's judgment for their refusal of God's word (s.w. Is. 5:28; 8:22; 29:6; Jer. 4:13 etc.). Although I may appear to take a critical approach to Solomon, there is no doubt that what he writes is inspired truth; the problem I am highlighting is in the subtexts he attached to it all, and his slanting of it all towards his own self justification.

Pro 1:28 Then will they call on me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me-
The rejected will want to be accepted. "When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you (quoted in Rom. 2:8 about the judgment). Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Prov. 1:27,28). The foolish virgins realize the need for prayer all too late; they knocked on the door with great zeal, asking for it to be opened; seeking but not finding. Knocking is sometimes used as a figure for prayer (Mt. 7:7). The basis for these foolish virgins is surely in Prov. 1:28,29: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer... they shall not find me: for that they

hated knowledge". Having a laid back attitude to developing a real knowledge of the Lord through the oil of the word is therefore effectively hating knowledge. As we see the Lord's coming approaching, our daily Bible ought to be a bare minimum. There must be a *feeling* of and for those things of which we read, and a holding of them in the heart through the course of each day.

Pro 1:29 because they hated knowledge, and didn't choose the fear of Yahweh-
"The fear of Yahweh" is not therefore an involuntary fear of Him, as an emotion. It refers rather to a way of life now which we consciously choose. To "know" God is not therefore the mere receipt of information about Him, which may be given to us whether or not we ask for it; to "know" Him in the Hebraic sense is to have a relationship with Him, to fear / respect Him.

Pro 1:30 They wished for none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof-
The parallel is with Prov. 12:1: "Whoever loves correction loves knowledge [spoken of in :29], but he who hates reproof is stupid". To really know God is to accept reproof from Him. And this is why people generally refuse the knowledge of God; they may claim they don't understand or agree with the knowledge they find in the Bible, but the subconscious reason is that their pride refuses to accept reproof.

Pro 1:31 Therefore they will eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with the fruit of their own schemes-
As noted on :18, men condemn themselves rather than God forcing condemnation upon them. The trap they set for others is what destroys them. In this sense, judgment day is ongoing now. "We make the answer now".

Pro 1:32 For the backsliding of the simple will kill them. The careless ease of fools will destroy them-
"Careless ease", without being bothered by God's moral demands, may appear to be the way to an easy life. The same word is used in Jer. 22:21 as the reason why God's people refused to hear His word and repent. And we live in an age which glorifies "careless ease" as no other. But the great paradox is that this way of life is in fact the way to self destruction.

Pro 1:33 But whoever listens to me will dwell securely and will be at ease, without fear of harm-
'Dwelling securely' appears to be how Solomon understood life now for those who listened to his book of Proverbs. But this phrase is used of the hope of the resurrection

of the body (Ps. 16:9 "rest in hope"), and of the future Kingdom age (Jer. 23:6; 33:16). Solomon went wrong in the end because his focus was solely upon the blessings to be enjoyed in this life, with himself as king of Israel; rather than perceiving the eternity ahead, in God's Kingdom, as the ultimate blessing.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 2

Pro 2:1 My son, if you will receive my words and store up my commandments within you-
Solomon seems to allude to David hiding God's word in his heart (Ps. 119:11) by asking his son to hide *his* word in his heart (s.w. Prov. 2:1; 7:1). Again Solomon is putting his own words in the place of God's words. Whilst his wisdom was inspired by God, I detect something wrong here. He is effectively playing God, and not directing people to God's word but rather to his own words, true and inspired as they might be. This came to full term in Solomon's attitude that personal loyalty to himself was loyalty to God- even when Solomon was far from God in his ways. And the same trap is fallen into by those who hold parts of 'God's truth'; they can come to thereby play God and demand personal loyalty to themselves rather than to God.

Pro 2:2 so as to turn your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding-
Solomon uses the same phrase "incline your ear" in appealing for his son to incline his ear to Solomon's words (Prov. 4:20). Solomon came to see himself as the embodiment of wisdom, and came to assume that whatever he said or thought must be right because he possessed wisdom. This comes to a peak in Prov. 5:1- "attend [s.w. "incline" in 2:2] unto *my* wisdom, bow your ear to *my* understanding". Solomon made the classic mistake of assuming that his will and word were effectively equivalent to the word of God. In Prov. 6:21 he speaks of the need to bind the law about your heart and neck; but in Song 8:6 he asks his Gentile lover to “set *me* as a seal upon thine heart” and arm. And often in Proverbs he uses the language of the blessings for keeping God’s law and turns them into the blessings for keeping *his* law; e.g. “My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart” (Prov. 7:1,2). And we all do the same in essence, whenever we assume that our consciences are effectively the will of God; when we ‘play God’ by allowing our words and will to count as if they are *His* word.

As noted on Ps. 119:36; 141:4, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and away from evil. This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go.

Solomon often appeals for us to incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

If we "attend" to God's word (Prov. 2:2; 4:1; 7:24), then He will "attend" to our word, of prayer (Ps. 55:2 and often in the Psalms). There is thereby a mutuality between God and man. Our attitude to His word becomes reflected in His attitude to our words in prayer; for God and man are in dialogue.

Pro 2:3 yes, if you cry out for wisdom, and lift up your voice for understanding-
These are the very words used of how wisdom and understanding cry out and lift up their voice (Prov. 8:1). The idea is that God's wisdom and understanding is crying out to those who are crying out for it. There is thus a mutuality between God and man. And the old Yiddish proverb comes true: "And going out to find Him / I met Him coming towards me". God is in search of man, and true man is in search for God. And when they meet, there is that electric spark, parties in Heaven celebrating the reconnection.

Pro 2:4 if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures-
Man's search for God is indeed to be more important than his plans to acquire wealth. But again we sense a subtext of self justification in Solomon; for his choice of wisdom rather than wealth was commended by God, and wealth was added to him because of it. The search for hidden treasure is an image picked up by the Lord and applied to our search for the Kingdom of God (Mt. 13:44), which requires the sacrifice of all our wealth in response to finding it. That sacrifice of wealth can therefore be interpreted as meaning our resignation of the search for it.

Pro 2:5 then you will understand the fear of Yahweh, and find the knowledge of God-
If we seek and cry out for wisdom and knowledge / relationship with God (:2-4), then we will find it. God is not playing hard to get, facing off against man over an open Bible. He earnestly seeks relationship with us. And it is that process of seeking and crying out for Him which of itself leads us to "understand" Him.

Pro 2:6 For Yahweh gives wisdom. Out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding-
But knowledge in the sense of relationship with God is not the same thing as the words of God, as we have them in the Bible, which come from His mouth. The gift of relationship is more subtle than that. But as so often, Solomon appears to assume that

mere possession of God's truth, in the form of inspired words, means that we have knowledge / relationship with God.

Pro 2:7 He lays up sound wisdom for the upright-
The implication could be that there is personal "wisdom" laid up for every upright man, which he must find for himself.

He is a shield to those who walk in integrity-
The allusion may be to how Yahweh was a "shield" to Abraham (Gen. 15:1). But Solomon misses the point, that Abraham like David his father was not always a man of integrity. We think of Abraham's weakness in not leaving Ur nor Lot when he should have done, and his poor behaviour towards Sarai and Hagar. Again Solomon is too simplistically dividing God's people into abject sinners on one hand, and stellar examples of integrity on the other.

Pro 2:8 that He may guard the paths of justice, and preserve the way of His saints-
"Preserves the way" is s.w. Gen. 3:24; 28:20; Ex. 23:20; Ps. 91:11. These verses suggest God keeps us in the way by Angelic involvement. The cherubim would keep [s.w. preserve] the way to the tree of life- this is a promise of Divine care to lead His people to that tree, rather than a judgment against man. But we on our side must also keep the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19; Jud. 2:22; Dt. 8:2,6; 11:22; 30:16 etc.). The way God 'preserved [Israel] in the way' through the wilderness to the promised land (Josh. 24:17) looks forward to how we are potentially kept in the way through the wilderness after baptism towards the Kingdom. David could say that he had preserved the way (2 Sam. 22:22) and he asks Solomon to keep / preserve the way (1 Kings 2:3,4); but here Solomon puts the emphasis on the promise that God will keep us in the way, rather than upon our need to preserve the way. Likewise he overlooked the conditional aspect of the promises about David's Son being Messiah. God directly told Solomon at least twice that he must make effort to keep the way (1 Kings 3:14; 11:38), but he misquotes this in 1 Kings 8:25 to the effect that God would keep His people in the way, by inclining their hearts to do so (1 Kings 8:58). David had spoken of God's ability to direct hearts into keeping His way (Ps. 119:5), but this was not the blank cheque assurance which Solomon seems to have take it as; David speaks of the effort he had to make to keep himself in the way (Ps. 39:1). Worse still, Solomon told his children to keep / preserve *his* way (Prov. 8:32), again confusing himself with God.

Pro 2:9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path-
Again it seems Solomon is dividing people into those who resist wisdom on one hand, and those on the other who understand everything perfectly, and are totally obedient to it. But this is simply not the case. There seems little humility in his worldview; for who

understands God's righteousness and justice completely. David his father confessed so often that the knowledge of these things was far above him.

Pro 2:10 For wisdom will enter into your heart, knowledge will be pleasant to your soul-
Solomon often emphasized the importance of keeping the heart (Prov. 2:10-16; 3:5,6; 4:23-5:5; 6:23-26); he had foreseen that the essential sin of God's people was "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:46), and he imagined how for this sin God's people would later pray towards the temple. And yet his wives turned away *his* heart (1 Kings 11:13), for all this awareness that the heart must be kept. It was as if the more he knew the truth of something, the more he wanted to do the very opposite. And this is exactly true of our natures. It's why we ourselves can discern the same perversity in our lives. Perhaps with Solomon he reasoned that in *his* case, foreign wives wouldn't turn away *his* heart. Just as our flesh thinks 'Yes, but it can't happen to *me*'. Perhaps too he reasoned that if the temple somehow could bring forgiveness for the plague of the heart, his heart was incorruptible because of the temple.

Pro 2:11 Discretion will watch over you. Understanding will keep you-
Again Solomon veers towards believing that intellectual understanding is all that is required, along with avoiding the worst of sinners (:12). This lack of appreciation of personal spirituality, spiritual mindedness, is what led Solomon himself to fall away completely, and to exhibit remarkable hypocrisy. Solomon was commanded to personally keep or watch over [s.w.] the commandments (1 Kings 3:14 and often); but he seemed to think that possession of intellectual understanding would keep / watch over him and of itself keep him in the way (Prov. 2:11). This is the temptation for all who pride themselves on possession of academic knowledge of Divine truth.

Pro 2:12 to deliver you from the way of evil, from the men who speak perverse things-
Solomon understands the way of evil as association with perverse men. His focus is upon the external, rather than the internal. And this is the dangerous tendency of all who believe in guilt by association, contamination by communion, call it what you will. Those false ideas tend against personal spiritual mindedness.

Pro 2:13 who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness-
As in Prov. 15:10, Solomon sees the wicked as those who once knew the right path and have left it. He contrasts the path of uprightness and that of darkness (Prov. 2:13). But life is not so clear cut. The same phrase is used of how Job felt he was walking the path of darkness (Job 19:8). David, Solomon's father, likewise partially strayed from the path. This inability to recognize that spiritual life is not so black and white led to Solomon assuming he was totally on the way of righteousness. He was unable therefore to

appreciate that he himself failed at some points at some times. And this is true for those who have a similarly black and white view of people and spirituality. They never know the wonder of arising from our knees knowing we are forgiven, full of grace and renewed devotion to by all means serve the Lord again with all we have.

Pro 2:14 who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the perverseness of evil-
The only other occurrence of the phrase "rejoice to do evil" is in David's reflections upon the coalition of haters who joined Absalom in trying to overthrow him (Ps. 35:26). Solomon speaks the truth, but he does so with an eye on justifying himself against his brother Absalom and those who had followed him. Always Solomon is harnessing 'truth' to an agenda of self-justification; and we must be warned by this.

Pro 2:15 who are crooked in their ways, and wayward in their paths-
See on :14. Solomon rightly emphasizes that the "wayward" are wayward in their hearts (Prov. 11:20; 17:20), leading to wayward ways in practice (Prov. 2:15); but he repeats his father's mistake, in saying he will have nothing to do with those who are wayward in their hearts (s.w. Ps. 101:4). The mistake was in assuming that he could judge human hearts. It continues the far over simplified view of people which Solomon has; the righteous have pure hearts, always obedient; and wicked have bad hearts. But the Bible warns that all of us have hearts which are fountains of evil thoughts (Mk. 7:15,21-23 etc.).

Pro 2:16 to deliver you from the Gentile woman, even from the foreigner who flatters with her words-
Solomon married "strange women" i.e. Gentiles (1 Kings 11:1) and was led astray by them. Yet at the very time he was marrying them, he wrote in his wisdom that the words of wisdom would preserve / keep / defend a Jewish man from being damaged by them (Prov. 2:16; 6:24; 7:5). The connection would seem to suggest that Solomon reasoned that because he had wisdom, because he had 'the truth', he could therefore enjoy these "strange women" without them corrupting *his* heart; because *he* had wisdom. Thus he thought that mere possession of Divine truth was some kind of insurance policy against moral sin being counted to him. And so many have gone down this road; so many who knew more true theology than many have at the same time made an awful mess of their personal lives, just as Solomon did. This is why the higher one goes in the echelons of Christian organizations, the greater the learning and knowledge a person has, the more powerful is the tendency towards gross hypocrisy in moral terms. The point is, of course, that all the knowledge of God which we quite rightly seek after must be *personally applied*. The very possession of it and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it. He foretold that the people would sign when a wicked man ruled them (Prov. 29:2 RV)- and they did "sigh" because

of the heavy burdens he placed upon them (1 Kings 12:4). He imposed the "yoke" of tribute upon the people (2 Chron. 10:4), whereas he himself had warned that a king that imposes tribute on his people "overthrows" a country (Prov. 29:4 RV mg.). He saw it all as true- and yet it was far from him personally.

Pro 2:17 who forsakes the friend of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God-
Solomon was aware, at least theoretically, of the foolish path he was going down with the Gentile women he was involved with at the time he was given the wisdom which is codified in the book of Proverbs. God had inspired him with the wisdom of Prov. 2:16,17, which warned that wisdom would save a man from the Gentile woman who made a covenant with the God of Israel in her youth (in order to marry an Israelite, by implication), but soon forgot it. This was exactly the case of Solomon; yet he just couldn't see the personal relevance of his own wisdom to himself.

Pro 2:18 for her house leads down to death, her paths to the dead-
Yet Solomon built houses for his pagan, Gentile wives. He did this at the beginning of his reign, at the very time he was writing up his book of Proverbs as a result of the wisdom given him at that time. And he followed their paths to spiritual death, in the end.

Pro 2:19 None who go to her return again, neither do they attain to the paths of life-
Solomon reasoned that he would walk the path to life, whilst his wives walked the path to death (:18). He emphasizes these two paths throughout Proverbs. But his simplistic assumption was that he was on the path to life simply because he possessed academic, abstract truth and "wisdom". He was Divinely inspired with his wisdom, but surely he is also drawing on observation- that those who went to the house of the Gentile woman never spiritually returned. He had seen it happen in the paths of so many of God's people; but assumed that he was different, that it wouldn't happen to him.

Pro 2:20 that you may walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of the righteous-
Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was

through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

The idea of walking in the way, with feet on the path, is commonly used for walking in the way of God's commandments (Dt. 8:6; 10:12 etc.). David spoke of feet in the pathway of obedience to God's word (Ps. 119:1,3; 128:1 and very often). But Solomon interprets this as not walking in the way with criminals (Prov. 1:5; 16:29). That is somewhat easier than personally walking with God in His way. Again, what Solomon says is not untrue; but he is turning personal, internal spirituality and obedience into a matter of simply avoiding external company with gross sinners. And he suggests that walking in the right way is a matter of externally associating with the path of the righteous (Prov. 2:20).

Pro 2:21 For the upright will dwell in the land; the perfect will eternally remain in it- Again, Solomon over simplifies things. The old covenant clearly taught that all Israel would be exiled from their land if they broke the covenant. Solomon's dedication of the temple seemed to assume that only the wicked would be exiled from the land, and the temple would stand eternally; to express repentance in exile, they just needed to pray towards it (1 Kings 8:48). But all Israel were sent into exile, and his temple was razed to the ground. But Solomon's belief that "The upright will dwell in the land; the perfect will eternally remain in it" meant that he totally refused to accept the extent of judgment predicted in the curses of Dt. 28. All Israel would be exiled from their land. He liked to assume that his Kingdom would eternally endure; because of his lack of faith in the nature of the future Kingdom, and his mistaken imagination that he was the eternal Messianic king. He refused to recognize that his father David in Ps. 72 had wrongly imagined that he would be that eternal king, and disregarded the conditionality of the promises made to him.

Pro 2:22 But the wicked will be cut off from the land, the deceitful will be rooted out of it- "Transgressors" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 3

Pro 3:1 My son, don't forget my teaching but let your heart keep my commandments-
David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah.* This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

Pro 3:2 for length of days and years of life, and peace, will they add to you-
Length of days was promised for obedience to the covenant, but Solomon appropriates this language to the reward for obedience to his book of Proverbs. He appears to effectively replace God's word with his own words, although his words were indeed Divinely inspired. But he came to ignore the rest of God's revelation, with the result that he was absolutely disobedient to the Mosaic words about not multiplying horses, marrying foreign wives etc. See on :3.

Pro 3:3 Don't let grace and truth forsake you-
David saw "mercy [s.w. "grace"] and truth" as something given by God's grace to him, an unworthy sinner (Ps. 40:11); whereas Solomon assumes that they are with him and his son. The phrase often refers to God's covenant promises with David; and we note this is particularly addressed to Solomon's son. Solomon perceived the conditionality of the promises when it came to his son; but refused to perceive this concerning himself.

Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart-
The idea is that devotion to the covenant should be externally visible as well as in the heart. But the New Testament emphasizes that it is God who writes upon the table of the human heart by His Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3). Solomon assumes that by intellectual effort, man can do this to himself. There could be the implication that Solomon considered that his Proverbs had now replaced the tables of the covenant; the same word is used. See on :1,2.

Pro 3:4 So you will find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man-
Quoted in Lk. 2:52 about the Lord Jesus, who fulfilled all the advice to the "son" who is addressed in this part of Proverbs.

Pro 3:5 Trust in Yahweh with all your heart, and don't lean on your own understanding-
Trust in God is indeed predicated upon some form of "understanding", although not necessarily of the abstract, academic type which Solomon had in view. Trusting and leaning are parallel; to trust in Yahweh requires "understanding" of Him. For faith must have some basis, there are things which need to be believed before "faith" can be faith. Thus David predicates "trust" (s.w.) upon knowing Yahweh's Name, His character (Ps. 9:10). But David's "trust" in God was connected with his trust or belief in God's mercy to him regarding his sins (Ps. 13:5; 21:7; 32:10 s.w.). But Solomon

doesn't seem to have had any conscience of personal sin, and so trust in the Yahweh whose lead characteristic is grace and forgiveness was not elicited within him.

LXX "be not exalted in thine own wisdom" is precisely what Solomon did; he disobeyed his own teaching. Just as he did regarding marrying Gentiles.

Pro 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge Him-
Relationship with God is to affect all our ways, not merely some of them; just as the regulations concerning offerings required that every part of the animal [representative of the offerer] be given to Him.

And He will make your paths straight-
We must 'rightly divide', or cut straight, the word of truth in our preaching of it (2 Tim. 2:15). The LXX uses the same word in Prov. 3:6: "He will make straight your paths". We are to offer people a clear, straight way to the Kingdom; to span that gulf between the word of God and the mind of man. And this is why simple, direct preaching of Gospel truths is always the most successful.

Pro 3:7 Don't be wise in your own eyes. Fear Yahweh, and depart from evil-
Not being 'wise in our own eyes' is a major theme of Solomon's Proverbs (Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 26:12,16; 28:11). We are to recognize that there is no inherent wisdom in man; it must be taught to us from God's word. And yet we live in a postmodern world, where what seems or feels good to our own gut is taken to be the highest personal truth. This was what led Judah to condemnation (s.w. Is. 5:21), because trusting in their own opinions and gut feelings left them insensitive to God's word. Paul quotes the idea in Rom. 12:16; to be wise in our own eyes means that we ignore those whom we naturally consider worthy of being ignored. But that is not necessarily the way of the Spirit. But when Solomon lost his faith, he comments that whether a man has wise eyes or not (s.w.) is irrelevant in the face of death (Ecc. 2:14). He clearly conceived wisdom as only helpful for this life; he had no real personal faith in the resurrection of the dead or the establishment of the future Kingdom of God. And this led him to ultimately despise his own wisdom as futile.

Pro 3:8 It will be health to your body, and nourishment to your bones-
Solomon may have the idea here that there will be literal blessings to our health if God's laws are obeyed; and that may also be hinted at in Ex. 15:26; Dt. 7:15. But true as this may have been in a way under the old covenant, this fails to appreciate that bad things have always happened to good people. Material blessings and lack of trials simply haven't been the consistent experience of God's people; for none have been completely righteous. But Solomon had a black and white view of things, and his own apparent good health made him incline the more towards it.

Pro 3:9 Honour Yahweh with your substance, with the first fruits of all your increase-
This is true enough, but Solomon has a subtext it seems. He was obsessed with building the temple, and as the Israelites had 'honoured Yahweh with their substance' in their contributions towards making the tabernacle, so they were asked to do so for the building of the temple. The firstfruits were to be given to the priests for them to live off, but perhaps Solomon is implying they should be given to the king to help the building of the temple. In this case he would be subtly changing the Mosaic law to his own advantage.

Pro 3:10 so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new

wine-
As noted on :8, this may be true in the sense that the old covenant promised such blessings. But spiritual reality is far more nuanced than that. The Lord told a parable of the unbelieving Jew whose barns were so filled with plenty that he had to build greater barns (Lk. 12:18). But this was not due to his honouring Yahweh as required (:9). Perhaps this was the Lord's way of pointing out that things simply aren't as black and white as Solomon was perhaps suggesting.

Pro 3:11 My son, don't despise Yahweh's discipline, neither be weary of His reproof-
Proverbs is a book full of Solomon's reproof of others. And yet he veers towards playing God, by equating his reproofs with those of Yahweh. What he said was indeed Divinely inspired, but his later apostasy had its roots in this kind of playing God. Yet these words are true, and quoted in Hebrews as encouragement to every true child of God (Heb. 12:5,6). Indeed Solomon is quoting here from Job 5:17. Those were the words of Eliphaz, who said many things which were untrue. We have here an insight into the nature of Divine inspiration. The Bible is indeed wholly inspired as a record of the words and deeds of men; but there is a difference between inspiration of the record, and revelation- in the sense of a "Thus says the Lord". Not all that Eliphaz said was true, and he is rebuked by God for not speaking rightly at the end of the book. But this particular observation was true enough, and given to Solomon as inspired wisdom from God, and likewise quoted under inspiration in Hebrews.

Pro 3:12 for whom Yahweh loves, He reproves; even as a father reproves the son in whom he delights-
This is true, and is quoted as true in Hebrews. But Solomon was 'the one whom Yahweh loves' (2 Sam. 12:24; the same words are used), and there is a subtext here of self justification. Solomon therefore considers himself the son of God in whom God supremely delighted. He uses a Hebrew for "reproves" which can also means "justifies". It is perhaps in commentary upon Solomon's mistaken ideas about himself that Messiah is called the one whom Yahweh loves (Is. 48:14), the one in whom He supremely delighted (Is. 42:1). David perceived that Yahweh's delight is in those who hope for His mercy and grace after they have sinned (Ps. 147:11); but Solomon seems to have known nothing of personal sin and the receipt of grace upon forgiveness.

Pro 3:13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gets understanding-
This is true on one level, but it is a simplistic position. The same words are used in the book of Job for how wisdom in its ultimate sense cannot be "found", but rather must be taught and given by the experience of God's grace through affliction (Job 28:12; 32:13). Solomon often alludes to the book of Job (see on :15), yet he chooses to disregard this. Again Solomon is assuming that there exists "wisdom" as in a set of absolute truth which is attainable by God's people if they listen to the right teachers and intellectually master the system. This is an attitude found in many fundamentalist Christians.

Pro 3:14 For her good profit is better than getting silver, and her return is better than fine gold-
This is true, but Solomon is again hinting at his own justification; for God had commended him for not seeking wealth but wisdom. And yet he seems to relish the fact that God added wealth to him despite not asking for it; for he teaches in :16 that

wisdom gives wealth. But the wealth given to Solomon was by pure Divine grace; and yet he sees it rather as an outcome of his own wisdom.

Pro 3:15 She is more precious than rubies. None of the things you can desire are to be compared to her-
The words of Job 28:18 are repeatedly quoted in Proverbs (Prov. 3:15; 8:11; 20:15). "Wisdom" in Proverbs refers not so much to nuggets of isolated truth, but to a way of life in relationship with God; for that is the context in the source passage in Job 28:18 cp. 28. I noted on :13 that although Solomon was clearly aware of Job 28, he chose to only quote what was appealing to him, and ignores that which is inconvenient to his agendas.

Pro 3:16 Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and honour-
Length of days was offered as a gift from God in the old covenant; but in return for not having a heart which turned aside to idols (Dt. 30:17,20). Solomon seems to imply that this "length of days" comes instead from merely possessing "wisdom". And because of this, his heart did indeed turn away to idols. Solomon has just said that wisdom is far better than riches (see on :14), but now he claims that wisdom gives wealth. It doesn't, and the Bible is clear enough about that. In his case, his choice of wisdom over wealth led to God blessing him with wealth, but by His grace alone. Solomon seems to wrongly extrapolate from his own experience to a more general principle which is wrong. He saw his wealth as due to his wisdom, rather than due to God's grace; and he ends up wrongly implying that the path to wealth is through loving wisdom.

Pro 3:17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, all her paths are peace-
Again, Solomon presents a simplistic view. For the lives of those who follow God are rarely those of idyllic peace. The seed of the woman and that of the serpent are ever in conflict. He fails to appreciate that final peace is only possible in God's future Kingdom, rather than solely by following his rule book as presented in the book of Proverbs.

Pro 3:18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her. Happy is each one who retains her-
The way to the tree of life is what we are currently travelling. But Eden is not yet restored. Again, whilst Solomon's words are true as far as they go, they imply a lack of faith and understanding of the future Kingdom of God. He liked to think that he was the Messianic ruler of Ps. 72, as his father had unwisely enthused and fantasized about.

Pro 3:19 By wisdom Yahweh founded the earth, by understanding He established the heavens-
Here and in :20 we have more allusions to the book of Job. This and the Pentateuch were likely the only scriptures possessed by him and his father. As David often alludes to Job, so does Solomon; and we suspect that in this we see a living out of parental expectation, a worshipping of the dominant father figure, rather than personal faith. It was by God's word that the earth was created (Ps. 33:6), but Solomon says it was by wisdom. This is also true (Jer. 10:12), but by "wisdom" Solomon appears to have in view specifically the wisdom he is teaching in this book. And thus he makes his Proverbs effectively the entire word of God, when they are only part of His total

revelation. Solomon alludes to the book of Job, but not to those parts which don't quite fit with his simplistic views. For Job 38:4 leaves Job humbled that he doesn't in fact know anything about the founding of the earth, neither does he have such "understanding". But Solomon is saying that the same Divine understanding which was the blueprint for creation is in fact in us all if we accept the wisdom and understanding of the book of Proverbs. This is only partially true; man's lack of understanding and wisdom is a feature of Job, but is not at all reflected in Solomon's thinking.

Pro 3:20 By His knowledge the depths were broken up and the skies drop down the dew-
See on :19. Solomon will go on to now claim that this same knowledge is within us (:21). His claims to hold absolute truth lead him to minimize the wonder of creation, rather than being humbled by it as were David and Job. The breaking up of the depths is the phrase used about the flood (Gen. 7:11). Solomon seems to be saying that we can have the same knowledge as God in judging others; and this is inappropriate for us as fellow sinners who are not to condemn others.

Pro 3:21 My son, let them not depart from your eyes. Keep sound wisdom and discretion-
See on :19,20. Prov. 4:21 develops this thought, interpreting the eyes as the heart: "Let them not depart from your eyes. Keep them in the midst of your heart". "Discretion" really means plans or intentions. Our entire mindset, intentions, dreams, hopes are to be dominated by wisdom. This is the essence of the spiritual life; to be spiritually minded. But we live in an age which like no others seeks to dominate our thinking with unspiritual things.

Pro 3:22 so they will be life to your soul, and grace for your neck-
The idea is perhaps that what we think internally within our "soul" will be displayed outwardly as well, like a chain around our neck; see on Prov. 1:9. True spirituality is not just a matter of the mind; it will be outwardly revealed. A city set on a hill cannot be hid; there is to always be some external manifestation of our inward faith and belief. Yet Solomon reasons as if the mere possession of truth is what will adorn us before God. But it is personalization of the wisdom, not mere possession of it, which is required. And Solomon was a stellar example of failure in this. It was rulers who had chains around their necks, and Solomon has himself obliquely in view here; and he considers that the fact he was taught truth by his parents qualifies himself as king. That is not altogether untrue, but his personal example shows that it was not the right attitude.

Pro 3:23 Then you shall walk in your way securely; your foot won't stumble-
The idea is taken from Ps. 91:12, where the Angels "will bear you up in their hands, so that you won't dash your foot against a stone". The same words are used. The potential for Joshua is true for us all. "Guard" is the same word used in Gen. 3:24, and thus alludes to the Angels keeping men in the way to the tree of life- not only physically but spiritually preserving them. The figure of dashing the foot against a stone suggests the idea of spiritual stumbling against a "rock of offence" or stumblingstone (s.w. Jer. 13:16, of how the exiles refused this potential help and did stumble). The Angels bore up the Lord Jesus (to whom Ps. 91:12 refers) to help Him

avoid these. But only because He Himself wished for that strength, and avoided the temptation He faced to abuse it and wrongly use it.

Pro 3:24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid. Yes, you will lie down, and your sleep will be sweet-
This repeats the theme of many Psalms of David his father when under persecution. But David attributed this to his faith in God's grace and sustenance (Ps. 3:5); whereas Solomon appears to attribute it to the mere possession of wisdom, rather than personal faith.

Pro 3:25 Don't be afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked when it comes-
Again, this is true but only to an extent. "Sudden fear" is a phrase only used about the experience of Job (Job 22:10). He was a righteous man, yet afflicted with "sudden fear". Solomon presents a too simplistic view, whereby the righteous live a charmed life of every blessing. And he seems to think that the mere possession of wisdom frees us from any fear of condemnation, the "desolation of the wicked" which is to come. It was this which led Solomon to fail so badly; he had no sense of the conditionality of his relationship with God, no sense of the eternal future he might miss.

Pro 3:26 for Yahweh will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being taken-
Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Pro 3:27 Don't withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do it-
This is a powerful, incisive challenge to us in our approach to generosity. But again we note how Solomon fences it with the comment "to whom it is due". He sees generosity as predicated upon the worthiness of the recipient. Grace doesn't think like that. He may have in view the payment of wages (Dt. 24:15).

Pro 3:28 Don't say to your neighbour, Go, and come again; tomorrow I will give it to you, when you have it by you-
There is a tendency in human nature to play for time, to not say "Yes straight away" to the calls of Divinely inspired conscience. We see throughout scripture the theme of immediate response, not least in the immediate baptisms of those who heard the Gospel in the Acts of the Apostles. Our nature is the source of our temptations, and there is always the voice of the flesh which urges us to perform our devotions

tomorrow and not today. The LXX adds "For thou knowest not what the morrow may bring forth". We may not have the opportunity tomorrow, so, do it today; but that only makes sense if we are possessed of a basic desire to be generous. Solomon may here be interpreting further Dt. 24:15. In this case, paying a worker on time is a form of doing good (:27).

Pro 3:29 Don't devise evil against your neighbour, since he dwells securely by you-
"Devise" is literally to plough (as Prov. 6:14). The idea is that bad attitudes to others are a sowing of sin (Prov. 22:8). Solomon so often has a subtext of justifying his father David and his own rulership, seeing there were initially other contenders for the throne. Many of those pretensions to David's throne arose from the fact that David's "neighbour" did "evil" to him by taking his wives at the time of Absalom's rebellion (s.w. 2 Sam. 12:11). This "evil" was brought about by God, and yet Solomon condemns those who did it. That may be fair enough, but again we have to note that David is ever seeking to whitewash David and Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, regarding their sin.

Pro 3:30 Don't strive with a man without cause if he has done you no harm-
To strive or plead a cause is the very phrase used of the opposition of Saul (1 Sam. 24:15) and Nabal to David (1 Sam. 25:39); and in both cases, David had done them "no harm", the phrase used of David's innocence before Nabal (1 Sam. 25:21,28) and Saul (1 Sam. 24:11). Clearly Solomon has these incidents in view, and again his statements of truth have a subtext of justifying his father David, with whom he was psychologically obsessed.

Pro 3:31 Don't envy the man of violence; choose none of his ways-
David had calmly urged not to be envious of the wicked (s.w. Ps. 37:1), but he himself almost failed in this (Ps. 73:3 s.w.). We can profess clearly how much we are not envious of others; and then find ourselves like David, caught in a pang of crisis when we wonder why our lives cannot be like those of the world around us. Solomon simplistically commanded not to be envious of the wicked, drawing a simple contrast between the wicked, and the righteous who are not envious of them (Prov. 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19 s.w.). But this is not how it was in reality with his father David, who admits to almost having given in to envy of the wicked (Ps. 73:3) despite his earlier simplistic condemnation of such envy (Ps. 37:1), and was only saved from that by God's gracious action on his heart (Ps. 73:2). Solomon's proverbs seem to fail to address this complexity of situations because of his own self-righteousness; and yet all he says is inspired and true so far as it goes.

Pro 3:32 For the perverse person is an abomination to Yahweh, but His friendship is with the upright-
The Hebrew for "perverse" is literally 'the one who turns aside', implying they were once on the right path but had left it. It would seem that Solomon has in view the house of Saul, who were potential contenders for his throne. "Friendship" is AV "secret", a term sometimes used of God's revealed word (Am. 3:7; Job 15:8; Jer. 23:18,22). In this case, Solomon is again veering towards saying that mere possession of God's word of truth is what makes people "upright".

Pro 3:33 Yahweh's curse is in the house of the wicked, but He blesses the habitation of the righteous-

Here as in Prov. 14:11, Solomon again fails to have the subtlety he ought to have learnt from the book of Job. For Job was righteous but his "house" was overthrown, and the house of the wicked apparently prospered at the time of his affliction. Spiritual reality is that things are far more nuanced than the simplistic picture Solomon presents, true as it is in outline and ultimate terms.

Pro 3:34 Surely He mocks the mockers-
But this is not quite how God is, even to those who are against Him. Solomon should again have learned the lesson of Job, who was taught that "God despises not any" (Job 36:5).

But He gives grace to the humble-
This is quoted in James 4:5; 1 Pet. 5:5. But the quotation follows the LXX, which appears to correct Solomon's incorrect statement in the first half of the verse. God "resists the proud", but not with the mockery which Solomon's arrogance liked to impute to God.

Pro 3:35 The wise will inherit glory, but shame will be the promotion of fools-
David had called Solomon a "wise man", and indeed he was made wise by God (s.w. 1 Kings 2:9; 3:12; 5:7). But the logic of what Solomon seems to be saying is that the possession of wisdom makes a man obedient. And this is where he got it wrong; for his mere possession of wisdom didn't do so. And comparing Proverbs with Solomon's personal life as revealed in Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and the historical records- all indicates that in fact Solomon's possession of wisdom didn't at all make him obedient. Solomon failed to appreciate what David did- that the wise man also dies (Ps. 49:10). What is critical is having the hope of God's Kingdom and the resurrection of the body. But Solomon's possession of "truth" blinded him to this desperate need of all men. The mere possession of wisdom was no guarantee of itself of inheriting glory, as Solomon wrongly thought.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 4

Pro 4:1 Listen, sons, to a father's instruction. Pay attention and know understanding-
If we "attend" to God's word (Prov. 2:2; 4:1; 7:24), then He will "attend" to our word, of prayer (Ps. 55:2 and often in the Psalms). There is thereby a mutuality between God and man. Our attitude to His word becomes reflected in His attitude to our words in prayer; for God and man are in dialogue.

Pro 4:2 for I give you sound learning. Don't forsake my law-
Solomon condemns those who "forsake the law" (Prov. 4:2; 28:4), and he likely has the house of Saul in view as his father David when using this phrase (Ps. 119:53). But he speaks here in Prov. 4:2 of those who forsook his law; as if he was playing God, considering any inattention to himself as inattention to God. David by contrast continually emphasizes the need not to forsake God's law.

David so often talks about God's "law", using the word torah. But Solomon so often speaks of his own torah, and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of torah are always about God's law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. Whilst it could be argued

that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's torah rather than his own torah. This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

Pro 4:3 For I was a son to my father, tender and an only child in the sight of my mother-
David had taught his children with the words: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord" (Ps. 34:11- did David say this to his children every evening?). And Solomon uses just the same words, even whilst disobeying God's law at the same time in his own life: "Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father… I give you good doctrine… for I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother. He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments and live" (Prov. 4:1-4 AV). And so Solomon taught his kids with the same outward form of words, although the personal reality of wisdom was lost on him.

David took time out from his busy schedule to spend time instructing his special, beloved son. And David wasn't just playing Scrabble with Solomon in the evenings; he was really drumming into that lad vital spiritual values. Solomon really respected David and loved his mother; he was without doubt the blue eyed boy to her, and he reacted accordingly. We have seen how in Prov. 31 she lays the law down with him about his girlfriends, about not marrying Gentiles, and about not drinking, yet in Song 3:11 we see Bathsheba with all her motherly pride crowning Solomon on the day of engagement to that Egyptian girl who was to be his downfall. Like David, Bathsheba taught Solomon the principles with great enthusiasm, but she allowed parental pride to make her dismiss the possibility that her son was seriously going astray.

Here again, Solomon justifies himself by implying that he was David's only son. He wasn't, and his half brothers were in bitter competition with him. And so he uses his wisdom to just get the point in that he was the only legitimate heir to the throne.

Pro 4:4 He taught me, and said to me: Let your heart retain my words. Keep my commandments, and live-
Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to his wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to God's ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Pro 4:5 Get wisdom. Get understanding. Don't forget, neither swerve from the words of my mouth-
"Swerve" is the word for "incline" or "decline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

Pro 4:6 Don't forsake her, and she will preserve you. Love her, and she will keep you-
David sees God Himself as preserving and keeping him, by His grace (s.w. Ps. 12:7; 140:4), whereas Solomon sees our keeping and preservation as predicted upon our keeping and preserving of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 5:2). He reasons as did the brethren with misplaced ideals who told me to keep and preserve "the truth" delivered to me as a teenager, and I would be fine in the end. Intellectual maintenance of theological positions will not save in the end; it is God's grace by faith, as David learned by experience.

Pro 4:7 Wisdom is supreme. Get wisdom. Yes, though it costs all your possessions, get understanding-
It is possible that he asked for wisdom only because his father David had taught him to ask for it, just as he taught his children (Prov. 4:5-7). Again Solomon alludes to how he was commended for choosing wisdom over wealth, as ever justifying himself.

Pro 4:8 Esteem her, and she will exalt you. She will bring you to honour when you embrace her-
Dt. 17:17-20 is a warning to the King of Israel not to multiply horses and wives, lest his heart be turned away. It's a conscious prediction of Solomon's apostasy. But one result of such behaviour would be that the King's heart would be "lifted up" or exalted above his brethren (Dt. 17:20)- and this is exactly what happened to Solomon. He came to see himself as somehow above the rest of humanity, to the extent that he was convinced that he was acceptable to God, and that he could abuse his brethren because… he had wisdom. Significantly, Solomon uses the same Hebrew word translated "lifted up" in Dt. 17:20 in Prov. 4:8, when he speaks of how the possession of wisdom will "exalt" or lift up a person. He came to think that his mere possession of true wisdom gave him a superiority over others, and thus he was lifted up above his brethren. There are major warnings here for those who consider that they possess more Bible truth than any other church on earth. It has, sadly, led to a lifting up of many hearts above their fellow man and even their fellow brethren.

Pro 4:9 She will give to your head a garland of grace. She will deliver a crown of splendour to you-
Again Solomon reasons as if the mere possession of truth is what will adorn us before God. But it is personalization of the wisdom, not mere possession of it, which is required. And Solomon was a stellar example of failure in this.

Pro 4:10 O my son, receive my sayings; and the years of your life shall be many-
This is alluding to the promise of long life for the obedient to God's laws; but never does Solomon make the admission that his laws are only a repetition of God's laws. He was playing God by implying that his words carried the weight of God's words. He taught his son obedience to him as a father, but not to God Himself.

Pro 4:11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom, I have led you in straight paths-
He is repeating the words of David in Ps. 32:8: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye". But those words in their context were wrung from a David desperately grateful for God's forgiveness of his sin with Bathsheba. Solomon hadn't gone through this contrition- he was a self-justified womanizer, and yet he used the same outward form of words as his father. Solomon assumes he is going in the right way when he says: "I have led thee in right paths" (Prov. 4:11 AV), in subtle contrast to the way David repeatedly asks to be led in the right way by God Almighty (Ps. 23:3; 25:4,5).

Pro 4:12 When you go, your steps will not be hampered. When you run, you will not stumble-
Again Solomon presents a simplistic picture of the life of wisdom as running without stumbling. The only other reference to steps not being hampered is when the phrase is used about Job in Job 18:7. The reality of spiritual life is that there are times when the steps of the righteous are hampered, and even a righteous man like David stumbled in his path (s.w. Ps. 31:10, and again about Job in Job 4:4).

Pro 4:13 Take firm hold of instruction. Don't let her go. Keep her, for she is your life-
This is the language of Dt. 31:17,20, which taught that if Israel's heart did not decline to idols, then Yahweh Himself would "be your life". Solomon's heart did decline to idols. Because he appropriates the language of personal relationship with God to intellectual acceptance of abstract truth and wisdom. And so many in fundamentalist Christian circles have made the same mistake.

Pro 4:14 Don't enter into the path of the wicked. Don't walk in the way of evil men-
This is of course true, but Solomon is also making a swipe as his competitor and potential usurper Jeroboam, who is described as walking in the way of evil (s.w. 1 Kings 13:33). It seems that always Solomon uses Divine truth to his own self justification, as we can.

Pro 4:15 Avoid it, and don't pass by it; turn from it, and pass on-
Throughout Proverbs, Solomon assumes that he, his sons and his audience are already on the right path, and must not turn aside to the way of the wicked. There is no search for the right way by Solomon, because he assumes that the gift of theoretical truth and "wisdom" to him meant that he personally was walking the path of that truth. But it is one thing to know truth and another to walk the talk. And he totally failed in this,

disobeying his own wisdom about women whilst writing it.

Pro 4:16 For they don't sleep, unless they do evil. Their sleep is taken away, unless they make someone fall-
This is all true, it is Divinely inspired wisdom. But 'being made to fall' is the word used of David after his sin with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (Ps. 31:10), and he appears to want to whitewash this by blaming it upon evil men who made David do it.

Pro 4:17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence-
The contrast is with the invitation of wisdom to eat her bread and drink her wine (Prov. 9:5). Solomon again presents life as being of diametrical opposites, with people within Israel divided between the desperately, criminally wicked- and the spotlessly wise and righteous. But this is simply not true to reality. Human thought and behaviour within the people of God is more mixed than that. Bread and wine even in Old Testament times were of sacramental significance. The wicked are presented as not offering true sacrifice, but a fake appearance of it, to the praise and glory of wickedness and violence. Whereas the wise offer perfectly acceptable sacrifice.

Pro 4:18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of the dawn, that shines more and more until the perfect day-
As often noted on Proverbs, Solomon sees the righteous as having an unrealistically glorious path towards "the perfect day", their way ever brighter, never stumbling, with no darkness. But as noted on :12 that is simply not the case. The language here is very similar to that in 2 Sam. 23:4, where David speaks of his Messianic son as being as the ever brighter shining light of the dawn. His hope was of course that Solomon would be that Messianic son, and he expresses that hope in his Psalm for Solomon in Ps. 72. So again, Solomon speaks global truths about the righteous, but always seems to have himself in view as the parade example. When in fact at the very time he was writing down this Divine wisdom, he was living in an utterly opposite way by marrying pagan women.

We may interpret this verse as meaning that the dawn of the sun of righteousness at the Lord's second coming is in fact presaged by the bursting of light upon His people in the lead up to it. This would make "the perfect day" equivalent to the future Kingdom. But I doubt this is what Solomon himself had in mind; because he considered himself as the Messianic ruler, and his kingdom to be the Kingdom of God. He has nothing much to say about the hope of the resurrection of the body and the coming of the Kingdom; he considered that his possession of wisdom meant that he had the glory of the Kingdom in this life. And it was this refusal to accept the gospel of a future Kingdom of God which was his moral undoing.

"Perfect" is the word translated "establish" concerning the establishment of the Kingdom of David's son (2 Sam. 7:12). Solomon understood this to mean that he was indeed the Messianic son, he saw no future greater son of David than himself. He saw the righteous as slowly attaining to his own great light, climaxing in his kingdom becoming the full Kingdom of God on earth. But his apostacy meant that this was not to be, and the dawning of Zion's light is yet future (s.w. Is. 60:3,19). He refused to accept that the eternal "establishment" of his kingdom was dependent upon his personal obedience (1 Chron. 28:7).

Pro 4:19 The way of the wicked is like darkness-
This is so, but as it is baldly presented here, it fails to reflect the nuance of spiritual life in practice. Solomon considered himself absolutely and totally right, and all who followed his wisdom would never know darkness. But the righteous man Job had darkness set in his way by God (Job 19:8), and every truly sensitive believer will go through times when the darkness s such that we can't find our paths.

They don't know what they stumble over-
"Stumble" is the word for "fall" in :16. The wicked make others fall, and they themselves fall. The idea is that they want to bring down others with them. This is a basic human desire; to make others like ourselves, to not sin alone.

Pro 4:20 My son, attend to my words. Turn your ear to my sayings-
See on :5; Prov. 2:2. As noted on Ps. 119:36; 141:4, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and away from evil. This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go. Solomon often appeals for us to incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

Pro 4:21 Let them not depart from your eyes. Keep them in the midst of your heart-
Our entire mindset, intentions, dreams, hopes are to be dominated by wisdom. This is the essence of the spiritual life; to be spiritually minded. But we live in an age which like no others seeks to dominate our thinking with unspiritual things. See on Prov. 3:21.

Pro 4:22 For they are life to those who find them, and health to their whole body-
Life and health are here made dependent upon Solomon's words (:20). He has again subverted the teachings about God's words and applied them to his words. Even though they were divinely inspired, he speaks as if his book of Proverbs eclipses all other Divine revelation. See on Prov. 15:4.

Pro 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it is the wellspring of life-
Solomon often emphasized the importance of keeping the heart (Prov. 2:10-16; 3:5,6; 4:23-5:5; 6:23-26); he had foreseen that the essential sin of God's people was "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:46), and he imagined how for this sin God's people would later pray towards the temple. And yet his wives turned away his heart (1 Kings 11:13), for all this awareness that the heart must be kept. It was as if the more he knew the truth of something, the more he wanted to do the very opposite. And this is exactly true of our natures. It's why we ourselves can discern the same perversity in our lives. Perhaps with Solomon he reasoned that in his case, foreign wives wouldn't turn away his heart. Just as our flesh thinks 'Yes, but it can't happen to me'. Perhaps too he reasoned that if the temple somehow could bring forgiveness for the plague of the heart, his heart was incorruptible because of the temple.

Pro 4:24 Put away from yourself a perverse mouth, put corrupt lips far from you-

The idea may be that Solomon was the ultimate mouth of wisdom; see on Prov. 15:2,4. And he is warning against listening to any other teachers. Always he seems to have a subtext of commending himself. The only other usage of the term "perverse mouth" is about those whom Solomon considered to be the wicked within Israel (Prov. 6:12). Again, Solomon's idea of spirituality is avoiding false teachers and mixing with sinners- rather than internal spirituality and personal relationship with God.

Pro 4:25 Let your eyes look straight ahead-
The ways of man are "before" or "straight ahead" of Yahweh's eyes (Prov. 5:21 s.w.), and our eyes are to likewise "look straight ahead" (Prov. 4:25 s.w.). Our perspective and vision is to be His. We are to see life as He does. And He looks in the perspective of eternity, His Kingdom on earth which is to dominate the vast majority of our eternal existence. This is the meaning of faith in practice.

Fix your gaze directly before you-
Solomon thinks of the righteous as walking unflinchingly forward in wisdom, never turning to the right or left, refusing to be distracted by any wicked person who suggests walking another way (Prov. 9:15 "to call travellers who go directly on their way"). This approach fails to take account of the simple fact that righteous people sin and stray from the direct path every day, and are saved finally into God's Kingdom by grace alone. That is all something Solomon failed to have any grasp of, whereas David his father did. Prov. 11:5 makes the somewhat tautological statement that "the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way", s.w. Prov. 4:25 "fix your gaze directly before you". This contrasts with how David uses the word in Ps. 5:8: "Lead me, O Yahweh... make Your way straight [s.w. direct] before my face". The same statement of God directing in the straight way is found in Is. 45:13; Jer. 18:4 s.w. Solomon didn't see this need for the Spirit of God to direct his path because he assumed that mere possession of Divine truth would itself keep him in the way; hence he teaches that "understanding" makes a man walk "directly" (Prov. 15:21). And he failed miserably because of that arrogant position.

Pro 4:26 Make the path of your feet level. Let all of your ways be established-
If a man prepares his way after God's principles (2 Chron. 27:6; Prov. 4:26), then God will 'prepare' that man's way too (Ps. 37:23; 119:5), confirming him in the way of escape.

When Solomon teaches that God must be allowed to establish or direct our way (Prov. 4:26; 16:29), he is using the same Hebrew words as in Ps. 37:23 and Ps. 119:5, when David says the same. It's as if he was given God's truth and yet he never quite made it his very own- he still articulated it in terms of the faith of his fathers. And thus he lost it in the end. One cannot help notice the great stress placed by Solomon on *teaching* his children, as David had *taught* him. It could be that there was too much emphasis on theory, thinking that by merely teaching the Law, the children would turn out OK. But Dt. 6:1-7 taught that Israel must "*do*" the commandments of the Lord "so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes…these words…you shall teach them diligently to your sons". It was by the parents both doing and teaching the Law that their children would "do" it too. Behaviour patterns are learnt by observation and experience of parents, not by mere theoretical inculcation. So could it not be that there is a lesson here for us- that the diligent teaching of the Law, as David did to Solomon and as Solomon so proudly

did to his children, actually has no lasting effect unless that Law is lived out in a daily life. It seems to me that the Western Christian attitude and program for child-rearing is based very much on the assumption that both parents are believers, marry in their 20s, mother raises the kids and father brings in the money, with the result that the children will in due time also be baptized and repeat the cycle. This is all well and good. But the reality is that less than 7% of America's population fits the traditional nuclear family profile. "Today's family can be a single parent with one or more children, a two-career couple with no children, a female breadwinner with child and househusband, or a blended family that consists of a previously married couple and a combination of children from those two previous marriages" (John Naisbitt, *Megatrends*, NY: Warner Books, 1984 p. 261). Our style of Sunday School material and teaching needs to be appropriate to this reality, if we seek to win this world for Christ rather than just reproduce within the existing Western community. The brethren and sisters of our community and ecclesias must be the de facto spiritual parents of many of our children. Mere doctrinal teaching *alone* is not enough- it must be seen regularly and meaningfully and relevantly to be lived out in transformed lives. Solomon's Proverbs, although inspired by God, have so many similarities with the Psalms of his father David. It seems to me that although he was of course inspired in writing Proverbs, he chose to articulate the wisdom given him in terms which his father had used in his songs, prayers and Psalms.

Pro 4:27 Don't turn to the right hand nor to the left-
The Angel put Balaam in a position where he couldn't turn to the right hand nor the left, and thereby he was forced to face up to his sin (s.w. Num. 22:26). But this was of God's providence, attempting to bring the man to repentance. Whereas Solomon seems to assume that the power to not turn to the right nor left is solely within the steel will of the individual. He totally denies God's action in human life and hearts, just as many self congratulatory legalists do today.

Remove your foot from evil-
Removing or departing from evil is a major theme of Proverbs (Prov. 13:19; 14:16; 16:6,17). Solomon uses the same phrase in Ecc. 11:10, but he gives the reason as being because youth is vanity; old age will prove that there is no point in not departing from evil, and going the way of evil, like going the way of righteousness, is all the same vanity. This nihilistic approach is because Solomon failed to discern that the end point of the path of righteousness, departing or removing our foot from the way of evil, is the redemption of the body in God's future Kingdom. But because he failed to understand that, he ends up concluding as he gets older that the choice between evil and good is all the same vain and meaningless. It is the hope of the resurrection of the body, the reality of judgment to come and the future Kingdom of God, which make morality of so much meaning today. We may also note again Solomon's overly simplistic idea that if a man removes himself from evil, all will go wonderfully for him in life. The same phrase is used of how Job removed himself from, or "eschewed", evil; but his life was traumatic and without all the blessings for wisdom which Solomon liked to imagine.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 5

Pro 5:1
My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my understanding-
See on Prov. 2:2. As noted on Ps. 119:36; 141:4, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and

away from evil. This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go. Solomon often appeals for us to turn our ears / incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

"Turn your ear" is the word for "incline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

Pro 5:2 that you may maintain discretion, that your lips may preserve knowledge-
David sees God Himself as preserving and keeping him, by His grace (s.w. Ps. 12:7; 140:4), whereas Solomon sees our keeping and preservation as predicted upon our keeping and preserving of wisdom (Prov. 4:6 s.w. Prov. 5:2). He reasons as did the brethren with misplaced ideals who told me to keep and preserve "the truth" delivered to me as a teenager, and I would be fine in the end. Intellectual maintenance of theological positions will not save in the end; it is God's grace by faith, as David learned by experience.

Pro 5:3 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey. Her mouth is smoother than oil-
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. The strange woman has words like a honeycomb (Prov. 5:3); and yet this is exactly how Solomon found his woman's words (Song 4:11).

Pro 5:4 but in the end she is as bitter as wormwood, and as sharp as a two-edged sword-
He personally rejected this wisdom and only came to agree with it through doing just what he here condemns (Ecc. 7:26).

Pro 5:5 Her feet go down to death, her steps lead straight to Sheol-
The idea is that the beginning of the relationship would appear sweet, but in the very end, it would lead to death, paralleled here with *sheol*, the grave. And this was exactly the experience with Solomon's Gentile wives. Only in his old age did his chosen path lead him to turn his heart away from God and face an eternal grave. He disobeyed his own wisdom to an extraordinary degree. He clearly considered all the truths he knew

as merely ideas in his mind, thereby assuring him of acceptability with God; he never personalized any of it.

Pro 5:6 She gives no thought to the way of life. Her ways are crooked, and she doesn't know it-
The following of the path to death (:5) is done unconsciously, because of a total lack of self awareness and self examination. And yet this was precisely what Solomon did; see on :5.

Pro 5:7 Now therefore, my sons, listen to me. Don't depart from the words of my mouth-
He spoke of *his* law as giving life and blessing, appropriating the very terms of Deuteronomy about the blessings of obedience to *God's* law. Wisdom said: "Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me: for blessed are they that keep my ways" (Prov. 8:32 RV). Yet these are the very words Solomon uses when talking to his kids: "Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me" (Prov. 5:7; 7:24). Conclusion? Solomon sees the woman "Wisdom" as a personification of himself. It was really Solomon's self-justification. *He personally* was wisdom, so he thought. This is how self-exalted his possession of true wisdom made him. And of course, his kids *didn't* listen to wisdom's way. In passing, I have noted that those raised 'in the truth' often find it very hard to take criticism in later life. They find tolerance of others' views hard; they perceive themselves to be right to an intolerant extent. Is this not a little bit of the Solomon syndrome?

Pro 5:8 Remove your way far from her. Don't come near the door of her house-
Solomon had Gentile wives and built them houses (1 Kings 11:7,8). His wisdom was given to him as a young man, and the book of Proverbs appears to be collections of the various statements of that wisdom. But about the same time, he also got involved with multiple Gentile women who led him astray from God and to idolatry. The very warnings he gives against the adulteress and Gentile woman were ignored by him; he became the young man who went wrong with women. His girlfriend speaks in the very language of the Gentile woman of Proverbs: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house... into her chamber" (Song 3:4). Compare this with "She caught him... come not near the door of her house... her house... the chambers of death" (Prov. 7:13,27; 5:8). We see here the warning for all time; that we can know God's ways in theory, whilst disobeying them in practice, absolutely to the letter. Indeed it may be so that the more we know them, the more strongly we are tempted by our nature to break them.

Pro 5:9 lest you give your honour to others, and your years to the cruel one-
The word for "honour" is used at times specifically of the honour or majesty of kingship (Ps. 21:5; 45:3; Jer. 22:18; Zech. 6:13). Solomon warns his son that the kingship would be taken from the Davidic line if he married Gentiles. His years, his life, would be given to "the cruel", a word associated with idolatry in Dt. 32:22, although "the cruel" is a frequent designation of the Gentile powers in the prophets. All this is precisely what happened to Solomon. He married Gentiles, and finally was led to waste his life through turning to their idols.

Pro 5:10 lest foreigners feast on your wealth, and your labours enrich another man's house-

The allusion may be to the way that the family of Shechem thought they would get Jacob's wealth if their daughters married the sons of Israel. In Ecc. 2:18,19 Solomon laments that his labours will achieve nothing; doubtless alluding back to his words in Prov. 5:10, where he says that the Gentile wife will make the young Israelite's labours meaningless.

Pro 5:11 You will groan at your latter end, when your flesh and your body are consumed-
It would not be unreasonable to interpret the book of Ecclesiastes as Solomon's groaning at his latter end, as his physical faculties declined. Constantly we see him as the parade example of a man whose very knowledge of God's truth led him to live in the very opposite manner; because he refused to personalize it, and assumed that the very possession of such truth justified him.

Pro 5:12 and say, How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof-
Solomon here quotes his father's words in Ps. 50:17 "since you hate instruction". Solomon thus accuses any who refuse his Proverbs of doing just this, hating instruction, which in the context of Ps. 50:17 means 'You are condemned' (s.w. Prov. 5:12; 12:1; 15:10).

Pro 5:13 neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor turned my ear to those who instructed me!-
This is true, but Solomon is addressing his son, whom he has taught. He is strongly implying that any refusal to accept his teaching would call down terrible curses. His focus instead should have been upon God's total revelation, and upon God as the ultimate teacher and instructor.

Pro 5:14 I have come to the brink of utter ruin, in the midst of the gathered assembly-
David felt that his repentance of his sins with Bathsheba would lead him to praise God in the midst of the congregation (Ps. 22:22; 40:10); by contrast Solomon is more concerned with being shamed in the midst of the congregation. David was unashamed of his shame, because he was repentant. The record presents Solomon as obsessed with "my father David", and yet failing to emulate his humility and attitudes.

Pro 5:15 Drink water out of your own cistern, springing water out of your own spring-
There is no doubt that we can be counted responsible for making another brother sin, even though he too bears responsibility for that sin. The man who commits adultery causes his ex-wife to commit adultery too, the Lord observed (Mt. 5:32). Her sin remains her sin, but he too is guilty. Prov. 5:15,16 (NIV) teach likewise: that a man should drink the waters of his own well, i.e. take sexual fulfilment from his own wife, otherwise his waters (i.e. the sexuality of his wife) will overflow into the streets for all and sundry. She will turn to other men due to his unfaithfulness. Sin thus has so many aspects. We may reason that if we fail to upbuild a brother, or preach, then God will somehow do it anyway. But this doesn't seem to be the spirit of Ez. 3:18: "When... thou givest him not warning...he shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thy hand".

Pro 5:16 Should your springs overflow in the streets, streams of water in the public squares?-

As explained on :15, Solomon is saying that a man's sexuality should be channeled through his wife, and not overflow to loose women standing in public places. LXX "Let not thy waters flow beyond thy fountain" supports this.

Pro 5:17 Let them be for yourself alone, not for strangers with you-
Sexuality shouldn't be shared with "strangers", as noted on :15, although the word often refers to Gentiles. Yet Solomon was busy acquiring 1000 wives / concubines at the beginning of his reign, when he wrote up the Divine wisdom he was endowed with in the form of the book of Proverbs. This incredible hypocrisy arose from a lack of personal consciousness of sin, an inability to personalize God's truth, and a total wilful ignorance of the conditional nature of all God's purposes with him. He is a major example to all who pride themselves upon knowing God's truth.

Pro 5:18 Let your spring be blessed. Rejoice in the wife of your youth-
See on :15-17. Solomon failed to do so, not restraining his lust for women, as he explains in Ecclesiastes, and marrying 1000 wives / concubines. Despite his ravishment with Pharaoh's daughter as outlined in the Song, she never fulfilled him; indeed, none of his women did. In the Song he
speaks of how he was ravished with this Egyptian girl, especially with her breasts (Song 2:7; 3:5; 4:9; 8:14). Alluding to this he could confidently exhort in Prov. 5:18-20 AV: "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe (Song of Solomon language); let her breasts satisfy thee...
be thou ravished always with her love... And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange (i.e. Gentile) woman?". How, indeed? But 999 women later, it was a different story for Solomon. Solomon writes in Prov. 5:18-20 as if it is of course unthinkable that he should have been ravished by a Gentile woman; but he had been. He spoke to others with absolutely no thought as to whether his words had an application to himself. Effectively he was kidding himself, on a deeply internal level, that he hadn't married out of the faith. The obviousness of all this is in order to drum the warning home to us. How tragic that Solomon should go on to comment that such a person would die for want of instruction (Prov. 5:23). Solomon had all the instruction he could wish for; but he didn't allow it to really
sink home one little bit. He hit out on the search for an ultimately satisfying woman, but out of the 1000 he had he never found one (Ecc. 7:28), even when he sat down and analyzed each of them. And even politically, his marriages with all those Gentile women didn't seem to achieve him the support he desired from
their home countries; Egypt gave refuge to Jeroboam, Solomon's main rival (1 Kings 11:40), even though he always acquiesced to his wives and even in his very old age he still didn't destroy the idol temples he built for them (2 Kings 23:13).

Pro 5:19 A loving doe and a graceful deer- let her breasts satisfy you at all times. Be captivated always with her love-
The idea is "don't be ravished with the breasts of a Gentile and don't have many wives; be content with your first wife". But Solomon was (Song 4:9; 7:3), and he had many wives; he totally refused to see the personal relevance of the truth and wisdom he taught.

Pro 5:20 For why should you, my son, be captivated with an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another?-
See on Ecc. 7:26. The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he

knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" (AV) woman (Prov. 2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon.

Pro 5:21 For the ways of man are before the eyes of Yahweh, He examines all his paths-
The ways of man are "before" or "straight ahead" of Yahweh's eyes (Prov. 5:21 s.w.), and our eyes are to likewise "look straight ahead" (Prov. 4:25 s.w.). Our perspective and vision is to be His. We are to see life as He does. And He looks in the perspective of eternity, His Kingdom on earth which is to dominate the vast majority of our eternal existence. This is the meaning of faith in practice.

"The ways of man are before the eyes (angels) of the Lord, and He pondereth all his goings" (Prov. 5:21 AV). God pondering us (root 'to roll flat') is surely the language of limitation, and applicable to the Angels. God's Angels are pondering us, as they did Abraham, Job etc.

Pro 5:22 The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare him. The cords of his sin hold him firmly-
This continues the huge Biblical theme that sin is its own judgment; the wicked are more self condemned than condemned by God. In seeking to avoid the ties that bind in domestic and sexual life (see on :15-18), a man is tied by the cords of his own list. And again was absolutely fulfilled in Solomon. Once he began taking other wives, he lost all self restraint. And was held by the cords of those sins. "Hold" is the word just used in :5 of how the sinful woman herself 'takes hold' of the grave; and she will bring her men down there along with her. The imagery attributes to women a great power, which in Solomon's time was unheard of; for society considered men to be all powerful. It was perhaps this kind of thinking which led Solomon to ignore any possibility that mere women, as he saw them, could have such great hold on him and his destiny.

Pro 5:23 He will die for lack of instruction. In the greatness of his own folly he will go astray-
"Instruction" is here put for 'receipt of instruction'. But Solomon has Saul in view, his father's great enemy. It was he who greatly went astray (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:21 and see on ps. 119:21). Always there is the subtext in Solomon's words of justifying his father, and justifying himself against any potential opposition to his kingship, such as that from the house of Saul. But "astray" is also the word just used for a man being

"ravished" by inappropriate women (:19,20). The person in view in this chapter is always the man who has inappropriate relationships with women other than the wife of his youth. Again, Solomon is presented as the one who went astray in this way more than any other; and it was his wrong attitude to his possession of Divine truth which led him to it.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 6

Pro 6:1 My son, if you have become collateral for your neighbour, if you have struck your hands in pledge for a stranger-

The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis*)*. Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan; what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to this matter. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom.

Pro 6:2 you are trapped by the words of your mouth. You are ensnared with the words of your mouth-

Prov. 5:22 uses this language about those snared by major sins. As noted on :1, Solomon appears to be quite obsessively outlawing the giving of collateral for loans. And he doesn't leave it as mere advice, but presses the point that to disagree with him on this is a heinous sin- and yet this is a matter which has to be judged one case at a time. We again get the impression that he presents a narrative whereby people are either spotlessly perfect, or awful sinners. This is not a mature spiritual position. Any disagreement with his advice makes a person a wicked sinner. Even on such a delicate personal matter, where cases will always be different, and God's law allowed the use of collateral.

Pro 6:3 Do this now my son and deliver yourself, since you have come into the hand of your neighbour. Go, humble yourself. Press your plea with your neighbour-
As noted on :1,2, Solomon is making a huge issue over this matter of obeying his advice [for in such a nuanced matter it can be no more than that] regarding collateral. He sees humility as humility to his advice and positions, rather than before God.

Pro 6:4 Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids-
The words of Prov. 6 show that Solomon's motivation for teaching God's ways to his son (Rehoboam) was because this is how his father had taught him. "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids", he exhorts his son (Prov. 6:4), in the very language used to describe his father's zeal for the building of the temple (Ps. 132:4). Solomon prayed to God in the terms and language of his father (2 Chron. 6:41,42 cp. Ps. 132:1,8,9). He was familiar with his father's Psalms-after all, all Israel sung them. It must have been like being the son of a world-famous singer. The words were even in Solomon's subconscious it seems, for when he tells his son "Give not sleep to thine eyes nor slumber to thine eyelids" (Prov. 6:4) he is alluding unconsciously, it seems (in that it is out of context) to David's promise not to give sleep to his eyes until he had found a resting place for the ark (Ps. 132:4). But Solomon's spirituality was finally revealed as merely living out parental expectation.

Pro 6:5 Free yourself, like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the snare of the fowler-
As explained on :2, Solomon elsewhere uses this language about those snared by major sins. For him it was a heinous sin to disagree with his attitude to the difficult and very personal matter of giving collateral.

Pro 6:6 Go to the ant, you sluggard. Consider her ways, and be wise-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 6:7 which having no chief, overseer or ruler-

Solomon taught that if the ants can be so zealous, well why can't the ecclesia of God be zealous [for it was 'believers' that he was teaching]. The ants scurry around, working as if there is no tomorrow, to build up something so precarious that is in any case so tragically short lived. Can't we be yet more zealous, with a like loving co-operation, building the eternal things that we are (Prov. 6:6,7)? And Solomon pressed the point further, in that ants are self-motivated; they need no "guide, overseer or ruler". This was surely a reference to the complex system of overseers which Solomon had to place over Israel in order to build the temple and build up the Kingdom. The same Hebrew word for "overseer" is found in 1 Chron. 23:4; 26:29. Yet ideally, he seems to be saying, every Israelite ought to be a zealous worker. Prov. 12:24 says the same: "The hand of the diligent [*whoever* he / she is] shall bear rule [in practice]" [s.w. Prov. 6:7 "ruler"]. And we must ask ourselves, whether for whatever reason the new Israel hasn't slumped into the same problem, of lack of self-motivation, waiting to be asked to do something before we do it, over-relying upon our "overseers". The ants aren't like this. They see the job to be done, and naturally get on with it.

The self-motivated example of the ant should inspire our service and operations. They need no "guide, overseer or ruler". But these are the very words used about Solomon's elaborate hierarchy of foremen and slave drivers whom he used to 'get the job done' in his kingdom. He rejected his own wisdom.

Pro 6:8 yet provides her bread in the summer and gathers her food in the harvest-
See on :7. This again glorifies works and hard work inappropriately. Good harvests were God's blessing for obedience to the covenant; bad harvests were judgment for breaking the covenant (Jer. 5:17 s.w.). But Solomon assumes that hard work will bring good harvests. Again, real spirituality is ignored, and the conditional nature of Divine blessing is also overlooked, just as Solomon did in his own life.

Pro 6:9 How long will you sleep, lazy one? When will you arise out of your sleep?-
See on :6. This despising of sleep is in contrast to the spiritual maturity of David, who understood that true blessing comes from God alone and not from human works, and God gives His beloved sleep, in contrast to vainly rising early and working late to achieve blessing (Ps. 127:2). Time and again, we find Solomon glorifying "my father David", seeking to live out parental expectations; and yet quite out of step with David's spirituality.

Pro 6:10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep-
I have suggested on :9 that this condemnation of sleep and laziness is part of a works based mentality that at best is not very spiritually mature. It is therefore significant that when these words are repeated in Prov. 24:33, Solomon doesn't claim this to be part of

the package of Divine wisdom given to him; rather he says he worked this out from his own observations of broken down houses and farmsteads, and in mock humility claims to have thereby "received instruction" (Prov. 24:32).

Pro 6:11 so your poverty will come as a robber, and your scarcity as an armed man-
Solomon repeatedly sees poverty as being the fault of the poor, and their refusal of his teaching of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 6:11; 10:4,15; 13:7,8,18,23; 24:34; 28:19; 31:7). Many of these passages are effectively mocking the poor, which Solomon condemns in Prov. 17:5. He fails to take his own wisdom, as we also see in his behaviour with foreign women. Again we see Solomon's works based approach to righteousness, and lack of grace; refusing to accept that we are all poor men before God, as David himself exemplified when he cried to God as a poor man (Ps. 34:6). But his much beloved father David was unashamed to say he was a materially "poor man" (1 Sam. 18:23); and Uriah, whom he wronged, is described also as a "poor man" (2 Sam. 12:1). The poor were to be defended and given to (Ps. 82:3), and the Bible is clear that poverty isn't necessarily a result of sin or unwisdom. But Solomon fails to appreciate this, so obsessed is he with works, and the idea that obedience to his anthology of Proverbs will make the poor prosperous, as if God's truth is a kind of wealth creation scheme.

Pro 6:12 A worthless person, a man of iniquity, is he who walks with a perverse mouth-
True as the Proverbs are which condemn "a worthless / wicked person" (Prov. 6:12; 16:27; 19:28), again we have a subtext of Solomon seeking to justify himself and his father David, and to criticize the various competitors to Solomon's throne. "A worthless person" is the term used for Nabal (1 Sam. 25:17), those in David's camp who were not fully supportive of David (1 Sam. 30:22), Sheba who plotted to overthrow the Davidic line as king (2 Sam. 20:1), and particularly of those who wanted to overthrow Solomon as king (2 Chron. 13:7).

Pro 6:13 who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who motions with his fingers-
The body language of sinners is commented upon several times in the Bible. This is the degree to which God observes human behaviour. And we have wonderful insights into that of the Lord Jesus; His eyes and hands are often as it were zoomed in upon in the Gospel records. Body language is indeed a "signal" of our innermost heart; and for the wicked, they yield all the members of their bodies to work unrighteousness (Rom. 6:19).

Pro 6:14 in whose heart is perverseness, who devises evil continually, who always sows discord-
Solomon here reasons as if any of his opponents (see on :12) are wrong because they

"sow discord". This has ever been an argument deployed by autocratic rulers- any criticism or opposition is wrong because it undermines "unity".

Pro 6:15 Therefore his calamity will come suddenly. He will be broken suddenly, and that without remedy-
Being broken without remedy (as in Prov. 29:1) suggests that what is in view is an earthen vessel smashed, a figure used in the prophets of the last judgment. Israel were likewise smitten without remedy at the hands of their invaders (s.w. 2 Chron. 36:16; Jer. 8:15; 14:19). Many of Solomon's warnings of judgments in the Proverbs come exactly true for the Israel whom he wrongly assumed would be his eternal kingdom. The "remedy" Solomon has in mind is giving heed to wisdom. The "sudden" nature of condemnation is also a Biblical theme. The Bible is very clear about what will lead to condemnation, and yet when it comes, the condemned will as it were be taken by surprise. For they have ignored all the teaching about judgment and assumed it doesn't apply to them.

Pro 6:16 There are six things which Yahweh hates; yes, seven which are an abomination to Him-
"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 6:17 proud eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood-
David's prayer of repentance and request to be saved from "blood guiltiness" (Ps. 51:14) is literally 'from blood'. He was a man of blood and was guilty of Uriah's innocent blood. David had asked for 'men of blood' to be slain (Ps. 55:23 s.w.), those who had taken the blood of the innocent (Ps. 94:21), and for 'men of blood' to be expelled from his presence (Ps. 139:19). And it is not at all clear whether all those Psalms were written before his sin with Bathsheba. God was trying to teach David that he was the type of person whom he condemned. And yet it is unclear if he learned that lesson. Solomon liberally condemns the man who sheds innocent blood (Prov. 6:17; 28:17), refusing to recognize that his much lauded father had done just this, and was only saved by grace and not by any obedience to wisdom. There is so little grace in the book of Solomon's Proverbs because Solomon had failed to perceive the grace shown to his father. An example of indirect reference to Solomon's pride is found in the way the record points a

similarity between Paul and Solomon. Each was given wisdom, and each was given a Satan to humble them because of the way wisdom bloats a man's ego. The fact that we have 'the truth' in basic doctrinal terms - plus a fair bit of other Divine wisdom - really will tempt us to be proud. This is the sort of thing we individually and collectively need to exhort ourselves strongly about. Like us, Solomon knew theoretically the paramount danger of pride; he lists it as the most fundamental of the seven things God hates (Prov. 6:17 cp. 16:5,18). Indeed, Solomon correctly implies in Prov. 28:25 that pride is an outcome of lack of faith, and this was exactly true in Solomon's case. His lack of faith in the future kingdom led him to be proud.

We note here and in Ps. 119:69,78 and elsewhere that pride is associated with slandering others. This inflated self importance is what leads pride people to do others down by slandering them, that they may appear higher. "Innocent blood" refers to Saul's persecution of David's "innocent blood" (s.w. 1 Sam. 19:5). "A proud look" is exactly what Solomon's father David didn't have (s.w. Ps. 131:1).

Pro 6:18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief-
As so often in the Bible, action is presented as the direct result of thought. This was a conception foreign to their contemporary belief systems, where all that mattered was external behaviour. The Lord's "sermon on the mount" develops this teaching as the essence of all spiritual life. Israel were condemned by God specifically for their wicked schemes / imaginations (s.w. Is. 55:7; 59:7; Jer. 4:14). Is. 59:7 repeats this verse about Judah generally. The Proverbs so often end up descriptions of the house of Judah in their later history; whereas Solomon liked to think that his kingdom would be eternal, governed according to his principles as taught in the book of Proverbs.

Pro 6:19 a false witness who utters lies, and he who sows discord among brothers-
This is true, and needs to be given its due weight by those who divide brethren in Christ. But Solomon also doubtless has in view the discord between him and his half brothers, who were contenders for his throne. He considers the cause of the divisions to be "lies", a slander campaign against him and his father. But the division amongst David's sons was a direct fulfilment of Nathan's prediction of the consequence of David's sins associated with Bathsheba. But Solomon seeks to whitewash David, considering any friction arising from his father's sins as mere slander. He doesn't follow David in openly confessing sin and rejoicing in Divine grace.

Pro 6:20 My son, keep your father's commandment, and don't forsake your mother's teaching-
David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1;

4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah*. This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

Solomon exhorted others to keep the law of their mother, so that it would keep the from the attractive Gentile girl. And don't think, he went on, that in this context you can take fire into your hands and not be burnt. You can't play around with your own sexuality without it having a permanent spiritual effect upon you (6:27). But dear Bathsheba's words to Solomon warning against the Gentile woman in Prov. 31 were completely forgotten by him.

Solomon told his son, and presumably all his sons, to keep their father's commandment and not forsake the teaching of their mother. In this he was just blindly repeating his own experience of youth, and yet the way he repeated it was irrelevant seeing that his wives were largely Gentiles. To tell them to follow the laws of their mothers was hardly good advice. But he said it because it seemed the right thing, it was what he had been told as a child. David was motivated by a desire to fulfil the Law's command that the word should be enthusiastically taught by parents to their children. Externally, Solomon likewise obeyed the command. But he did so as a result of living out parental expectation; he did what his parents had done to him. Yet Rehoboam didn't really take Divine principles very seriously in his later life, although there is reason to think that he did so originally. And so he too lived out the spiritual experience of his father Solomon; the rot of only external spirituality snaked through those generations, until the real spirit of the Truth was lost, and only an external shell remained. There is ample evidence that this is exactly the situation in many areas today.

Pro 6:21 Bind them continually on your heart. Tie them around your neck-
Solomon made the classic mistake of assuming that his will and word were effectively equivalent to the word of God. In Prov. 6:21 he speaks of the need to bind the law about your heart and neck; but in Song 8:6 he asks his Gentile lover to "set *me* as a seal upon your heart" and arm. And often in Proverbs he uses the language of the blessings for keeping God's law and turns them into the blessings for keeping *his* law.

Pro 6:22 When you walk, it will lead you. When you sleep, it will watch over you. When you awake, it will talk with you-
Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't

preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Pro 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light. Reproofs of instruction are the way of life-
The connection is with Ps. 119:105: "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path". The "word" in view was the prophetic word that David would be king and Saul would be destroyed. Solomon reapplied this in Prov. 6:23; but his legalism comes out, in that he changed "Your word" (of promise) to "the law" and the "commandments".

Pro 6:24 to keep you from the immoral woman, from the flattery of the wayward wife's tongue-
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" (AV) woman (Prov. 2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon.

Pro 6:25 Don't lust after her beauty in your heart, neither let her captivate you with her eyelids-

The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. He warned the typical young man about being captivated by the eyelids of the Gentile woman (Prov. 6:25); yet it was the eyes of Miss Egypt that he openly admitted stole his heart (Song 4:9; 6:5).

Solomon often emphasized the importance of keeping the heart (Prov. 2:10-16; 3:5,6; 4:23-5:5; 6:23-26); he had foreseen that the essential sin of God's people was "the plague of his own heart" (1 Kings 8:46), and he imagined how for this sin God's people would later pray towards the temple. And yet his wives turned away *his* heart (1 Kings 11:13), for all this awareness that the heart must be kept. It was as if the more he knew the truth of something, the more he wanted to do the very opposite. And this is exactly true of our natures. It's why we ourselves can discern the same perversity in our lives. Perhaps with Solomon he reasoned that in *his* case, foreign wives wouldn't turn away *his* heart. Just as our flesh thinks 'Yes, but it can't happen to *me*'. Perhaps too he reasoned that if the temple somehow could bring forgiveness for the plague of the heart, his heart was incorruptible because of the temple.

Pro 6:26 For a prostitute reduces you to a piece of bread. The adulteress hunts for your precious life-

Truth flowed through Solomon's mouth with ease, but took no lodgment at all in his heart. Truth, absolute and pure, flows through our hands in such volume. Bible study after Bible study, chapter after chapter… But does it mean anything at all to us? Prov. 6:26 warns the young man that the Gentile woman will take his money and leave him destitute at the end. These words seem to be alluded to by Solomon years later in Ecc. 6:2, where he laments that despite his wealth and success, a Gentile would have it all after his death. He saw in later life that his warnings to the young men of Israel had been in the form of painting a picture of a typical young man who epitomized youthful folly; but now he saw that he had been making a detailed prophecy of himself.

Pro 6:27 Can a man scoop fire into his lap, and his clothes not be burned?-

He soberly warns against the strange (i.e. Gentile) woman, observing that a man cannot take this kind of fire into his bosom and not be burned by it. Yet this is exactly what he was doing at the time he wrote that. His public removal of his Egyptian wife from the house of David "because the places are holy" (2 Chron. 8:11) is therefore to be seen as spiritual pride, appearing to do the right thing, when his heart was far from it. Burning clothes is the phrase used about what was to be done to the leper (Lev. 13:52,57). The adulterer would be treated by others as a leper.

Pro 6:28 Or can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be scorched?-

This is exactly what Solomon thought he could do with women. And he was scorched, a figure for condemnation. "Hot coals" is the word used to figuratively describe condemnation (Ps. 120:4; 140:10; Prov. 25:22; 26:21). The man who gets involved with sexual sin reasons that he can tip toe over condemnation without being destroyed or his clothes catching fire (Prov. 6:27). A sober warning of the psychology of all human sin.

Pro 6:29 So is he who goes in to his neighbour's wife-
When he warns his son not to go in to his neighbour's wife, this may be thought to be looking back to his parents' failure; for Bathsheba was the literal neighbour to David, living next door to his palace. But Solomon so glorifies his parents that I wonder if in fact he had so whitewashed their behaviour in his own mind that he is, as it were, unaware of how he was sounding. He may have been genuinely convinced they had done nothing wrong, and it was all a case of fake news and slander. Despite David's psalms of penitence.

Whoever touches her will not be unpunished-
The book of Proverbs outlines the basis upon which Solomon was to judge Israel. This can be read as Solomon warning that he would not show any grace to a man who went in to his neighbour's wife. But he was only conceived by David because God had not punished David as that iniquity deserved. We see here Solomon's utter refusal to accept grace, or to reflect the grace shown to his family to others. His harsh legalism leads me to conclude that he had [in his own mind] whitewashed his parents as if their sin had never happened.

Pro 6:30 Men don't despise a thief, if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry-
Solomon is arguing that there is utterly no excuse for adultery, and therefore he will always prosecute it to the ultimate term; he is arguing that adultery with the woman next door is just inexcusable for any reason. As noted on :29, he is totally hardened by his legalism to any kind of grace; were it not for the grace shown to his father, David would have died before Solomon was even conceived.

Pro 6:31 but if he is found, he shall restore seven times. He shall give all the wealth of his house-
The wealth or substance of a man's house is the phrase used in Prov. 1:13, of those who fill their houses with wealth by violence. Solomon presents a perhaps simplistic caricature of the wicked; they use violence, steal, commit adultery etc. And the righteous are consistently wise and righteous, according to Proverbs. Whereas in reality, sin and righteousness is far more subtle. A man like Solomon's father David was righteous and yet also sinned.

Pro 6:32 He who commits adultery with a woman is void of understanding. He who does it destroys his own soul-
Solomon didn't commit adultery, but he sinned sexually by taking 1000 wives / concubines, who were Gentiles and idolaters. As so often happens, people who fail in the general area of sexuality love to focus upon the specific sins of others in that general area which they themselves have not committed. This is classic human psychology. Solomon is ever glorifying his father David, and he appears to not consider David and his own mother to have committed adultery. Yet he so openly justifies David, whilst condemning adultery in the strongest terms. It seems to me that he had found a way of whitewashing his parents' sin, as so many tend to do in various areas. Solomon simply fails to perceive that God's true people sin as do other sinners; it is faith in grace which makes the difference. But Solomon doesn't perceive this critical nuance. His father David had understanding, but committed adultery. So Solomon's simplistic worldview, whereby the world is divided between stellar examples of spirituality on one hand and vile criminal sinners on the other, is shown to be bankrupt and at best unrealistic.

Pro 6:33 He will get wounds and dishonour, his reproach will not be wiped away-
This is indeed what happened to Solomon's father David; but I have argued on :29-32 that Solomon doesn't consciously have David's experience in view. His Proverbs often subtly criticize his half brothers and all who had been problematic for David after his sin with Bathsheba. Solomon sees their behaviour as solely their fault and lack of wisdom. He doesn't accept any of that behaviour was in fact provoked by the sins of David his father.

Pro 6:34 For jealousy arouses the fury of the husband. He won't spare in the day of vengeance-
Solomon seems to be saying that such refusal by the husband to pity / spare in the day of judgment is the attitude he will uphold as the judge (see on :29). Solomon is out of step with his father David, who spared Saul and his family (s.w. 1 Sam. 23:21; 2 Sam. 21:7); and was condemned because he showed no pity / sparing to Uriah in taking his wife (s.w. 2 Sam. 12:4,6). Refusal to accept the reality of sin and God's consequent grace makes people harsh in their judgments.

Pro 6:35 He won't regard any ransom, neither will he rest content, though you give many gifts-
I suggested on :34 that Solomon is saying that the husband's insistence upon the death penalty rather than any "ransom" will be eagerly upheld by him in judgment (:29). David his father committed murder, for which no ransom was to be accepted (s.w. Num.

35:31). But God spared David by grace. And God does constantly ransom / redeem hopeless sinners from condemnation; this was what led Him to give His Son for the world's redemption. "Ransom" is a form of the Hebrew word for covering or atonement. But the very core of God's gracious operation with men was not appreciated by Solomon at all, and his technical wisdom only led him to deny this grace.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 7

Pro 7:1 My son, keep my words. Lay up my commandments within you-
Proverbs contains a number of Samson allusions (16:32; 25:28). But the most powerful are in 7:1,5,22,25-27, where the young Israelite is commended to God's word, because this will keep him from falling to the wiles of the Gentile woman, who throws down strong men into the way of miserable death. Solomon evidently writes with allusion to Samson; that here was the man who loved God's word, and yet went so astray with women. And tragically enough, Solomon himself did just the same! He realized and lamented the tragedy of Samson, as a lover of the word who fell for the Gentile woman; and then, with all his wisdom, he did the very same thing! Here, for all to see, is the crucial difference between knowledge and faith.

Solomon seems to allude to David hiding God's word in his heart (Ps. 119:11) by asking his son to hide *his* word in his heart (s.w. Prov. 2:1; 7:1). Again Solomon is putting his own words in the place of God's words. Whilst his wisdom was inspired by God, I detect something wrong here. He is effectively playing God, and not directing people to God's word but rather to his own words, true and inspired as they might be. This came to full term in Solomon's attitude that personal loyalty to himself was loyalty to God- even when Solomon was far from God in his ways. And the same trap is fallen into by those who hold parts of 'God's truth'; they can come to thereby play God and demand personal loyalty to themselves rather than to God.

Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Pro 7:2 Keep my commandments and live! Guard my teaching as the apple of your eye-
David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's

teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah*. This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

David had taught his children with the words: “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord” (Ps. 34:11- did David say this to his children every evening?). And Solomon uses just the same words, even whilst disobeying God’s law at the same time in his own life. He repeats these very words of David when teaching his own son: “My son, keep [retain] my words... keep my commandments and live” (Prov. 7:1,2). The idea of keeping commandments in order to live is a reference back to the many Deuteronomy passages where Moses pleads with Israel to keep *God’s* commands and live. But Solomon came to perceive his father David’s commands as those of God, and in his generation he watered this down in his own mind until he assumed that *his* commands to his children were to be treated by them as the law of God- no matter how far he had strayed himself from God’s law. It’s a gripping, frightening psychology.

Pro 7:3 Bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart-
Often in Proverbs Solomon uses the language of the blessings for keeping God’s law and turns them into the blessings for keeping *his* law; e.g. “My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart” (Prov. 7:1-3 AV). And we all do the same in essence, whenever we assume that our consciences are effectively the will of God; when we ‘play God’ by allowing our words and will to count as if they are *His* word.

The idea is that devotion to the covenant should be externally visible as well as in the heart. But the New Testament emphasizes that it is God who writes upon the table of the human heart by His Spirit (2 Cor. 3:3). Solomon assumes that by intellectual effort, man can do this to himself. There could be the implication that Solomon considered that his Proverbs had now replaced the tables of the covenant; the same word is used. See on Prov. 3:1,2.

Pro 7:4 Tell wisdom, You are my sister. Call understanding your relative-
"Relative" translates a Hebrew word which occurs only in Ruth 2:1 about a relative who has the power to redeem. Solomon misses the point that redemption is by grace through faith, as explained on Prov. 6:35. He thinks that the mere possession of intellectual truth, what he terms "wisdom", will be enough to redeem a person. This attitude to Divine truth led him to personal spiritual disaster, as it has so many.

Pro 7:5 that they may keep you from the strange woman, from the foreigner who flatters

with her words-
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" woman (Prov. 2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon.

Solomon here argues as if mere intellectual assent to the truths he was teaching would keep a man safe from sexual temptation. But Solomon himself possessed all this truth and failed miserably in this area (see on :21).

Pro 7:6 For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice-
Solomon here claims that he had come to his conclusions by his observations, although one wonders if he is speaking literal truth about the incident he claims to be reporting. It is perhaps significant that he doesn't claim this to be part of the package of Divine wisdom given to him; rather he says he worked this out from his own observations. He does the same in Prov. 24:30-32, where his conclusions [see notes there] were not correct. We may conclude that in this anthology he is mixing Divine wisdom with his own pet issues.

Solomon in Prov. 7:6 likens himself to a wise man looking out through his lattice window and noticing a man going astray with a woman. But the precise figure is used in Song 2:9 for how his illicit, paganic Gentile girlfriend found his doing this to be so attractive, if not somehow erotic. The connection shows how totally confused Solomon was in his personal spirituality.

Pro 7:7 I saw among the simple ones. I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding-
This singles out a particular "young man" [s.w. "child"] who was lacking in "heart", whose folly stood out from that of the other "simple ones". These may well refer to the 200

'simple ones' who went with Absalom in his rebellion against David (2 Sam. 15:11). One of them was particularly singled out here by Solomon as being foolish. And it's no accident that David calls Absalom "the young man [s.w. "child"] Absalom" (2 Sam. 14:21; 18:5,12,29,32). "Young man" was perhaps David's term of endearment for Absalom. The same "young man" [s.w. "child"] may be in view also in Prov. 22:15- see notes there.

Pro 7:8 passing through the street near her corner, he went the way to her house-
The idea is of furtive movement; and she herself lurked at the corners (:12). The impression is that he met her on the corner, and they arranged to meet later at her house that evening.

Pro 7:9 in the twilight, in the evening of the day, in the middle of the night and in the darkness-
Solomon is therefore claiming that he made these observations throughout a period of many hours, stretching from evening to midnight (:6).

Pro 7:10 Behold, there a woman met him with the attire of a prostitute, and with crafty intent-
AV "subtil of heart". This is a phrase used positively a heart which keeps to God's word (Ps. 119:69; Prov. 3:1; 4:23; 23:26 etc.). The idea is being developed that this sinful woman is a parody of the righteous woman called wisdom.

Pro 7:11 She is loud and defiant. Her feet don't stay in her house-
Just as the woman wisdom "loudly" proclaims her truths on the streets. This woman is a conscious parody of the righteous woman. We note that Solomon considered that the wise woman does stay in her house, whereas the sinful woman doesn't. This appears to be Solomon's chauvinism rather than true wisdom. For he then presents the woman wisdom as being publically on the streets pleading with men to turn in to her wisdom.

Pro 7:12 Now she is in the streets, now in the squares, and lurking at every corner-
See on :8,11. "Lie in wait" is the word for ambush. Solomon often uses the word, as if it is for him a major characteristic of sinners (Prov. 1:11,18; 7:12; 12:6; 23:28; 24:15). But it's a rather specific word to use so often. It's as if Solomon is consciously alluding to his father's experiences at the hands of the house of Saul (s.w. Ps. 10:9; 59:3), whom Solomon considered a threat to his own kingship. And so he seems to rather like using the term about sinners, as if using his wisdom to have a dig at his immediate opposition.

Pro 7:13 So she caught him, and kissed him. With an impudent face she said to him-
See on :27. She catches him in parody of how the good woman wisdom takes hold of righteous men (as in Phil. 3:12). Likewise "impudent" is the word for 'to strengthen', used in Ecc. 7:19 of how wisdom strengths the wise.

Pro 7:14 Sacrifices of peace offerings are with me. This day I have paid my vows-
Her references to her obedience to the Mosaic law are understandable once we perceive how she is a parody of the wise woman "wisdom" (see on :11,13,15-17,19,20; Prov. 9:17). Her attraction is because she claims to be obedient to the requirements of Israel's God. I will note throughout the Song of Solomon that Solomon likewise sees his idolatrous, Gentile girlfriend as righteous, presenting her in the terms of Israel; when her heart was far from it. And this was what finally led the young man Solomon to his destruction. Again and again, we see Solomon going the way of the foolish which he laments and points out at such length. He failed to personalize wisdom, to see the conditional nature of his standing before God, and his possession of theoretical truth led him to never examine himself.

Pro 7:15 Therefore I came out to meet you, to diligently seek your face, and I have found you-
This again parodies the way wisdom seeks and finds wise men (s.w. Prov. 8:17); or rather they seek and find her. But Solomon appears to draw a contrast between the whore seeking and finding the man, and the wise woman being sought and found by men. But Solomon fails to perceive that God by grace is in search of man, and indeed He had searched for and found Solomon's father David (Ps. 89:20). Solomon really understands nothing of the grace by which God works constantly in practice. See on :18.

Pro 7:16 I have spread my couch with carpets of tapestry, with striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt-
This woman Solomon warns of appears to want to serve Yahweh, and presents herself in the very language of the tabernacle (Prov. 7:14,16,17). And yet Solomon goes and falls for just such a woman. One can only conclude that the more true spiritual knowledge we have, the more prone we are to do the very opposite. Such is our nature.

Pro 7:17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon-
The Proverbs so frequently refer to the dangers of the house of the Gentile woman; yet the Song shows the Egyptian girl dearly wishing that Solomon would come with her into her house. And Solomon, just like the foolish young man he wrote about, went right ahead down the road to spiritual disaster he so often warned others about. He warns

the young man of the dangers of the Egyptian woman who perfumes her bed with myrrh (Prov. 7:16,17)- and then falls for just such a woman (Ps. 45:8).

Pro 7:18 Come, let's take our fill of loving until the morning. Let's solace ourselves with loving-
The whore offers her "love" to the man, whereas Solomon presents the wise woman wisdom as only loving those who first love her (Prov. 8:17; see on :15). Again, Solomon has it all wrong. It is not man's search for intellectual truth about God which is the initial spark in the Divine-human encounter. The opposite is the case. It is not that we loved God first, but rather that God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19).

Pro 7:19 For my husband isn't at home. He has gone on a long journey-
Verse 11 has described the woman as not staying at home. Solomon's idea is that the woman who has no husband at home will go out of her home to look for sex. This could reflect a rather crude chauvinism. Perhaps he ignored the Biblical warnings that women would turn away his heart from God because he considered that women had no real power. He built houses for his wives and made them stay at home. The man who goes away on a long journey is used by the Lord for the basis of His parables of the man who goes to a far country (Mt. 21:33; 25:14). This continues the theme developed in earlier verses, that this woman is a parody of true spirituality. But there is a twist; see on :20.

Pro 7:20 He has taken a bag of money with him; he will come home at the full moon-
I suggested on :19 that the Lord in His parables of the man taking a journey was as it were deconstructing the language here, to confirm that the woman is a fake believer. In His stories, the man doesn't take his money with him, but rather gives it to his servants to manage (Mt. 25:14). The woman gives the impression that her husband has taken money with him to enjoy himself, perhaps with other women, and again the Lord may have this in mind in the construction of the parable of the prodigal son who likewise leaves his home with money. The promise that he will return "at the full moon" suggests this family is observant of the Mosaic feasts. Again, the woman gives the impression of spirituality and devotion to the Mosaic law, externally. See on :14.

Pro 7:21 With persuasive words she led him astray-
"Persuasive words" is the word usually translated doctrine or teaching, always used about the teaching of wisdom (Prov. 1:5; 4:2; 9:9; 16:21 etc.). Again, the woman is presented as the antithesis of the wise woman wisdom. They both teach, but the whore's teaching leads astray. This contrast between such women is found in Revelation, where the whore is the antithesis of the bride of Christ. "Led him astray" is the very term used of how Solomon's wives turned his heart astray from God (1 Kings

11:4,9). The more Solomon knew Divine truth, the more he seems to have considered himself free to ignore it and in fact do the very opposite. He clearly thought that mere possession of that truth was the basis for his justification, and dismissed any idea of self examination or awareness that he might in fact personally fail in obedience.

With the flattering of her lips, she seduced him-
Solomon in :5 argues as if mere intellectual assent to the truths he was teaching would keep a man safe from sexual temptation and the flattery of bad women. But Solomon himself possessed all this truth and failed miserably in this area. The Hebrew literally refers to the smoothness of her lips; and Solomon admired the smoothness of the lips of his illicit Gentile girlfriend (s.w. Song 4:3,11; 7:9). Again we see Solomon doing the exact opposite of the wisdom and theoretical truth he was blessed with.

Pro 7:22 He followed her immediately, as an ox goes to the slaughter, as a fool stepping into a noose-
As explained on :21, this is exactly what happened to Solomon. AV "As a fool to the correction of the stocks". Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or instruction coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 7:23 Until an arrow strikes through his liver, as a bird hurries to the snare, and doesn't know that it will cost his life-
The language of snares alludes to Solomon's father David, asking to be saved from such snares (Ps. 141:9) and rejoicing that he and God's people had been (Ps. 124:7). The initial reference may have been to Saul laying snares for David through getting him to marry his daughters and thereby seeking to kill him; and in Ps. 119:110 David is proud he has not fallen into those snares. Solomon likewise is hinting that the family of Saul, who were still his political opponents, were not better than gentile whores, and he didn't

want his own family to intermarry with them. But Psalm 119 finishes with David saying bluntly that he has "gone astray" (Ps. 119:176), as if to say that earlier he had far overrated his own obedience to God's law.

In Proverbs, Solomon is continually alluding positively to his father's words. But in Ecc. 9:12 he alludes to those words cynically. Solomon seems to be cynically commenting that all men are finally snared in death. Earlier Solomon had warned about avoiding spiritual snares (Prov. 7:23; 22:5), but finally in Ecc. 9:12 he concludes that death is the unavoidable snare; and therefore all attempts to avoid being morally snared into sin are ultimately vain. He came to this perspective because he failed to fully grasp the hope of the resurrection of the body at the last day. He thought he would have the Kingdom now, and this led to his rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom and its moral implications.

In Ecc. 9:12 he says that he suffered the fate of all men in that soon he would die, he would suddenly be caught like a bird in a snare, although he knew not his time. These are the very ideas of Prov. 7:23 AV concerning the snaring of the simple young man by the Gentile woman: "As a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life". But here he presents the Gentile woman is a snare leading to death. But Ecc. 9:12 shows Solomon claiming that death is a snare brought about by time and chance; he thereby minimalized the sin of marriage out of the faith.

Pro 7:24 Now therefore, sons, listen to me. Pay attention to the words of my mouth-
If we "attend" to God's word (Prov. 2:2; 4:1; 7:24), then He will "attend" to our word, of prayer (Ps. 55:2 and often in the Psalms). There is thereby a mutuality between God and man. Our attitude to His word becomes reflected in His attitude to our words in prayer; for God and man are in dialogue.

He spoke of *his* law as giving life and blessing, appropriating the very terms of Deuteronomy about the blessings of obedience to *God's* law. Wisdom said: “Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me: for blessed are they that keep my ways” (Prov. 8:32 RV). Yet these are the very words Solomon uses when talking to his kids: “Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me” (Prov. 5:7; 7:24). Conclusion? Solomon sees the woman “Wisdom” as a personification of himself. It was really Solomon's self-justification. *He personally* was wisdom, so he thought. This is how self-exalted his possession of true wisdom made him. And of course, his kids *didn't* listen to wisdom's way. In passing, I have noted that those raised ‘in the truth’ often find it very hard to take criticism in later life. They find tolerance of others’ views hard; they perceive themselves to be right to an intolerant extent. Is this not a little bit of the Solomon syndrome?

Pro 7:25 Don't let your heart turn to her ways. Don't go astray in her paths-
The young man's heart was made to go astray because of her, and her house led him to

death (Prov. 7:27). Miss Egypt caused Solomon's heart to go astray (1 Kings 11:1-4), he built her a house, and her house became an idol temple which destroyed Solomon's faith. Yet Solomon warned the young men of Israel all about this in Prov. 7; and he even pointed out that such a woman would have all the outward trappings of Yahweh worship; she would claim an enthusiasm for keeping peace offerings and vows (Prov. 7:14). Solomon was the young man whose picture he was painting.

Pro 7:26 for she has thrown down many wounded. Yes, all her slain are a mighty army- Solomon had seen many good men destroyed by bad women, a whole army of them. And yet he went that same way. Knowledge of theoretical truth, observation of the sad path of others... is all not enough. There must be a humble personalization of wisdom, which only comes from throwing ourselves upon God's grace, experiencing that grace, and wanting to respond to it in a life and thought pattern in conformity to His will and way. But Solomon hadn't known any of that.

Pro 7:27 Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the rooms of death- Solomon's wisdom was given to him as a young man, and the book of Proverbs appears to be collections of the various statements of that wisdom. But about the same time, he also got involved with multiple Gentile women who led him astray from God and to idolatry. The very warnings he gives against the adulteress and Gentile woman were ignored by him; he became the young man who went wrong with women. His girlfriend speaks in the very language of the Gentile woman of Proverbs: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house... into her chamber" (Song 3:4). Compare this with "She caught him... come not near the door of her house... her house... the chambers of death" (Prov. 7:13,27; 5:8). We see here the warning for all time; that we can know God's ways in theory, whilst disobeying them in practice, absolutely to the letter. Indeed it may be so that the more we know them, the more strongly we are tempted by our nature to break them.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 8

Pro 8:1 Doesn't wisdom cry out? Doesn't understanding raise her voice?-
These are the very words used of how man is to cry out and raise his voice for wisdom and understanding (Prov. 2:3). The idea is that God's wisdom and understanding is crying out to those who are crying out for it. There is thus a mutuality between God and man. And the old Yiddish proverb comes true: "And going out to find Him / I met Him coming towards me". God is in search of man, and true man is in search for God. And when they meet, there is that electric spark, parties in Heaven celebrating the reconnection.

Pro 8:2 On the top of high places by the way, where the paths meet, she stands-
The crying out of wisdom in Proverbs is alluded to by the Lord as the pattern for our appealing to men and women. A feast is prepared by wisdom, and she sends out people to invite others to come in to it (Prov. 9:1-3)- clearly the basis for the Lord's parable about the King's feast. Those who reject these invitations sin against their own souls (Prov. 8:36)- just as those who reject our witness reject the appeal of God against themselves (Lk. 7:30). Wisdom appeals to people "where the paths meet" (Prov. 8:2 RV), just as the Lord taught that our witness to people places them at a 'crossroad', whereby they have to decide for or against their God. In this context my point is that the appeal of "wisdom" in Proverbs is in a spirit of urgency- an urgency inspired by the ultimate seriousness of the message, and the fact that there are only two paths in Proverbs which men can chose. It's either eternal life or eternal death, the way of wisdom or folly, obedience to the call of the woman wisdom or to the call of the harlot. There's no third way- and this should be the spirit of our witness. Insofar as we appreciate the ultimate eternity of the issues we're preaching about, so we will find a power of urgency that somehow appeals to people and compels them.

Pro 8:3 Beside the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entry doors, she cries aloud-
The wise woman wisdom is presented here as the antithesis of the whore described in Prov. 7, who is also seen outside, crying aloud to men. They both teach, but the whore's teaching leads astray. This contrast between such women is found in Revelation, where the whore is the antithesis of the bride of Christ.

Pro 8:4 To you people I call! I send my voice to the sons of mankind-
The call or cry of wisdom is presented as in response to the cry of the believer for wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:3; 7:4). There is a mutuality between God and man. We search for God, yet God is in search of man. And when we meet, there is that electric spark spoken of in the parables of Luke 15, whereby Heaven and earth are united together in an electric spark of joy at finding each other. Solomon parallels "the sons of mankind",

people generally, with simple fools (:5). Whilst there is an element of truth in this from a spiritual angle, we also get the impression that Solomon despises people generally, leading him to abuse his own people at the end of his reign, whipping them into submission, as they were to complain of at his death.

Pro 8:5 You simple, understand prudence. You fools, be of an understanding heart-
See on :4. David likens himself to the simple who was made wise by God's word (Ps. 19:7; 119:130), and was therefore preserved (Ps. 116:6). To be taught by God's word we have to become "simple", unlearning and placing to one side all our perceived knowledge and understandings. Solomon repeats David's theme by saying that wisdom makes wise the simple (Prov. 1:4; 8:5; 9:4). But he is equating "wisdom" with the words of God, although for Solomon, "wisdom" seems to be what he is saying and teaching. Solomon doesn't direct his listeners back to God's word, as David did, but rather towards loyalty to his teaching. Inspired as it was, his lack of extended reference to God's law places his own teaching of "wisdom" above that law. This is in sharp contrast to David's attitude in Ps. 119.

Pro 8:6 Hear, for I will speak excellent things. The opening of my lips is for right things-
The woman wisdom's lips and words are contrasted with those of the whore in Prov. 7:21. See on :3. "Excellent" translates a Hebrew term usually referring to a ruler or prince, the very term used of Solomon as king (1 Kings 1:35; Prov. 28:16). Again, we see Solomon assuming that the words of wisdom are the words of himself as king. He failed to appreciate the degree to which he was merely a channel for God's truth, and came to assume that his words and positions were on the same level as God's. He therefore ended up playing God, assuming that submission to himself was submission to Divine wisdom. And this is an abiding temptation for all who are used as channels for God's truth. Solomon liked to imagine that he was perfectly obedient to his mother's command to open his lips in right judgment (s.w. Prov. 31:9). But he went further, to assume that whatever he spoke in whatever context was right and true (see on Prov. 8:6-8).

Pro 8:7 For my mouth speaks truth. Wickedness is an abomination to my lips-
As noted on :6, Solomon's personification of wisdom ends up with him effectively considering that it is his own mouth which speaks truth, and his lips simply cannot utter wickedness. And so he went wrong; he assumed that because he did speak Divine truths, therefore all his words and positions were those of wisdom. He thereby lost any sense of personal self examination, or awareness of his own possibility of personal failure. And again we see this repeated in the lives of others who know and teach God's truth.

Pro 8:8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness. There is nothing crooked or perverse in them-
As noted on :6,7, Solomon takes this personification of wisdom too far- in that he ends up thinking all the words of his mouth must be right just because he was chosen as the channel for God's words. The "crooked and perverse" are those David his father saw as being condemned (s.w. Ps. 18:26), in contrast to "the pure". Solomon wrongly assumed that his knowledge of Divine truth made him "pure" of itself.

Pro 8:9 They are all plain to him who understands, right to those who find knowledge-
The implication is that anyone who disagreed with or misunderstood what Solomon said was not really seeking knowledge. And yet there is, as always, a general truth here; that God's words are "plain" and clear to those who love Him. Those who wish to do God's will can easily discern doctrine / teaching (Jn. 7:17). Much [although not all] 'misunderstanding' or complaint that the Bible is hard to understand is rooted in a refusal to do God's will. People often do not understand because they don't want to. All is plain and clear to those of a humble heart.

Pro 8:10 Receive my instruction rather than silver; knowledge rather than choice gold-
Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies. All the things that may be desired can't be compared to it-
The words of Job 28:18 are repeatedly quoted in Proverbs (Prov. 3:15; 8:11; 20:15).

"Wisdom" in Proverbs refers not so much to nuggets of truth, but to a way of life in relationship with God; for that is the context in the source passage in Job 28:18 cp. 28.

Pro 8:12 I, wisdom, have made prudence my dwelling. Find out knowledge and discretion-
The emphasis of Solomon is always upon needing to "find out knowledge" through accepting the wisdom he taught. This is no bad exhortation of itself. But it is not the accent given by an understanding of God's grace. Through intellectual searching, we will not find out God, i.e. build relationship with Him- as Job concluded. The Bible is not a riddle to be solved, with relationship with God waiting there as a reward for getting things right. Bible study alone doesn't lead a man to God; or else this would be reason for boasting in intellectual prowess. The Divine-human encounter and relationship is instead predicated upon His prevenient grace, His initiative in seeking us. And so it is not so much a question of us knowing God, but of His knowing us (Gal. 4:9). We love because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19).

Pro 8:13 The fear of Yahweh is to hate evil. I hate pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse mouth-
Solomon, as often, repeats his father's phrases. Here he has in mind Ps. 97:10 "You that love Yahweh, hate evil". But Solomon replaces *loving* Yahweh with *fearing* Yahweh. and he gives far stronger accent to the aspect of 'hating' evil and evil people. This is not merely Solomon wishing to put everything in black and white terms; but through that, he is seeking to use God's truth as a vehicle through which to express hatred against others, rather than love. And this is related to why he thinks in terms of *fearing* God rather than *loving Him*.

Pro 8:14 Counsel and sound knowledge are mine. I have understanding and power-
The word translated "power" is frequently used of the power of a king, which is the context of the following verses. Solomon is justifying himself, arguing that he has power to act as he likes because he has wisdom. And the same abuse of possession of Divine truth has so often been seen. By contrast, David often uses this word for "power" about God's power, and the way He uses it to save people, by grace (Ps. 106:8 etc.). But Solomon speaks of such "power" as being possessed by kings [he has himself in view], predicated upon the possession of wisdom.

Pro 8:15 By me kings reign, and princes decree justice-
Solomon is again justifying himself. He had been given wisdom in order to reign over Israel on God's behalf, but from that good basis he had slipped into considering himself as therefore automatically just and right in whatever abuse of power he chose to

exercise (see on :14). And he ends his reign abusing and whipping his people. He maintained his intellectual grasp of wisdom to the end (Ecc. 2:9), but he didn't reign nor live by it. He is proof enough that mere intellectual assent to God's truth is not going to save anyone.

Pro 8:16 By me princes rule; nobles, and all the righteous rulers of the earth-
By "the earth", Solomon has in view the *eretz* promised to Abraham. The local rulers he had established were to teach his wisdom and judge and rule according to it. But again, Solomon's personification of wisdom gets confused with himself personally. For it was he who had appointed the various rulers, princes and nobles of Israel, as the historical records record. But he says here that wisdom had done that.

Pro 8:17 I love those who love me. Those who seek me diligently will find me-
The Lord Jesus taught that we should love our enemies, and not fall into the trap of only loving those who love us (Mt. 5:44-46). He seems to be alluding here to Solomon's claim that wisdom says: "I love them that love me" (Prov. 8:17). It seems likely that He was consciously showing that God's grace is in fact the very opposite of what Solomon thought. God loves His enemies, and doesn't only love those who love Him; and this is to be our credo likewise.

The woman wisdom is the opposite of the whore in Prov. 7, who likewise says she seeks and finds men (Prov. 7:15). But Solomon appears to draw a contrast between the whore seeking and finding the man, and the wise woman being sought and found by men. But Solomon fails to perceive that God by grace is in search of man, and indeed He had searched for and found Solomon's father David (Ps. 89:20). Solomon really understands nothing of the grace by which God works constantly in practice.

Pro 8:18 With me are riches, honour, enduring wealth, and prosperity-
This, again, is true, but not quite so simply as Solomon likes to present it. It is true that he chose wisdom rather than wealth, and was rewarded for that with great and enduring wealth. But many of God's wise people have been poor, or lost their wealth and honour; His Son being the parade example (2 Cor. 8:9). Yet Solomon failed to realize that his wealth was given to him by grace, and not because he was wise. And so he makes the false step further, to say that if we have wisdom, we will then have wealth. And logically, any who are poor are so because they have refused wisdom. And that is simply a wrong conclusion. The Gospel has ever been "good news for the poor", rather than a rebuke of them for their poverty.

Pro 8:19 My fruit is better than gold, yes, than fine gold; my yield than choice silver-

This as it were seeks to qualify the simplistic conclusion offered in :18, that wisdom leads to wealth. Solomon has indeed just said that, but now he says that the fruit of wisdom is even more valuable than the material wealth which he thinks wisdom will give to the wise. Solomon's father David concluded that the law of God was better than gold and solver (s.w. Ps. 119:72). But as so often in the book of Proverbs, Solomon speaks of the wisdom he was teaching in the same terms as the Bible elsewhere speaks of God's entire revelation. And he saw fit to flout God's law. It was as if his obsession with the wisdom material he was teaching had led him to effectively replace God's laws with his own. He saw the particular Divine truths he had been given as eclipsing the rest of God's revelation; a mistake we see commonly made.

Pro 8:20 I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice-
Again it seems that Solomon's personification of wisdom leads him to come out with things which he clearly enough saw as descriptions of himself. He saw himself as wisdom personified, walking always in the right way, and always judging justly. And the one who walked in "the way of righteousness" would never die (Prov. 12:28 s.w.). Solomon saw his possession of Divine truths as the guarantee of itself that he was the eternal Messianic king. He had been warned that he must walk in the way of God if he was to have long life (s.w. 1 Kings 3:14); but he assumed that the mere possession of Divine wisdom meant he was in that "way". As he got older and was reminded of his own mortality, he would have realized that he had to recalculate his position; and he ended up with the cynicism about his own wisdom seen in Ecclesiastes. And yet his injustice to his own people was evidence enough that he didn't do this in reality, but only in his own mind (1 Kings 12:11).

Pro 8:21 that I may give wealth to those who love me. I fill their treasuries-
I discussed on :18 how this is not totally true. Often Solomon's Proverbs bring out the tension between wealth and wisdom, and the need to choose wisdom (Prov. 8:11; 16:16). But whilst he was inspired to write this, and true as it all was, it is inevitable that Solomon said all this with his mind on the way that he had rejected wealth for wisdom when asked by God for his wish. He thought that his right choice in early life [cp. Christian baptism] justified him in later loving wealth rather than wisdom. He taught that wisdom filled the treasuries of the wise (Prov. 8:21 RV)- just as his treasuries were filled with wealth.

Pro 8:22 Yahweh possessed me in the beginning of His work, before His deeds of old-
LXX has "created" for "possessed". Wisdom was "set up" (:23), "brought forth" (:24,25). Wisdom is presented as having been 'created' by God, right at the beginning, before the present world was made. Any attempt to use this passage to prove the eternal

preexistence of the Lord Jesus is doomed to failure, therefore. It is true that the passage in Jn. 1:1-3 about the *logos* or "word" existing in the beginning, on account of whom all was made, may be alluding here. But clearly enough in this passage, "wisdom" is personified, just as the "word" is in Jn. 1:1-3. The Lord Jesus didn't physically, personally exist before His conception. The word, or wisdom / *logos*, became flesh in Him (Jn. 1:14). And indeed He thereby became the living embodiment of the word / wisdom, and can therefore truly be called "Christ... the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24,30). But this is not to say that He personally existed in Solomon's time. To insist on reading the text like this is to miss the point that the language of personification and preexistence "with God" is common in Jewish and indeed all Semitic writings. See on :23.

Pro 8:23 I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth existed-
This kind of language is common in the literature of the time; see on :22. But it is primitive to suggest that there was a literal personal being called wisdom who existed at the beginning, just as it is to suggest this person was the Lord Jesus. The records of His birth leave out any possibility for His personal preexistence. Thus chapter 42 of the Book of Enoch likewise speaks of the personality and preexistence of Wisdom: "Wisdom found no place where she could dwell; therefore was her dwelling in heaven. Wisdom came forth in order to dwell among the sons of men, and found no habitation; then she returned to her place, and took her seat among the angels". Likewise Wisdom 8:3: "In that she dwelleth with God, she magnifieth her nobility". This is the language of personification; in no way is a literal being in view.

Pro 8:24 When there were no depths, I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water-
The specific references to the waters are because the Genesis creation is spoken of as happening after a point at which the earth was covered with deep waters (Gen. 1:2). But before that point, wisdom was there, God's plan, His ways. LXX "Before the springs of the waters came forward" would be a reference to the opening up of the fountains at the flood (Gen. 7:11).

Pro 8:25 Before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was brought forth-
The language of Ps. 90:2 about God Himself, who existed before the mountains were settled. But again we note that "wisdom" was brought forth; it had a beginning. Whereas God has no beginning. We cannot simply equate wisdom with God. There is a marked difference between them. Any attempt to prove "Jesus = God" because He is called the wisdom of God is therefore simplistic and lacking in attention to what the text is saying.

Pro 8:26 while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields-

The distinction is between the areas used by man and those not. LXX "The Lord made countries and uninhabited places".

Nor the beginning of the dust of the world-
This could be an oblique reference to the seed of Abraham, who were to multiply as the dust- if they followed the way of wisdom. Or "The highest part of the dust of the world" could refer to the creation of man from the dust, the *rosh* or head of all creation (Gen. 3:19; Ecc. 3:20).

Pro 8:27 When He established the skies, I was there; when He set a circle on the surface of the deep-
Here as in Job 22:14, the reference is to the idea that there was a dome like vault called "heaven", imagined as resting on an ocean which surrounds the earth. As with the language of demons in the New Testament, wrong ideas aren't necessarily corrected in the Biblical record. People had these ideas, but believed that God was behind them. And the overall form [belief, faith in God as creator] was more significant to God than the exact content. Human attempts at religion have emphasized the opposite.

Pro 8:28 when He established the clouds above, when the springs of the deep became strong-
This may be a reference to the events of the flood, when the springs of the deep were unleashed (Gen. 7:11). The flood, therefore, was an outcome of "wisdom", it was according to God's plan and in line with His principles, and not some senseless pouring out of Divine anger. LXX "When he made secure the fountains of the earth beneath the heaven" would continue the allusions to current conceptions of creation and cosmology, however incorrect (see on :27).

Pro 8:29 when He gave to the sea its boundary, that the waters should not violate His commandment, when He marked out the foundations of the earth-
The reference may be to the earth / land promised to Abraham. The sea of Gentile nations were given a boundary beyond which they could not pass in their aggression toward Israel (Jer. 5:22). This was all by the Divine grace which is such an integral part of His "wisdom", His purpose, His word from the beginning.

Pro 8:30 then I was the craftsman by His side. I was a delight day by day, always rejoicing before Him-
This again is the language of personification and not to be taken literally. And such language is found in contemporary writings, with no hint that a literal person is to be imagined. Thus in Wisdom 7:22, Wisdom is called "the worker of all things... from the

beginning". And indeed the whole of creation was according to God's wisdom (Prov. 3:19); God spoke, and the creation came about. Creation is presented in Genesis as by the spoken word of God, but that "word" reflected His wisdom, the *logos* which was from the beginning.

Pro 8:31 rejoicing in His whole world. My delight was with the sons of men-
The joy of God and the Angels in creation is elsewhere mentioned (Job 38:7; Ps. 104:31). In this sense, "wisdom" rejoiced. God's special joy was in the creation and salvation of men- according to the principles of His wisdom.

Pro 8:32 Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, for blessed are those who keep my ways-
Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to *his* wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to *God's* ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

He spoke of *his* law as giving life and blessing, appropriating the very terms of Deuteronomy about the blessings of obedience to *God's* law. Wisdom said: “Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me: for blessed are they that keep my ways” (Prov. 8:32 RV). Yet these are the very words Solomon uses when talking to his kids: “Now therefore my sons, hearken unto me” (Prov. 5:7; 7:24). Conclusion? Solomon sees the woman “Wisdom” as a personification of himself. It was really Solomon's self-justification. *He personally* was wisdom, so he thought. This is how self-exalted his possession of true wisdom made him. And of course, his kids *didn't* listen to wisdom’s way. In passing, I have noted that those raised ‘in the truth’ often find it very hard to take criticism in later life. They find tolerance of others’ views hard; they perceive themselves to be right to an intolerant extent. Is this not a little bit of the Solomon syndrome?

Pro 8:33 Hear instruction, and be wise. Don't refuse it-
The same power of wisdom in the natural creation just described can be articulated to men who accept wisdom, thereby forming a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Pro 8:34 Blessed is the man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my door posts-
This may be an intentional contrast with the bad woman if Prov. 7, who tempts men to furtively enter the doors and gates of her house. And Solomon failed in this; for the Song of Solomon speaks of the "gates" of his illicit Gentile girlfriend (Song 7:13), outside which Solomon waited secretly at night (Song 5:2,4). The language of doors, posts and gates recurs in the descriptions of Solomon's temple. The subtext could be that Solomon considered that building to be the repository of wisdom, in that from there he taught wisdom; whereas the true abode of wisdom is in human hearts.

Pro 8:35 For whoever finds me finds life, and will obtain favour from Yahweh-
True as this is, as noted on :12, through intellectual searching, we will not find out God, i.e. build relationship with Him- as Job concluded. The Bible is not a riddle to be solved, with relationship with God waiting there as a reward for getting things right and our intellectual search ending in 'finding'. Bible study alone doesn't lead a man to God; or else this would be reason for boasting in intellectual prowess. The Divine-human encounter and relationship is instead predicated upon His prevenient grace, His initiative in seeking us. And so it is not so much a question of us knowing God, but of His knowing us (Gal. 4:9). We love because He first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19.

God's "favour" isn't predicated upon our intellectual prowess in mastering "wisdom" (Prov. 8:35) nor upon our good works (Prov. 12:2). Academic truth and / or good living isn't as it were the key which opens up access to God's grace. For otherwise Divine "favour" would be a reward, and grace would no longer be grace. See on :36.

Pro 8:36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul. All those who hate me love death-
"Sins" is the word for 'missing', and is the antithesis of 'finding' wisdom in :35. But whilst this may be true in a sense, Solomon has the idea that those who seek wisdom but miss finding her will be punished for it. The truth is that God is in search of man, and finally all we have to do is say "yes" to His approach. Intellectual failure will not of itself mean that we have 'missed' God; for He is right on course for us. The Divine-human encounter I discussed on :12 will surely happen; for God is coming out to meet us, and is focused upon us. The sin, the failure, is to refuse His approach. But Solomon, like many fundamentalists, puts the failure on missing wisdom, not finding truth, for whatever reason.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 9

Pro 9:1 Wisdom has built her house, she has carved out her seven pillars-
See on Prov. 8:2. Solomon's great obsession had been the building of the temple, replete with pillars. I have noted on Prov. 8 that his personification of "wisdom" is to the point that he speaks of himself as "wisdom" personified. So here, his picture of wisdom building her grand and glorious house is in fact referring to his building of grandiose houses, both for God and for himself and his wives.

Pro 9:2 she has prepared her bread, she has mixed her wine. She has also set her table-
A table with bread and wine on it is the language of the altar, the table of Yahweh. As noted on :1, Solomon presents the house wisdom built as the temple which *he* had built.

Pro 9:3 she has sent out her maidens, she cries from the highest places of the city-
The call or cry of wisdom is presented as in response to the cry of the believer for wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:3; 7:4). There is a mutuality between God and man. We search for God, yet God is in search of man. And when we meet, there is that electric spark spoken of in the parables of Luke 15, whereby Heaven and earth are united together in an electric spark of joy at finding each other.

Pro 9:4 Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! As for him who is void of understanding, she says to him-
David likens himself to the simple who was made wise by God's word (Ps. 19:7; 119:130), and was therefore preserved (Ps. 116:6). To be taught by God's word we have to become "simple", unlearning and placing to one side all our perceived knowledge and understandings. Solomon repeats David's theme by saying that wisdom makes wise the simple (Prov. 1:4; 8:5; 9:4). But he is equating "wisdom" with the words of God, although for Solomon, "wisdom" seems to be what he is saying and teaching. Solomon doesn't direct his listeners back to God's word, as David did, but rather towards loyalty to his teaching. Inspired as it was, his lack of extended reference to God's law places his own teaching of "wisdom" above that law. This is in sharp contrast to David's attitude in Ps. 119.

Pro 9:5 Come, eat some of my bread, drink some of the wine which I have mixed!-
The contrast is with the invitation of wicked men to eat their bread and drink their wine of wickedness and violence (Prov. 4:17). Solomon again presents life as being of diametrical opposites, with people within Israel divided between the desperately, criminally wicked- and the spotlessly wise and righteous. But this is simply not true to reality. Human thought and behaviour within the people of God is more mixed than that. Bread and wine even in Old Testament times were of sacramental significance. The wicked are presented as not offering true sacrifice, but a fake appearance of it, to the praise and glory of wickedness and violence. Whereas the wise offer perfectly acceptable sacrifice.

Pro 9:6 Leave your simple ways, and live. Walk in the way of understanding-
These are the words used by David in Ps. 119:37: "Revive me in Your ways". This idea of living in God's ways was a promised blessing for remaining in the covenant (Dt. 5:33; 30:16). Solomon here uses the phrase for living in the way of

understanding, but the difference with his father David was that David asks to be "revived" or made to live in those ways; whereas Solomon exhorts people to attempt to do this in their own strength and steel willpower. And this ultimately fails, as it did with Solomon.

Pro 9:7 He who corrects a mocker invites insult; he who reproves a wicked man invites abuse-
What is said in :7-9 is true enough, but it presupposes that we judge who is a mocker or scoffer (:8) before sharing with them the reproof and hope of true wisdom. This is out of step with God's universal appeal to "all men" as sinners to repent and accept His grace; wise and unwise, mockers and spiritual enthusiasts alike, are all sinners and in that sense unwise. And the records of the "insults" and "abuse" suffered by the Lord Jesus and His apostles are evidence enough that they did not seek to avoid these things by only selectively witnessing to only some men- those they judged wise.

Pro 9:8 Don't reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you-
As noted on :7, this may be true, but it is not an approach of love. Job's friends were scoffers (s.w. Job 16:20), but still they were reproved by him and God. Our appeal to others should not be made selectively, based upon the likely response we think they will make. Thus it is quite wrong to reason that a person should not be baptized because they may fall away, or it may divide the church. We think of how John the Baptist rebuked Herod, and was hated for it by Herodias.

Reprove a wise man, and he will love you-
Solomon may be justifying his father David's response to Nathan the prophet.

Pro 9:9 instruct a wise man, and he will be still wiser. Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning-
This is true, but as noted on :7,8, it rather presupposes that we can somehow judge the spiritual nature of our audience before we begin sharing instruction / wisdom with them. It is indeed so that there is an upward spiral in spiritual life, whereby the wise become wiser. But our motive for wanting to share wisdom ought to be to make the foolish wise, rather than confirm the wise in their wisdom.

Pro 9:10 The fear of Yahweh is the beginning of wisdom, the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding-
Solomon repeats his father David's conclusion that wisdom begins with the fear of Yahweh (Ps. 111:10 = Prov. 1:7; 9:10). This statement is in sharp contrast with the accepted view of the times, that wisdom was held by the sages, and was accessible only by sitting at their feet. But this idea (and it is common enough today too) is subverted by this idea that wisdom begins in each individual heart being in fear of Yahweh- so that wisdom from Him can be personally experienced, taught directly through relationship with Him rather than sitting at the feet of a human sage. "Wisdom" is parallel with getting "a good understanding" by 'doing His work' or obeying His commandments (Ps. 111:10b). The work we are to do for God in obeying His ways is not simply a test of our obedience; it is designed to give us wisdom. Wisdom therefore comes from experience of obedience and relationship with God, rather than from picking up nuggets of 'truth' from human sages. The fear of God is therefore not so much referring to a fear of the consequence of our sins; but the fear or reverence expressed through keeping His commandments (see on Ps. 112:1).

"Holy One" can as well be translated "the assembly", the 'holy ones', as if Solomon saw wisdom as held by a group of holy people.

Pro 9:11 For by me your days will be multiplied. The years of your life will be increased-
Solomon claims that the righteous / wise live long lives, and therefore the unwise have shorter lives. This was the promise for obedience to the old covenant (s.w. Dt. 11:21). But it is not always the case, as Job learned (s.w. Job 29:18). And it was so with the Lord Jesus. And faithful men often lament that the wicked seem to get long life, whilst the righteous don't. The answer to that conundrum is that final blessing of long life is at the resurrection, at the last day; and not in this life. But Solomon didn't see that; he thought that long life now was the only reward. He failed to perceive the real meaning of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Pro 9:12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself. If you mock, you alone will bear it-
Solomon presents wisdom as of great personal benefit, indeed it is "for yourself"; and folly likewise is to your loss. But this presents a somewhat selfish view of wisdom. Solomon had been granted wisdom not for himself, but because he wanted to know how best to rule God's great people (1 Kings 3:9). But once he has the wisdom, he becomes exalted by it, and concludes that wisdom is essentially for the personal benefit of those who have it, "you are wise for yourself" (Prov. 9:12). Whatever truths are revealed to us are so that we might use them to the glory of God with others, and not to merely keep them for our own personal benefit.

Pro 9:13 The foolish woman is loud, undisciplined, and knows nothing-
Just as the woman wisdom "loudly" proclaims her truths on the streets. This woman is a conscious parody of the righteous woman of Prov. 8. This contrast between such women is found in Revelation, where the whore is the antithesis of the bride of Christ.

Pro 9:14 She sits at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city-
We note that Solomon considered that the wise woman does stay in her house, whereas the sinful woman doesn't. This appears to be Solomon's chauvinism rather than true wisdom. For he then presents the woman wisdom as being publically on the streets pleading with men to turn in to her wisdom.

The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. The wicked Gentile woman is associated with a large house in a high place, in the temple area. But this is exactly where Solomon built his Egyptian wife a house!

Pro 9:15 to call to those who pass by, who go straight on their ways-
Solomon thinks of the righteous as walking unflinchingly forward in wisdom, never turning to the right or left, refusing to be distracted by any wicked person who suggests walking another way (Prov. 9:15 "to call travellers who go directly on their way"). This approach fails to take account of the simple fact that righteous people sin and stray from the direct path every day, and are saved finally into God's Kingdom by grace alone. That is all something Solomon failed to have any grasp of, whereas David his father did. Prov. 11:5 makes the somewhat tautological statement that "the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way", s.w. Prov. 4:25 "fix your gaze

directly before you". This contrasts with how David uses the word in Ps. 5:8: "Lead me, O Yahweh... make Your way straight [s.w. direct] before my face". The same statement of God directing in the straight way is found in Is. 45:13; Jer. 18:4 s.w. Solomon didn't see this need for the Spirit of God to direct his path because he assumed that mere possession of Divine truth would itself keep him in the way; hence he teaches that "understanding" makes a man walk "directly" (Prov. 15:21). And he failed miserably because of that arrogant position.

Pro 9:16 Whoever is simple, let him turn in here. As for him who is void of understanding, she says to him-
Again, this is a parody of the woman wisdom, who likewise gives teaching to "the simple". The person without / lacking or void of understanding is typically the adulterer or sexual sinner (s.w. Prov. 6:32; 7:7; 9:4,16). But Solomon failed with women, despite priding himself on his wisdom. So by 'having understanding' he seems to refer to the mere intellectual possession of it. He thought this would alone preserve men from temptation and sin; but he utterly failed to personalize wisdom. Possession of Divine truth does not of itself preserve from sin; and Solomon is the parade example of this.

Pro 9:17 Stolen water is sweet. Food eaten in secret is pleasant-
"Water" is euphemism for semen, confirming that illicit sexual behaviour is in view, which agrees with the context. The idea of secret bread may allude to the shewbread, and I suggested on Prov. 7:14 that this bad woman portrays herself in the language of the Mosaic law. This was the basis of her attraction to a young Israelite man.

Pro 9:18 But he doesn't know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol-
The idea is that they are in a living death; her house is the house of the grave. "Guests" is literally "called / invited ones". They responded to her call, which is a parody and antithesis of the call of wisdom. And indeed there are only two ways before us in life, the call of the word of God and that of the flesh, personified here as a whore.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 10

Pro 10:1 The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son makes a glad father; but a foolish son brings grief to his mother-
Although this is all inspired wisdom, Solomon does seem to have his mind on his own self-justification in the way he expresses it. All his many references to "David my father" suggest his spirituality was a living out of parental expectation. He had been called the "wise son" of David (1 Kings 5:7; 2 Chron. 2:12) even before David died, and he clearly wanted to live out that expectation by asking for wisdom and implying his father would've been so happy with him. Yet his heart was far from personal wisdom, as he later admits in Ecclesiastes.

He says that a wise son makes a glad father, so intent was he on living out his father's expectations even after David's death. Because of this he teaches that the King must

always be right and be respected, whatever happens (Prov. 16:10-15). He saw himself as the Messianic King and therefore infallible. He again and again failed to realize the conditionality of all God has promised.

Pro 10:2 Treasures of wickedness profit nothing, but righteousness delivers from death- "Treasures" is Heb. storehouses. Solomon built these for his horses and his wealth. We have a tendency to do the very thing we know is wrong, just as Solomon married Gentile women despite all his warnings against doing so. This is one window on the ability of religious people to be the worse hypocrites.

David appealed to *God's* righteousness for deliverance from the consequence of his sins (Ps. 71:2). This was appropriate, seeing that David had been saved from death by God's imputation of His righteousness to David (Ps. 32:1-4), by grace through faith; seeing David's sins left him with no righteousness of his own. And it was on this basis that David believed he would continue to be saved / delivered / rescued (s.w. Ps. 51:14 in the Bathsheba context). But Solomon failed to learn from his mother and father's experience of grace, teaching instead that personal righteousness is what saves (Prov. 10:2; 11:4,6).

Pro 10:3 Yahweh will not allow the soul of the righteous to go hungry, but He thrusts away the desire of the wicked-
In the court of Heaven, God “thrusteth away the desire of the wicked” (Prov. 10:3 RV)- as if their prayers are rejected there. And yet Solomon appears to simplistically assume that the righteous never suffer, which the book of Job and other scripture show quite simply not to be the case. It is however true that the righteous would not starve to death; God would always provide for them. And this should be of huge strength to us in our battle against the fears which arise from living in a materialistic society.

Pro 10:4 He becomes poor who works with a lazy hand, but the hand of the diligent brings wealth-
Solomon repeatedly sees poverty as being the fault of the poor, and their refusal of his teaching of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 6:11; 10:4,15; 13:7,8,18,23; 24:34; 28:19; 31:7). Many of these passages are effectively mocking the poor, which Solomon condemns in Prov. 17:5. He fails to take his own wisdom, as we also see in his behaviour with foreign women. Again we see Solomon's works based approach to righteousness, and lack of grace; refusing to accept that we are all poor men before God, as David himself exemplified when he cried to God as a poor man (Ps. 34:6). But his much beloved father David was unashamed to say he was a materially "poor man" (1 Sam. 18:23); and Uriah, whom he wronged, is described also as a "poor man" (2 Sam. 12:1). The poor were to be defended and given to (Ps. 82:3), and the Bible is clear that poverty isn't necessarily a

result of sin or unwisdom. But Solomon fails to appreciate this, so obsessed is he with works, and the idea that obedience to his anthology of Proverbs will make the poor prosperous, as if God's truth is a kind of wealth creation scheme.

Pro 10:5 He who gathers in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during the harvest is a son who causes shame-
Solomon contrasts wisdom with shame. But he goes too far in saying that the wise gather in harvest time; for that is what most people do, wise or unwise. He seems over enthusiastic to paint those without the wisdom he taught as lazy and shameful. But there are many who reject Divine wisdom who are zealous gatherers of their harvest, and hard workers. As noted elsewhere in Proverbs, it could be that the Lord's parable of the rich fool with great harvests is intended to correct some of these images. For He there presents the man with good harvests as foolish, and lacking wisdom; whereas Solomon claims that good harvests are the reward for the wise, and the foolish don't enjoy that.

Pro 10:6 Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked-
Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

Pro 10:7 The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot-
The Hebrew idea of 'name' is of reputation, and that is demonstrated here by being paralleled with 'memory'. Who we are and what we spiritually achieve will be eternally remembered. Careers, attainment of wealth etc. will fade away [AV "rot"].

Pro 10:8 The wise in heart accept commandments, but a chattering fool will fall-
The same words are used about Moses receiving commandments on Sinai (Ex. 34:4). This is one of many times when the average Israelite was encouraged to rise up to the spirit of Moses. The contrast is between receiving God's word and thus getting into an upward spiral of spirituality; and talking so much that we don't receive God's words. That same tension is found in :14.

Pro 10:9 He who walks blamelessly walks surely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out-
Again Solomon presents life as polar opposites, with the righteous "blameless", walking surely on the path of righteousness; and the wicked whose ways are perverted. But this is not how spiritual reality is; nobody is blameless, the righteous don't walk surely all the time, but slip from the path as David did. And yet this doesn't make them perverts of the way. It was this overly simplistic view of things which led Solomon to assume himself to be a stellar example of spirituality, assured of acceptance with God; and thereby failing to appreciate that for all his wisdom and professed faith, his behaviour was disobedient and hypocritical. This led to him finally turning away from Yahweh. If he had maintained a more realistic and humble view of human spirituality, his own included, then he could have avoided this.

Pro 10:10 One winking with the eye causes sorrow, and a chattering fool will fall-
The body language of sinners is commented upon several times in the Bible. This is the degree to which God observes human behaviour. And we have wonderful insights into that of the Lord Jesus; His eyes and hands are often as it were zoomed in upon in the Gospel records. Body language is indeed a "signal" of our innermost heart; and for the wicked, they yield all the members of their bodies to work unrighteousness (Rom. 6:19).

Pro 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a spring of life, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked-
See on :6. Solomon uses the figure of a well of living water to describe spiritual words and thinking (Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22). Yet this is the very figure which he uses concerning his worldly bride (Song of Solomon 4:15). It could be argued that this typifies the massive imputation of righteousness which the Lord Jesus grants to us, His worldly Gentile bride. But I would rather see it as an example of how he chose to justify his love for worldly women by as it were clothing those women in his own mind with the imagery of spirituality.

Pro 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all wrongs-
"Covers", not in the sense of turning a blind eye, but of forgiving just as God covers or deals with / atones [Heb. 'covers'] for sin. The "strife" is defined as that between brothers arising from lies (s.w. Prov. 6:19). This is true, and needs to be given its due weight by those who divide brethren in Christ. But Solomon also doubtless has in view the discord between him and his half brothers, who were contenders for his throne. He considers the cause of the divisions to be "lies", a slander campaign against him and his father; and even if there were truth in any of it, he orders it to be covered by love. But the division amongst David's sons was a direct fulfilment of Nathan's prediction of the

consequence of David's sins associated with Bathsheba. But Solomon seeks to whitewash David, considering any friction arising from his father's sins as mere slander. He doesn't follow David in openly confessing sin and rejoicing in Divine grace.

Pro 10:13 Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has discernment, but a rod is for the back of him who is void of understanding-
LXX "He that brings forth wisdom from his lips smites the fool with a rod". Solomon has himself in view, but now instead of attributing wisdom to Divine inspiration, he starts to consider that it emanated from himself. When he died, the people complained that he had whipped [Heb. 'beaten'] them unreasonably (1 Kings 12:11). It was Solomon's false view of his wisdom which led him to do this. He assumed that he must be right, he was infallible, because of his possession of Divine truths. He justified indulging his natural human tendency to be overly harsh on others because he claimed he was the source of all wisdom. And again we see a parallel in fundamentalist Christian groups; where the more dogmatic are the claimants to possession of absolute truth about everything, the more they tend to abuse others and show no mercy to any who fail to attain to their supposed wisdom.

Pro 10:14 Wise men lay up knowledge, but the mouth of the foolish is near ruin-
"Knowledge" is presented as accumulating progressively, as a witness to the acceptability of the wise. But knowledge in this sense is not the basis of justification with God, contrary to what Solomon [and many fundamentalists] liked to think.

Pro 10:15 The rich man's wealth is his fortified city; the destruction of the poor is their poverty-
This seems to reason as if wealth is a strong city to the wise and righteous of :14, and poverty is the fault of the poor, who are the foolish and wicked of :16. And yet there simply isn't such a direct correlation between wisdom and wealth for the believer; the book of Job and so much Biblical revelation make it clear that the poor are those who tend to respond more to the Gospel (Lk. 7:22). Solomon's choice of wisdom over wealth was indeed pleasing to God, and so he was given wealth by God. But that was a gift by grace. Yet it led Solomon to assume that his wisdom [which was anyway not his own, but God's gift to him] was the basis for his wealth; and that therefore possession of Divine wisdom meant wealth, and thereby poverty was a punishment of God upon the foolish. This is simply not the case.

Pro 10:16 The labour of the righteous leads to life; the increase of the wicked leads to sin-
"Life" and "sin" are placed in antithesis. We would rather read "death" instead of "sin", as

death is the opposite of life. But sin can be put for death in that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). But Solomon here veers towards belief in salvation by works, or "labour". Paul explains that this is simply not the case. "Life" is by grace, through faith and not of works (Rom. 4:6). But the wonder of grace was unknown to Solomon.

Pro 10:17 He is in the way of life who heeds correction, but he who forsakes reproof leads others astray-
This appears to be an out of context allusion to David's words in Ps. 38:14, reflecting on his sin with Bathsheba, and how he felt unable to give reproof to others: "Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs". Solomon was obsessed with David his father, speaking hundreds of times of "David my father". But he failed to have his humility; he endlessly dishes out reproofs in Proverbs, indeed he sees his Proverbs as reproofs to people (e.g. Prov. 1:25; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5,31; 29:15); whereas David humbly felt unable to do so because of his awareness of his sins. And at the time David wrote the Proverbs, when he received wisdom at the start of his reign, he was sinning likewise [in essence] by marrying foreign women. See on Prov. 7:22.

Pro 10:18 He who hides hatred has lying lips; he who utters a slander is a fool-
Whether we speak the slander or think it and keep our mouth tactfully shut- it's all the same before God. Nicespeak and tact aren't the same as the true spirituality which includes the love which *thinks* no evil. See on :20. Perhaps Solomon has in view the "hatred" of his brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:15). The word for "hatred" is used by David in the Psalms, about both the house of Saul and also Solomon's half brothers (see on Ps. 25:19; 103:9; 109:5). All these were contenders to Solomon's throne, and he appears to here condemn them as fools who shall therefore be condemned. This constant focus upon the judgment of others led Solomon to be quite unaware of his personal responsibility to judgment himself.

Pro 10:19 In the multitude of words there is no lack of disobedience, but he who restrains his lips does wisely-
"The multitude of words" is a phrase quoted from Job 11:2, one of the scriptures which would have been available to Solomon. And the conclusion is that Job's multitude of words was not altogether right, and he would have been wiser to restrain his lips, as he himself realizes at the end.

Pro 10:20 The tongue of the righteous is like choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth-
The tongue and the heart / mind are paralleled- thoughts are as bad as words. See on :18. I will suggest on :21 and :31 that the "tongue" effectively means 'the teaching'.

Solomon's utilitarian attitude still comes through, in his description of the heart of the wicked as 'worth little', whereas the teaching of the righteous is precious as silver. A wicked heart is abomination to God, and not merely 'worth little'.

Pro 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many, but the foolish die for lack of understanding-
"Feed" is the word for "pastors" in Jer. 12:10. The idea is that "the righteous" are those with "understanding", and it is this understanding which feeds and gives life to others. This is true enough; our sharing with others and influence upon them can indeed lead them to life and not to die eternally. But Solomon appears to again have his own self justification in view; for he considered that he was the preeminently righteous because he was the teacher of Israel, giving them the wisdom given him. But Solomon fell away from Yahweh, even though he says his wisdom remained with him (Ecc. 2:9), and he continued to teach others that wisdom to the end of his life (Ecc. 12:9). And so it was simply not true that teaching others makes a person righteous, as Solomon supposed often in Proverbs (e.g. Prov. 10:21). .

Pro 10:22 Yahweh's blessing brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it-
Again Solomon presents the advantage of accepting his wisdom as being in that it will give genuine wealth now. But that is not always the case, as so many Biblical characters came to realize. However we can read "The blessing of the Lord has nothing added to it by human toil" (Prov. 10:22 RVmg.). But just because we don't *have* to do it, we do. This is the power of grace; it doesn't force us to monotonous service, but should be a wellspring of fresh motivation, to do perhaps the same things with an ever fresh spirit.

Pro 10:23 It is a fool's pleasure to do wickedness, but wisdom is a man of understanding's pleasure-
Solomon sees wisdom as the way to wealth and "pleasure" in this life, and that is the basis for his appeal to men to be wise and accept his wisdom (Prov. 10:23). But David uses the word only of the "pleasure" of the future, restored Kingdom of God on earth (Ps. 126:2); whereas Solomon wanted it all now, just as the 'prosperity gospel' likewise does. And yet as he got older, Solomon realized that such "pleasure" from material things is not in fact pleasure, and he uses the word several times in Ecclesiastes of how pleasure in this life is vain (Ecc. 2:2; 7:3; 10:19). This approach is in fact a contradiction of his seeking after "pleasure" in Proverbs. He came to this nihilistic position because he failed to perceive that the true "pleasure" is not now, but in the future Kingdom.

Pro 10:24 What the wicked fear will overtake them, but the desire of the righteous will be granted-

This is true in ultimate terms at the day of judgment. But that doesn't seem to be what Solomon has in view. He sees the whirlwind of judgment coming in this life (:25), because he had no clear view of the future Kingdom and judgment. But the book of Job ought to have led Solomon to a more subtle view of the difference between the wicked and the righteous. The thing righteous Job greatly feared came upon him (Job 3:25), as did the whirlwind of apparent judgment (:25).

Pro 10:25 When the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more; but the righteous stand firm forever-
'Have an eternal foundation'. Who we are now is the basis of who we will eternally be. Hence the supreme importance of character formation and personality developed in this life. See on :24; Ps. 35:5.

Pro 10:26 As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 10:27 The fear of Yahweh prolongs days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened-
Solomon claims that the righteous / wise live long lives, and therefore the unwise have shorter lives (Prov. 9:11; 10:27). This was the promise for obedience to the old covenant (s.w. Dt. 11:21). But it is not always the case, as Job learned (s.w. Job 29:18); righteous men like David and Hezekiah felt their days had been shortened (s.w. Ps. 89:45; 102:23). And it was so with the Lord Jesus. And faithful men often lament that the wicked seem to get long life, whilst the righteous don't. The answer to that conundrum is that final blessing of long life is at the resurrection, at the last day; and not in this life. But Solomon didn't see that; he thought that long life now was the only reward. He failed to perceive the real meaning of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Pro 10:28 The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hope of the wicked will perish-
David's "hope / expectation" in the context of Ps. 62:5 was the continuation of his own

kingdom, despite all the threats against it from the likes of Saul, Absalom and others who would usurp his Davidic kingship and kingdom. Solomon likely uses the word for "expectation" with the same subtext; that all opposition to him was based upon a false expectation which would be dashed by God (s.w. Prov. 10:28; 11:7,23; 23:18; 24:14).

Pro 10:29 The way of Yahweh is a stronghold to the upright, but it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity-
The very process of walking in the right way, in the hour by hour business of spiritual life, indeed confirms us in that way. God's way is designed to confirm those who walk in it; and those who work iniquity are caused to stumble further by it into destruction. "The workers of iniquity" is a phrase repeatedly used by Solomon's father David concerning the supporters of Saul, and also those supporting David's half brothers- all of which were groups who were potential contenders for Solomon's throne. See notes on Ps. 5:5; 6:8; 14:4; 28:3; 36:12; 53:4; 59:2; 64:2; 92:7,9; 94:4,16; 101:8; 125:5; 141:4,9. So whilst Solomon speaks truly, so far as it goes, he uses language which subtly condemns his political opponents. Thus he harnessed God's truth towards his own self justification, as many do today.

Pro 10:30 The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land-
David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

"He will never be shaken" is spoken in Ps. 112:6 in the context of the outcome of the final judgment. Being unmoved or never shaken is a major theme of the Psalms of David. Human beings naturally seek for stability, but look for it in the wrong places, imagining that their idols shall never be shaken (s.w. Is. 40:20; 41:7). It is only the receipt of eternal salvation at the last day which means we shall never be moved; that is the only ultimate stability (Ps. 62:2,6 s.w.). Their stability will be associated with that of God's eternal Kingdom to be centered upon Zion (s.w. Ps. 125:1). For in secular life under the sun, the righteous do suffer and their lives are "shaken". Solomon's statements that the righteous shall never be shaken / moved (Prov. 10:30; 12:3) are only ultimately true in this sense; but whether he spoke them with that understanding is debatable.

Pro 10:31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off-
This again is true as it stands, but Solomon puts all the focus upon holding true wisdom / teaching, and then teaching it. He sees this as the basis for being righteous. Solomon of course was the one who had the wisdom and taught it, so he is justifying himself as "righteous" thereby. But he was not a spiritual person, he lived otherwise to that wisdom, and fell away from his faith in Yahweh. The problem with holding and teaching Divine truth is that we are tempted to think that this thereby justifies us. But alone, it doesn't. See on :32.

Pro 10:32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked is perverse-
See on :6,31. Solomon again presents an overly simplistic position; the lips of the righteous are good, and those of the wicked are bad. But the reality is that righteous people say some bad things at times, and are saved by grace. James is far closer to spiritual reality when he writes that the tongue is an uncontrollable evil, and none of us succeed in not offending any by our words, and in this context of the tongue, "in many things we offend all" (James 3:2). The conclusion therefore is that we must cast ourselves upon God's grace. But this was something Solomon knew nothing about.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 11

Pro 11:1 A false balance is an abomination to Yahweh, but accurate weights are His delight-
See on Mt. 6:26. "Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 11:2 When pride comes then comes shame, but with humility comes wisdom-
This is true, but Solomon seems to be also implying that anyone who doesn't accept his wisdom by which he ruled Israel was therefore proud. Autocratic rulers like Solomon often use appeals to humility to quash any dissent; and he ended up whipping and abusing his people. Pride is the opposite of being shamed; the proud person will be brought down to shame even in this life, according to Solomon. Whereas the Bible often teaches that the proud apparently prosper, and are only brought to shame at the day of final judgment; and this perspective wasn't what Solomon accepted, as he liked to think of himself as the Messiah figure.

Pro 11:3 The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them-
"Transgressors" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Pro 11:4 Riches don't profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death-
"Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death" (Prov. 11:4). Riches kept in hand will not help us through the day of judgment. But righteousness, which in the Hebraic parallel in this verse refers to the correct use of riches, will deliver us from eternal death.

David appealed to *God's* righteousness for deliverance from the consequence of his sins (Ps. 71:2). This was appropriate, seeing that David had been saved from death by

God's imputation of His righteousness to David (Ps. 32:1-4), by grace through faith; seeing David's sins left him with no righteousness of his own. And it was on this basis that David believed he would continue to be saved / delivered / rescued (s.w. Ps. 51:14 in the Bathsheba context). But Solomon failed to learn from his mother and father's experience of grace, teaching instead that personal righteousness is what saves (Prov. 10:2; 11:4,6).

Pro 11:5 The righteousness of the blameless will direct his way, but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness-
Solomon thinks of the righteous as walking unflinchingly forward in wisdom, never turning to the right or left, refusing to be distracted by any wicked person who suggests walking another way (Prov. 9:15 "to call travellers who go directly on their way"). This approach fails to take account of the simple fact that righteous people sin and stray from the direct path every day, and are saved finally into God's Kingdom by grace alone. That is all something Solomon failed to have any grasp of, whereas David his father did. Prov. 11:5 makes the somewhat tautological statement that "the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way", s.w. Prov. 4:25 "fix your gaze directly before you". This contrasts with how David uses the word in Ps. 5:8: "Lead me, O Yahweh… make Your way straight [s.w. direct] before my face". The same statement of God directing in the straight way is found in Is. 45:13; Jer. 18:4 s.w. Solomon didn't see this need for the Spirit of God to direct his path because he assumed that mere possession of Divine truth would itself keep him in the way; hence he teaches that "understanding" makes a man walk "directly" (Prov. 15:21). And he failed miserably because of that arrogant position.

Pro 11:6 The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them, but the unfaithful will be trapped by evil desires-
"Destructive" or "wickedness" is the word used of the wickedness of Ahithophel and Absalom (Ps. 55:11). Solomon's Proverbs seem in places a justification of himself as king over his brother Absalom. He uses the same word to speak of "transgressors are taken in their own wickedness / destructiveness" (Prov. 11:6); how a liar [Absalom] listens to a 'destructive' tongue [in taking advice from Ahithophel] (Prov. 17:4); and how a foolish son [Absalom] is the calamity or destruction of his father (Prov. 19:13).

Pro 11:7 When a wicked man dies, hope perishes, and expectation of power comes to nothing-
David's "expectation" in the context of Ps. 62:5 was the continuation of his own kingdom, despite all the threats against it from the likes of Saul, Absalom and others who would usurp his Davidic kingship and kingdom. Solomon likely uses the word for

"expectation" with the same subtext; that all opposition to him was based upon a false expectation which would be dashed by God (s.w. Prov. 10:28; 11:7,23; 23:18; 24:14).

Pro 11:8 A righteous person is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked walks into it in his place-
LXX "A righteous man escapes from a snare, and the ungodly man is delivered up in his place". The allusion may be to David's frequent references to having been saved from the snares of Saul. But David prayed for those deliverances from snares according to God's grace; whereas Solomon sees them as due to righteousness.

Pro 11:9 With his mouth the godless man destroys his neighbour, but the righteous will be delivered through knowledge-
It is indeed true that words have great power, as seen in the 'destruction' of Job by his friends. The tongue is indeed a destructive fire (James 3:5,6). But it is not the case that "knowledge" delivers the righteous. Deliverance / salvation is by grace through faith. Solomon had all the knowledge, but it didn't save him. This is the myth of the idea of "saving truth"; intellectual purity of understanding will not of itself save.

Pro 11:10 When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices. When the wicked perish, there is shouting-
This had various historical fulfillments, not least in the destruction of Haman and exaltation of Mordecai (Esther 8:15; 2 Kings 11:20; 2 Chron. 23:21). But again Solomon is rather simplistic. When the wicked Absalom perished, David mourned, and likewise for Saul.

Pro 11:11 By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted, but it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked-
Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

Pro 11:12 One who despises his neighbour is without wisdom, but a man of

understanding holds his peace-
The person without / lacking or void of understanding is typically the adulterer or sexual sinner (s.w. Prov. 6:32; 7:7; 9:4,16). So the despising of the neighbour particularly refers to adultery with his wife. I have noted that in previous verses, Solomon is seeking to justify his father David and the Davidic succession through himself. But he overlooks how David sinned with Bathsheba. Or, he is indeed alluding to it, but is saying that although his father lacked wisdom at that point, the man of understanding / wisdom will say nothing about it.

Pro 11:13 One who brings gossip betrays a confidence, but one who is of a trustworthy spirit is one who keeps a secret-
David frequently complains in his Psalms about gossip about him, both at the time of Saul's persecution of him and of Absalom's rebellion and putsch. "Keeps a secret" is AV "concealeth the matter", and may continue the theme of :12; that despite David's unwisdom in sleeping with Bathsheba [which is still whitewashing David, as what he did was a major sin and not just a lack of wisdom], the faithful will conceal the matter instead of gossiping about. Which is clearly what happened amongst those who were to become contenders against Solomon for the throne.

Pro 11:14 Where there is no wise guidance the nation falls, but in the multitude of counsellors there is victory-
"The nation" is better "the people". And the people of Israel fell in war with the Philistines, under Saul's unwise leadership (s.w. 2 Sam. 1:4,12). Whereas under David, they were led to victory. Always Solomon seems to want to justify his father David. "Victory" is AV "safety", and may allude to how the lives of Solomon and David were saved by wise counsellors (s.w. 1 Kings 1:12). Solomon may also be having a swipe at Ahithophel, the grandfather of his mother Bathsheba, who began as a wise counsellor but then became an unwise counsellor when he turned against David.

Pro 11:15 He who is collateral for a stranger will suffer for it, but he who refuses pledges of collateral is secure-
The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis). Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan;

what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to this matter. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom.

Pro 11:16 A gracious woman obtains honour, but violent men obtain riches-
"Violent men" is AV "strong men". The idea seems to be that grace and strength are associated with the wisdom which Solomon sees as bringing honour and wealth. But the word for "obtains" is used by David always with the sense that it is God who obtains / establishes / holds up the righteous, by grace (s.w. Ps. 16:5; 17:5; 41:12; 63:8). Although Solomon is obsessed with "David my father" and forever justifying him, he totally fails to have the perspective of grace and humility which characterized him.

Pro 11:17 The merciful man does good to his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh-
This continues the theme of :16, that the advantage of wisdom is that it benefits you in this life; and the unwise are only hurting themselves. Whilst this is true, it seems an altogether human and secular approach to God's truth. Because the purpose of our believing, obedient lives is for God's wider glory, and to pave the way for life in His Kingdom in the future. But these things seem almost unknown to Solomon. "The merciful man" may be a reference to Solomon's ancestor Boaz (s.w. Ruth 2:20). This kind of self-justification of his ancestral line is seen so often in Solomon's words.

Pro 11:18 Wicked people earn deceitful wages, but one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward-
Reading this verse along with :19 leads us to conclude that the wages in view are life for the righteous, seen as a just reward; and death for the wicked. But as noted on :19, this is not really true to spiritual reality. For all men sin, there is not one righteous, as David realized (Rom. 3:10). Later, Solomon cynically concludes that the wicked and the righteous all die the same death, and so, he concludes, there is no great advantage in righteousness (Ecc. 9:2). This contrasts with Solomon's huge emphasis in Proverbs upon the difference between the wicked and the righteous (e.g. Prov. 11:18). But it seems he got to that wrong conclusion because he assumes that the blessing for

righteousness is in this life, and likewise the curses for wickedness. He totally fails to think in terms of the future judgment and eternal life of God's future kingdom. And so as he himself got older and approached death, he concluded that death means that all effort towards righteousness is therefore vain. He made the same mistake as the false teachers of 1 Cor. 15:19, who likewise considered that "hope in Christ" was only helpful for "this life", because they rejected the resurrection of the body and future judgment and reward.

Pro 11:19 He who is truly righteous gets life; he who pursues evil gets death-
The LXX implies that the righteous are born that way and shall inherit eternal life simply because of their pedigree; and Solomon was the classic case of this, totally overlooking the conditional nature of the promises made to David about him: "A righteous son is born for life: but the persecution of the ungodly ends in death". Whilst these things are true in a sense, Paul in Romans 1-8 points out the obvious truth than no man apart from the Lord Jesus "is truly righteous", and eternal life is a gift by grace. And "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23) for us all, and not just those who "pursue evil"; for all have sinned. The life and death in view here are perhaps the "wages" of :18.

Pro 11:20 Those who are perverse in heart are an abomination to Yahweh, but those whose ways are blameless are His delight-
Solomon rightly emphasizes that the "perverse" or "wayward" are wayward in their hearts (Prov. 11:20; 17:20), leading to wayward ways in practice (Prov. 2:15); but he repeats his father's mistake, in saying he will have nothing to do with those who are wayward in their hearts (s.w. Ps. 101:4). The mistake was in assuming that he could judge human hearts. It continues the far over simplified view of people which Solomon has; the righteous have pure hearts, always obedient; and wicked have bad hearts. But the Bible warns that all of us have hearts which are fountains of evil thoughts (Mk. 7:15,21-23 etc.).

Pro 11:21 Most certainly, the evil man will not be unpunished, but the seed of the righteous will be delivered-
The contrast is between the evil man [who is punished] and the seed of the righteous [who is saved]. Salvation is thereby predicated upon being the seed of the righteous. Solomon speaks hundreds of time of "David my father"; he considered his salvation was assured because of his father. But again, this is not fully the case. Personal spirituality is required.

Pro 11:22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout, so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion-
The same term is used of Tamar, daughter of Solomon's half brother Absalom (2 Sam.

14:27), whose family would have been potential contenders with Solomon for the throne. He as ever is using Divine truth in a way which knocks back his enemies and portrays himself as justified. "Beautiful woman" is the term Solomon uses about his illicit Gentile girlfriend (Song 1:8), and it is the term sarcastically used about her by Israelite competitors (Song 5:9; 6:1). Seeing Solomon's wives were idolaters, they lacked discretion; and yet Solomon loved them and married them. He behaved with women completely opposite to his own teachings.

Pro 11:23 The desire of the righteous is only for good; the expectation of the wicked is wrath-
This again seems rather simplistic, drawing a dualistic picture of the righteous who seek only good, whereas the wicked can only expect the wrath of Divine judgment. Yet "there is none righteous" (Rom. 3:10), and our desires are not only and solely for good. There are mixed motives in even the best of us. We are saved from wrath by grace and being counted righteous by that grace, as Paul makes clear (Rom. 5:9).

Pro 11:24 There is one who scatters, and increases yet more. There is one who withholds more than is appropriate, but gains poverty-
The one who scatters widely is the generous (:25); and Solomon sees generosity as sure to bring more wealth. But if this is the motive for our generosity, then this isn't surely the kind of self-sacrificial giving until it costs us which God wishes of us. It all fits with the same theme, of righteousness having advantage in this life, and surely bringing wealth. But as I have commented elsewhere, this just isn't the case. And the mean often do not find poverty, but rather apparent wealth. This surely was the intention of the Lord's parable of the rich fool, which can be read as a correction of Solomon's perspective. The difference between the generous and the mean will only be finally articulated in the judgment of the last day, and not in this life. But Solomon refused to be aware of that, and therefore as he came nearer to his own death, he lost his faith and wrote the rejection of wisdom we have in Ecclesiastes.

Pro 11:25 The generous soul shall be made fat; he who waters shall be watered also himself-
As discussed on :24, Solomon sees the advantage of generosity and wisdom generally as being for this life. He totally lacks any sense of a judgment and Kingdom yet to come. And this was the root of his own spiritual undoing. David saw himself as being "made fat" by God's grace (Ps. 23:5, s.w. "anoint"), whereas Solomon sees this as a direct result of the good deeds of the righteous, such as generosity (Prov. 11:25) and hard work (Prov. 13:4). This is exactly the kind of justification by works which Paul argues against in Romans.

Pro 11:26 People curse someone who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it-
The allusion may be to Joseph selling the grain he had stored. But Solomon sees the motivation for such behaviour as being to get a blessing from people. To do good is seen as the way to get favour or blessing from men (:27). And yet the Biblical emphasis is upon the blessing of Divine grace, a teaching found right back in the covenant with Abraham. At this point, Solomon is heavily pushing a works-based righteousness, whose end is in having a good life right now. Again, the perspective of the future Kingdom is totally absent.

Pro 11:27 He who diligently seeks good seeks favour, but he who searches after evil, it shall come to him-
As noted on :26, the idea is that one should do good because this is the way to favour or blessing from men. But David emphasizes the need to receive favour / acceptance from God, which is granted by His grace in response to repentance (Ps. 30:5,7; 51:18; 69:13; 106:4).

Pro 11:28 He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous shall flourish as the green leaf-
The same words as in David's vision of how Solomon's kingdom would be in Ps. 72:7: "In his days, the righteous shall flourish". So Solomon's later statement here that the righteous would flourish is therefore a reference to this, assuming that David's fantasy of Solomon having an eternal kingdom was going to be fulfilled in him. In Ps. 92:11,12, David thinks that he himself will see the righteous flourishing (s.w. Ps. 72:7). So he may be imagining that he would somehow be resurrected and see this happening in Solomon's reign. His hope will come ultimately true, but through the kingdom of the Lord Jesus and not Solomon.

Pro 11:29 He who troubles his own house shall inherit the wind. The foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart-
Solomon appears to be overlooking how his father David had troubled his own house, according to the condemnation of Nathan. Such a person will inherit nothing; whereas Solomon liked to think that the Davidic line through him would inherit everything. It appears that Solomon had a blindness to the nature of his parents' sin, and whitewashed them in his own mind, rather than presenting them [as David would have wished] as the parade example of Divine grace.

Pro 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; he who is wise wins souls-
This is true insofar as we really can be the source of life for others. But access to the tree

of life has been taken away because of human sin; only in the restored Eden of the Kingdom of God on earth will we be able to eat the fruit of the tree of life. Indeed God in His grace and wisdom barred access to the tree of life, knowing that eternity in our present state would be a curse. But Solomon likes to think that his kingdom is the Kingdom of God, and the life according to his wisdom was effectively the life eternal. Again we see a failure in Solomon to perceive that the true life and restoration of Eden was yet future. This would explain why as he got older and approached death, he became disillusioned; for clearly his life had not been the life of the Kingdom.

Pro 11:31 Behold, the righteous shall be repaid in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner!-
LXX "If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?". The righteous remnant who spoke often to one another about Yahweh will only be "spared" by God's grace (Mal. 3:17). The accepted will feel so certain of this that they will almost argue with the Lord Jesus at the day of judgment that He hasn't made the right decision concerning them (Mt. 25:37-40). It's only a highly convicted man who would dare do that. Thus the Father will have to comfort the faithful in the aftermath of the judgment, wiping away the tears which will *then* (see context) be in our eyes, and give us special help to realize that our sinful past has now finally been overcome (Rev. 21:4). We will be like the labourers in the parable who walk away clutching their penny, thinking "I really shouldn't have this. I didn't work for a day, and this is a day's pay".

Peter quotes this in 1 Pet. 4:18, although he quotes liberally and mixing quotation with interpretation. Peter never introduces his quotations as Paul does, with an "It is written...". And he always quotes from the LXX, and often in a rather loose way. Peter was illiterate, and would have known the LXX quotations by memory, recollecting how they had been read to him, rather than having read them with his own eyes and memorized them. And this shows in the way he quotes the Old Testament- although the whole process and final product was Divinely inspired.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 12

Pro 12:1 Whoever loves correction loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid-
Solomon here quotes his father's words in Ps. 50:17 "since you hate instruction". Solomon thus accuses any who refuse his Proverbs of doing just this, hating instruction, which in the context of Ps. 50:17 means 'You are condemned' (s.w. Prov. 5:12; 12:1; 15:10).

Pro 12:2 A good man shall obtain favour from Yahweh, but He will condemn a man of wicked devices-
God's "favour" isn't predicated upon our intellectual prowess in mastering "wisdom" (Prov. 8:35) nor upon our good works (Prov. 12:2). Academic truth and / or good living isn't as it were the key which opens up access to God's grace. For otherwise Divine "favour" would be a reward, and grace would no longer be grace.

Pro 12:3 A man shall not be established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous shall not be moved-
"Not... moved" is alluding to how David considered that his inheritance and dynasty would not be moved (Ps. 16:8). The context is of David's desire to take the hill of Zion from the Jebusites, and for it to become his by conquest. He was confident he could do this in God's strength, and by saying "*I* shall not be moved" he identifies himself with Zion which "shall not be moved" (Ps. 46:5). And indeed God came through for David. Because he put Yahweh "always before me", he was given mount Zion and established his kingdom there; but he looked forward to resurrection as the ultimate means of receiving the inheritance (Ps. 16:8-10). This passage is then quoted about the Lord Jesus- who likewise shall establish His Kingdom upon David's throne in Zion (Lk. 1:34,35) because of His trust in Yahweh. But Solomon, as the son of David, liked to imagine that his dynasty would continue unmoved anyway; he failed to perceive that the unmoved dynasty was due only to God's grace through the Lord Jesus.

"He will never be shaken" is spoken in Ps. 112:6 in the context of the outcome of the final judgment. Being unmoved or never shaken is a major theme of the Psalms of David. Human beings naturally seek for stability, but look for it in the wrong places, imagining that their idols shall never be shaken (s.w. Is. 40:20; 41:7). It is only the receipt of eternal salvation at the last day which means we shall never be moved; that is the only ultimate stability (Ps. 62:2,6 s.w.). Their stability will be associated with that of God's eternal Kingdom to be centered upon Zion (s.w. Ps. 125:1). For in secular life under the sun, the righteous do suffer and their lives are "shaken". Solomon's statements that the righteous shall never be shaken / moved (Prov. 10:30; 12:3) are only ultimately true in this sense; but whether he spoke them with that understanding is debatable.

Pro 12:4 A worthy woman is the crown of her husband, but a disgraceful wife is as rottenness in his bones-
This is true, but as ever Solomon has his own self justification in view. For "a worthy woman" is the term used of his ancestor Ruth (Ruth 3:11), and he uses it of his mother Bathsheba (Prov. 31:10). The wife who brings disgrace may refer to David's wife Michal, Saul's daughter, whom he divorced.

Pro 12:5 The thoughts of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful-
True enough, but probably another swipe at David's advisor Ahithophel, Solomon's great grandfather.

Pro 12:6 The words of the wicked are about lying in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them-
"Lie in wait" is the word for ambush. Solomon often uses the word, as if it is for him a major characteristic of sinners (Prov. 1:11,18; 7:12; 12:6; 23:28; 24:15). But it's a rather specific word to use so often. It's as if Solomon is consciously alluding to his father's experiences at the hands of the house of Saul (s.w. Ps. 10:9; 59:3), whom Solomon considered a threat to his own kingship. And so he seems to rather like using the term about sinners, as if using his wisdom to have a dig at his immediate opposition.

Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

Pro 12:7 The wicked are overthrown, and are no more, but the house of the righteous shall stand-
The implication is that the house of the wicked is overthrown, but the house of the righteous is established. True as this is, the subtext is that Solomon is reflecting upon how the house of Saul and other opponents was "no more", but the house of David through himself was established.

Pro 12:8 A man shall be commended according to his wisdom, but he who has a warped

mind shall be despised-
Solomon of course was the man well known for his wisdom. But that wisdom had been given him by God for the purpose of leading Israel. But Solomon went on to conclude that there mere possession of wisdom is what commends a man personally; and all others are therefore "warped" and to be "despised". His possession of wisdom didn't save him personally. This problem is commonly experienced especially in small time Protestant groups; the assumption is that there mere possession of Divine truth is enough to justify a man and commend him before God and man.

Pro 12:9 Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant, than he who honours himself, and lacks bread-
Perhaps a reference to David, who considered himself "lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 18:23). We could translate "the lightly esteemed servant", as David was at that time to Saul. The only other reference to a man who "lacks bread" is David's curse upon Joab (2 Sam. 3:29 s.w.), whose family were contenders against Solomon for the throne. So the unsuccessful power grab by Joab is alluded to, and Solomon hints that any who tried to take the throne from him were merely honouring themselves in their own minds.

Pro 12:10 A righteous man respects the life of his animal, but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel-
Solomon may have in view Balaam's unreasonable beating of his donkey. What he writes is true, but it reflects his simplistic, dualistic view; even when a wicked man [as Solomon defines him] shows tender mercy to his animal, Solomon sees that as cruelty. He utterly fails to recognize that human behaviour is a jagged graph, good people sin, and bad people do good things; we are saved not by consistent, stellar living before God, but by faith in His grace. But he fails to perceive this, when he should have learnt it from his father's experiences and his Psalms.

Pro 12:11 He who tills his land shall have plenty of bread, but he who chases fantasies is void of understanding-
Solomon speaks often of how hard work will "satisfy with bread" (Prov. 12:11; 20:13; 28:19). David his father uses the phrase in the context of saying that being 'satisfied with bread' is part of God's gracious blessing (Ps. 132:15). We see here how Solomon became focused upon works, rather than faith in the blessings which come from Divine grace. And yet he uses the words his father had used; but he interprets them as justification of works rather than acceptance of grace.

Pro 12:12 The wicked desires the plunder of evil men, but the root of the righteous flourishes-

Solomon may be using "root" in the sense of 'the offspring of the root', for the root of David is his Messianic descendant (Is. 11:10; Rev. 5:5; 22:16). And this was who Solomon wrongly perceived himself to be. He could have been the offspring of that root, but that was conditional upon his personal spirituality. But he considered that mere descent by the flesh was enough; an error made by Israel throughout their history.

Pro 12:13 An evil man is trapped by the sinfulness of his lips, but the righteous shall come out of trouble-
As noted on :10 and often, Solomon assumes the righteous never sin with their lips. Whereas James 3:1-5 explains what we all sadly know from honest experience; that nobody fails to sin with their lips, even the best of us. He utterly fails to recognize that human behaviour is a jagged graph, good people sin, and bad people do good things; we are saved not by consistent, stellar living before God, but by faith in His grace. But he fails to perceive this, when he should have learnt it from his father's experiences and his Psalms. The righteous don't always come out of trouble in this life, the Lord Jesus being the parade example. Their victory is only ultimately in the future day of judgment and the Kingdom, which concepts Solomon chose not to understand, as he assumed that his kingdom was God's Kingdom, and he was Messiah.

Pro 12:14 A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth; the work of a man's hands shall be rewarded to him-
Solomon correctly parallels words and actions, as the Scriptures often do. But as noted on :13, he assumes the righteous never sin with their lips. Whereas James 3:1-5 explains what we all sadly know from honest experience; that nobody fails to sin with their lips, even the best of us. And he continues to teach justification by the works of human hands. We shall indeed be given as our works shall be (Rev. 22:12), but not in this life; only at the day of final judgment.

Pro 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who is wise listens to counsel-
Not being 'wise in our own eyes' is a major theme of Solomon's Proverbs (Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 26:12,16; 28:11). We are to recognize that there is no inherent wisdom in man; it must be taught to us from God's word. And yet we live in a postmodern world, where what seems or feels good to our own gut is taken to be the highest personal truth. This was what led Judah to condemnation (s.w. Is. 5:21), because trusting in their own opinions and gut feelings left them insensitive to God's word. Paul quotes the idea in Rom. 12:16; to be wise in our own eyes means that we ignore those whom we naturally consider worthy of being ignored. But that is not necessarily the way of the Spirit. But when Solomon lost his faith, he comments that whether a man has wise eyes or not (s.w.) is irrelevant in the face of death (Ecc. 2:14). He clearly conceived wisdom as only helpful for this life; he had no real personal faith in the resurrection of the dead or the

establishment of the future Kingdom of God. And this led him to ultimately despise his own wisdom as futile.

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

Pro 12:17 He who is truthful testifies honestly, but a false witness lies-
This may sound like a pointless statement of the obvious an axiomatic. But we likely need to read in an ellipsis; the truthful *always* testify honestly, and liars *always* lie. But this is simply not the case. Solomon utterly fails to recognize that human behaviour is a jagged graph, good people sin, and bad people do good things; we are saved not by consistent, stellar living before God, but by faith in His grace. But he fails to perceive this, when he should have learnt it from his father's experiences and his Psalms.

Pro 12:18 There is one who speaks rashly like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise heals-
This uses the language of David, in complaining that his opponents in the house of Saul and the followers of Solomon's half brother Absalom have tongues which pierce like swords (Ps. 57:4; 64:3). Again, what Solomon says is true, but he is using Divine truth to have a dig at his potential competitors for the throne, and to historically justify his father David.

Pro 12:19 Truth's lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only momentary-
"Established forever" is the language of the eternal establishment of the Davidic line through his Messianic son; which Solomon wrongly assumed must automatically refer to himself. David led him into this wrong assumption by dedicating "Kingdom" Psalms like Ps. 72 to Solomon. Solomon's fulfilment of the role of David's greater prophetic son was strictly conditional; and he failed totally to meet those conditions. But he uses his possession of wisdom, and teaching of it with his lips, as a reason to wrongly think that he fulfilled the role (Prov. 12:19; 29:14).

Pro 12:20 Deceit is in the heart of those who plot evil, but joy comes to the promoters of peace-
"Plot evil" is the phrase used of Saul's plots against David (1 Sam. 23:9). Saul likely still had his supporters even in Solomon's time, and Solomon came to the throne after period of continual attempts to take the throne from the Davidic line through Absalom. And he uses his Proverbs, true as they are, to do down any potential opposition, and to present support of him as the only way to national peace and unity- an old ploy.

Pro 12:21 No mischief shall happen to the righteous, but the wicked shall be filled with evil-
Again Solomon presents an over simplistic picture. Mischief / evil does happen to the righteous, and the sufferings of the Lord Jesus are the parade example. David also had suffered much evil. And the wicked prosper in this life. These words are only true within the perspective of a future judgment and a future Kingdom of God on earth when the eternal outcomes of human behaviour will be manifest. But Solomon refused to factor this in, and saw wisdom as having an immediate effect and reward in this life. He had totally refused to learn the lessons of the book of Job, which was extant scripture at his time.

Pro 12:22 Lying lips are an abomination to Yahweh, but those who do the truth are His

delight-
"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 12:23 A prudent man keeps his knowledge, but the hearts of fools proclaim foolishness-
We may be intended to understand the silence of the lips of the prudent as contrasted with the heart of the foolish speaking freely. In this case, the heart and the tongue are paralleled, as often in scripture; for out of the heart, the mouth speaks (Lk. 6:45).

Pro 12:24 The hands of the diligent ones shall rule, but laziness ends in slave labour-
See on Prov. 6:7. Solomon's reign concluded with him putting people into slave labour and whipping them. He sees this as fair punishment for their laziness. But by enslaving people and whipping them for their supposed laziness, he was acting like Pharaoh.

Pro 12:25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs it down, but a kind word makes it glad-
"Weights it down" is the usual word for 'to bow down', and may continue the theme of :24; that the diligent Solomon would have men down to him, although he considers that his words could also lift them up with gladness. Again, these things are all true, but they are being used to justify Solomon's rulership style, which was far from spiritual and was often abusive, especially at the end of his reign.

Pro 12:26 A righteous person is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray-
The need to choose friends wisely is true, and yet it would appear justification for how Solomon filled his cabinet with "yes men".

Pro 12:27 The slothful man doesn't roast his game, but the possessions of diligent men are prized-
The slothful man catcheth / roasteth not that which *he* took in hunting" (Prov. 12:27 RVmg.) may be one of the Proverbs' historical commentaries- in this case, on Jacob. The implication would be that Jacob was lazy in staying in the tent and not hunting. But again we see a glorification of works, rather than of grace and faith.

Pro 12:28 In the way of righteousness is life; in its path there is no death-
LXX "In the ways of righteousness is life; but the ways of those that remember injuries lead to death". This is true, but Solomon would be hinting that any legitimate complaints about the behaviour of himself or his father were wrong because love doesn't remember past abuses. That argument is faulty on various counts, but the point is that Solomon is yet again seeking to whitewash his father and himself, and place them beyond any criticism.

The term "way of righteousness" is found in Prov. 8:20 "I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of justice". Again it seems that Solomon's personification of wisdom leads him to come out with things which he clearly enough saw as descriptions of himself. He saw himself as wisdom personified, walking always in the right way, and always judging justly. And the one who walked in "the way of righteousness" would never die (Prov. 12:28 s.w.). Solomon saw his possession of Divine truths as the guarantee of itself that he was the eternal Messianic king. He had been warned that he must walk in the way of God if he was to have long life (s.w. 1 Kings 3:14); but he assumed that the mere possession of Divine wisdom meant he was in that "way". As he got older and was reminded of his own mortality, he would have realized that he had to recalculate his position; and he ended up with the cynicism about his own wisdom seen in Ecclesiastes. And yet his injustice to his own people was evidence enough that he didn't do this in reality, but only in his own mind (1 Kings 12:11).

PROVERBS CHAPTER 13

Pro 13:1 A wise son listens to his father's instruction, but a scoffer doesn't listen to rebuke-
The book of Job makes it clear that it is the *content* of an elder's instruction which should govern whether or not it is accepted. But Solomon demands submission to him simply because he is a king and a father. Being "wise" is predicated therefore upon accepting Solomon's truths; personal behaviour and spirituality doesn't come into the picture with Solomon, and his own apostasy shows the end of this line of thinking.

Pro 13:2 By the fruit of his lips, a man enjoys good things; but the unfaithful crave violence-
"Transgressors" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Pro 13:3 He who guards his mouth guards his soul; one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin-
This continues the common theme of Proverbs, that the advantage of wisdom is that it benefits you in this life; and the unwise are only hurting themselves. Whilst this is true, it seems an altogether human and secular approach to God's truth. Because the purpose of our believing, obedient lives is for God's wider glory, and to pave the way for life in His Kingdom in the future. But these things seem almost unknown to Solomon.

Pro 13:4 The soul of the sluggard desires, and has nothing, but the desire of the diligent shall be fully satisfied-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Solomon sees the advantage of generosity and wisdom generally as being for this life. He totally lacks any sense of a judgment and Kingdom yet to come. And this was the root of his own spiritual undoing. David saw himself as being "made fat" by God's grace (Ps. 23:5, s.w. "anoint"), whereas Solomon sees this as a direct result of the good deeds of the righteous, such as generosity (Prov. 11:25) and hard work (Prov. 13:4). This is exactly the kind of justification by works which Paul argues against in Romans.

Pro 13:5 A righteous man hates lies, but a wicked man brings shame and disgrace-
Again, Solomon is justifying his father David, who uses these words to describe how he "hates lies" (Ps. 119:104,128,163). The reality was that David had brought shame and disgrace through his sin with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. But Solomon seems at pains to make a case that the righteous don't do this kind of thing, and the shame and disgrace which arose was due to Solomon's half brothers and court politics. Whereas Nathan is clear that it all came as a consequence for David's sin.

Pro 13:6 Righteousness guards the way of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner-
David by contrast felt he was kept or guarded in the way of integrity by God constantly pointing out that way to him (s.w. Ps. 119:33). Solomon seems to think that mere possession of Divine truth made him "righteous", and this of itself kept him in the way. He has none of the constant desire to be taught which David had, because he assumed he had received total truth. Those who consider they hold "the truth" as a package of doctrinally correct propositions can make the same mistake as Solomon.

Pro 13:7 There are some who are made rich, yet have nothing. There are some who are made poor, yet have great wealth-
The Hebrew grammar makes these reflexive verbs, as if the making rich or poor are done to the person by themselves, possibly referring simply to their own perceptions of themselves. Solomon's own words were so true of him: “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing [quoted in Rev. 3:17 about the rejected]: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth” (Prov. 13:7 AV). This last phrase is quoted about the Lord Jesus, who made Himself poor on the cross (2 Cor. 8:9). And yet Solomon, who made himself rich, is the very anti-Christ, the only specific person associated in the Bible with the number 666 (1 Kings 10:14).

Pro 13:8 The ransom of a man’s life is his riches, but the poor hear no threats-
Prov. 13:8 speaks of how our attitude to wealth is a crucial factor in our eternal destiny: “The ransom of a man’s life are his riches”. Just prior to that we read in Prov. 13:7: “There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches”. This verse is actually part quoted in 2

Cor. 8:9 and Phil. 2:7, about how on the cross, the Lord Jesus made himself poor, of no reputation, and now has been so highly exalted. Our living out of the Lord's cross is shown in our making of ourselves poor. That is surely the unmistakable teaching of this allusion. But Solomon may have had in view the way that rich people were held to ransom to part with their riches for the sake of their lives being spared, whereas the poor don't have this problem. He may be thereby implying that wealth is the most important thing a man has after his physical life. This accords with his mistaken view that the wise get wealth and the foolish are poor.

Pro 13:9 The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out-
"The righteous" in :5 and elsewhere in Proverbs refers to David, and Solomon was the "lamp" or descendent given to David, shining brightly in his kingdom (1 Kings 15:4). But Solomon was not the Messianic "lamp" of David in its ultimate term (Ps. 132:17). He failed to fulfil the conditions to become the Messianic son of David. But he prides himself that he is shining brightly, whereas all other contenders for the throne had been snuffed out. Again, what he says is true, but is harnessed to his own personal self-justification.

Pro 13:10 Pride only breeds quarrels, but with ones who take advice is wisdom-
Again this is true, but almost every verse in this section has included some self justification. "Quarrels" is the word used in the parable about the strivings between David's sons (2 Sam. 14:6). He is implying that all the quarrels about his being the one to have the throne merely came from pride, and the wise will accept Solomon's kingship.

Pro 13:11 Wealth gained dishonestly dwindles away, but he who gathers by hand makes it grow-
Solomon believed that his own wealth was a result of his wisdom. But wealth is given by God, and in his case, he was told that right at the start of his reign. It didn't come from his own hard work, but from God's gracious gift, in recognition of his desire for wisdom to teach Israel. And again, the Lord's parable of the rich fool shows that the rich sometimes take their wealth to the grave. But the ultimate perspective upon wealth is that it cannot affect in any way our eternity, nor be taken into God's Kingdom. Indeed, it must be shed if we are to enter the needle gate into the Kingdom- whether or not the wealth was attained by our hard work or by dishonesty.

Pro 13:12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when longing is fulfilled, it is a tree of life-
Access to the tree of life has been taken away because of human sin; only in the

restored Eden of the Kingdom of God on earth will we be able to eat the fruit of the tree of life. Indeed God in His grace and wisdom barred access to the tree of life, knowing that eternity in our present state would be a curse. But Solomon likes to think that his kingdom is the Kingdom of God, and the life according to his wisdom was effectively the life eternal. Again we see a failure in Solomon to perceive that the true life and restoration of Eden was yet future. This would explain why as he got older and approached death, he became disillusioned; for clearly his life had not been the life of the Kingdom.

Pro 13:13 Whoever despises instruction will pay for it, but he who respects a command will be rewarded-
Again this is true, but the instruction and commands which Solomon has in immediate view is his own teaching in the anthology of Proverbs we are reading. He would tolerate no disobedience to it.

Pro 13:14 The teaching of the wise is a spring of life, to turn others away from the snares of death-
AV "the law of the wise is a fountain of life". But the law could not bring life, only grace could; and Solomon was far from realizing this (Gal. 3:21). David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah*. This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

Solomon uses the figure of a well of living water to describe spiritual words and thinking (Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22). Yet this is the very figure which he uses concerning his worldly bride (Song of Solomon 4:15). It could be argued that this typifies the massive imputation of righteousness which the Lord Jesus grants to us, His worldly Gentile bride. But I would rather see it as an example of how he chose to justify his love for worldly women by as it were clothing those women in his own mind with the imagery of spirituality.

Pro 13:15 Good understanding wins favour; but the way of the unfaithful is hard-
Solomon teaches that material blessings (Heb.) come as a result of using wisdom. But Ecc. 9:11 shows his rejection of Prov. 13:15: “The race is not to the swift... neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill;

but time and chance happeneth to them all". He concluded life was just a random sequence of events.

Pro 13:16 Every prudent man acts from knowledge, but a fool exposes folly-
The idea may be that the actions of the wise and foolish are openly displayed for public view. That may sound obvious, but the sense is that the way of wisdom earns approval from observers, whereas the unwise appear foolish in public. And Solomon seems all too concerned about appearances, being shamed or avoiding looking foolish, in the court of public opinion- rather than before God's final judgment.

Pro 13:17 A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy gains healing-
"Trouble" is the word for "evil", and Solomon uses the idea of falling into evil / trouble as the ultimate judgment for the wicked, to be avoided by all means (Prov. 13:17; 17:20; 28:10,14). But by the time of Ecc. 9:12, Solomon concludes that death is the ultimate falling into evil, and this shall come upon all men, and therefore being righteous or wicked is irrelevant in the face of death.

Pro 13:18 Poverty and shame come to him who refuses discipline, but he who heeds correction shall be honoured-
This appears to be an out of context allusion to David's words in Ps. 38:14, reflecting on his sin with Bathsheba, and how he felt unable to give reproof to others: "Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs". Solomon was obsessed with David his father, speaking hundreds of times of "David my father". But he failed to have his humility; he endlessly dishes out reproofs in Proverbs, indeed he sees his Proverbs as reproofs to people (e.g. Prov. 1:25; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5,31; 29:15); whereas David humbly felt unable to do so because of his awareness of his sins. And at the time David wrote the Proverbs, when he received wisdom at the start of his reign, he was sinning likewise [in essence] by marrying foreign women.

Pro 13:19 Longing fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but fools detest turning from evil-
Removing / turning or departing from evil is a major theme of Proverbs (Prov. 13:19; 14:16; 16:6,17). Solomon uses the same phrase in Ecc. 11:10, but he gives the reason as being because youth is vanity; old age will prove that there is no point in not departing from evil, and going the way of evil, like going the way of righteousness, is all the same vanity. This nihilistic approach is because Solomon failed to discern that the end point of the path of righteousness, departing or removing our foot from the way of evil, is the redemption of the body in God's future Kingdom. But because he failed to understand that, he ends up concluding as he gets older that the choice between evil and good is all the same vain and meaningless. It is the hope of the resurrection of the

body, the reality of judgment to come and the future Kingdom of God, which make morality of so much meaning today. We may also note again Solomon's overly simplistic idea that if a man removes himself from evil, all will go wonderfully for him in life. The same phrase is used of how Job removed himself from, or "eschewed", evil; but his life was traumatic and without all the blessings for wisdom which Solomon liked to imagine.

Pro 13:20 One who walks with wise men grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm-
Solomon sees wisdom as being mediated through men. Whilst this may be true, and it certainly was in an illiterate society, he fails to perceive the direct, personal relationship possible and preferable between God and man. David's desire was for fools to repent: "Understand, you brutes... You fools, when will you be wise?" (Ps. 94:8). But Solomon makes little appeal to the fools, but instead divides men into the righteous and the fools, and almost gloats over the foolishness of the fools, relishing in describing their position.

Pro 13:21 Misfortune pursues sinners, but prosperity rewards the righteous-
This again is how Solomon wanted to imagine things, assuming that others would follow his pattern, and be given prosperity. But spiritual reality is different. The righteous suffer and don't get prosperity now, whereas the wicked prosper. Reality is far more complex than the simple dualism Solomon presents, and the final rewards for human behaviour are yet future, at the day of judgment. But he had no desire to perceive that, as he imagined his kingdom to be God's Kingdom, under his own Messianic rulership.

Pro 13:22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the wealth of the sinner is stored for the righteous-
This may be true, but the children of the wicked prosper, apparently (Job 21:11), and wealthy sinners leave prosperous houses to their children (Job 21:9; 22:18; Ps. 49:11). Again, Solomon's simplistic dualism fails to perceive the nuances of spiritual reality, because Solomon seems to have never experienced the ups and downs, paradoxes and tensions which are all part of spiritual experience in practice.

Pro 13:23 An abundance of food is in poor people's fields, but injustice sweeps it away-
AV "want of judgment", as if the failure to have enough food is the fault of the poor. This would be in line with :18 and Prov. 28:19. Solomon repeatedly sees poverty as being the fault of the poor, and their refusal of his teaching of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 6:11; 10:4,15; 13:7,8,18,23; 24:34; 28:19; 31:7). Many of these passages are effectively mocking the poor, which Solomon condemns in Prov. 17:5. He fails to take his own wisdom, as we

also see in his behaviour with foreign women. Again we see Solomon's works based approach to righteousness, and lack of grace; refusing to accept that we are all poor men before God, as David himself exemplified when he cried to God as a poor man (Ps. 34:6). But his much beloved father David was unashamed to say he was a materially "poor man" (1 Sam. 18:23); and Uriah, whom he wronged, is described also as a "poor man" (2 Sam. 12:1). The poor were to be defended and given to (Ps. 82:3), and the Bible is clear that poverty isn't necessarily a result of sin or unwisdom. But Solomon fails to appreciate this, so obsessed is he with works, and the idea that obedience to his anthology of Proverbs will make the poor prosperous, as if God's truth is a kind of wealth creation scheme.

Pro 13:24 One who spares the rod hates his son, but one who loves him is careful to discipline him-
Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 13:25 The righteous one eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the belly of the wicked goes hungry-
But we think of the righteous Paul often going hungry, and hardly having a satisfied soul (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27). As I have observed so often, Solomon is presenting an overly simplistic view of blessing for the righteous now, and cursing for the wicked. The book of Job, and his father David's experiences, ought to have taught him that this was not the case. Solomon later concludes that despite having every material blessing, a man can still not be satisfied (s.w. Ecc. 4:8; 6:3). But in Proverbs he thinks that the righteous *do* satisfy their souls in this life (Prov. 13:25). But he thought that this would be experienced in this life, rather than in any future Kingdom of God on earth. As he got closer to death, he realized that he had not satisfied his soul despite all his wealth. And so he concluded

that righteousness was vain, and turned away from Yahweh. This is what happens when we lose the perspective of the future Kingdom of God.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 14

Pro 14:1 Every wise woman builds her house, but the foolish one tears it down with her own hands-
Solomon here continues the spirit of his mother's advice to him about a good wife in Prov. 31; for the virtuous woman is pictures as building up the house / family. Solomon repeats his mother's wisdom about women, whilst disobeying it in practice, as noted througout Prov. 31. It is one thing to discern and teach truth; but quite another to personalize it and live by it. The very possession of that truth, and the experience of teaching it, can lead us to disobey it because we assume that mere possession of it justifies us.

Pro 14:2 He who walks in his uprightness fears Yahweh, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him-
The Hebrew for "perverse" is literally 'the one who turns aside', implying they were once on the right path but had left it. It would seem that Solomon has in view the house of Saul, who were potential contenders for his throne.

Pro 14:3 The fool's talk brings a rod to his back, but the lips of the wise protect them-
Discipline and punishment of the unwise is a big theme in Solomon's Proverbs. He took it to the extent of whipping his own people (1 Kings 12:11). This abusive attitude to people arose from his obsession with the idea that he had wisdom, and people generally are fools, idiots, unwise- and therefore he could abuse them. This abusive attitude to people is another outcome of believing that mere possession of truths about God justifies us, and declares all other people foolish, unwise and able to be legitimately abused by us. In contrast, the heart of God (as of David) bleeds for such people and wants to save them rather than gloat in their unwisdom and punish them for it.

Pro 14:4 Where no oxen are, the crib is clean, but much increase is by the strength of the ox-
This is a fair enough observation, but again Solomon falls into the mindset of believing that blessing / increase comes about by strength and hard work. Whereas the consistent Biblical message is that blessing is by grace, and the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, as Solomon later mused (Ecc. 9:11). Power and strength are of God, and from nothing else.

Pro 14:5 A truthful witness will not lie, but a false witness pours out lies-
This may sound like a pointless statement of the obvious an axiomatic. But we likely need to read in an ellipsis; the truthful *always* testify honestly, and liars *always* lie. But

this is simply not the case. Solomon utterly fails to recognize that human behaviour is a jagged graph, good people sin, and bad people do good things; we are saved not by consistent, stellar living before God, but by faith in His grace. But he fails to perceive this, when he should have learnt it from his father's experiences and his Psalms.

Pro 14:6 A scoffer seeks wisdom, and doesn't find it, but knowledge comes easily to a discerning person-
It is true that those who claim not to understand God's truth, or who say it's too difficult to interpret, are in fact exercising their own psychological agenda. Subconsciously they don't want to accept His truth, and so they claim not to understand, or cite difficulties in interpretation. Jn. 7:17 is relevant here: "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know of this teaching, whether it is of God, or I speak from myself". He who wishes above all things to live God's life, to have His Spirit, to live the life eternal with Him… they will intuitively know whether the Lord's doctrine is right or not. This intuitive element is in fact what leads to faith in the first place. There is a strong tendency to talk this down, and assume that it is by intellectual process that a person decides what is true or otherwise. But all appeal to intellectual process alone to decide 'truth' is flawed. For we are talking of spiritual things and not material. And legitimate intellectual process varies between persons. They may come to different conclusions about the same teaching which they analyze. And some are far more capable of intellectual analysis than others. There has to be something beyond intellectual process to decide truth. Here the Lord expresses this as a willing to do God's will, a heart for God, a desire for eternity. In a word, we must be open to the things of the Spirit. And then, the teachings make sense and there is an intuitive congruence between them and our own spirit.

Pro 14:7 Stay away from a foolish man, for you won't find knowledge on his lips-
This is true. There is no Old Testament concept of excommunication or disfellowship of those who taught wrongly or were unwise; rather the simple advice is to keep away from them and their teaching.

Pro 14:8 The wisdom of the prudent is to think about his way, but the folly of fools is deceit-
The idea is that not examining our way is the same as foolish self deceit. Self examination is a fundamental part of the way of life. But the word for "deceit" is so often used by David in the Psalms about his opponents, and their supporters and families were Solomon's opponents too. And he writes them off as all fools who are self deceived.

Pro 14:9 Fools mock at making atonement for sins, but among the upright there is good

will-
AV "make a mock at sin", as if a lighthearted attitude to sin is the way of foolishness. But equally, as NEV, the idea may be that fools have no conscience about the seriousness of their sins, and their need for atonement. The "upright" surely ought to be commended for making atonement for their sins. But that is lacking in the parallelism. Solomon sees a simplistic division between fools who sin, and the upright who don't sin. When [as he should have learned from his father David's life], sin is to be found in all. "There is good will" is hard to interpret. The sense may be as in LXX "the houses of the just are acceptable", i.e. they need no atonement, as far as Solomon wanted to see it. Or we may interpret with GNB "Foolish people don't care if they sin, but good people want to be forgiven"; in which case we are comforted that good people sin, the difference is that they wish for atonement.

Pro 14:10 The heart knows its own bitterness and joy; he will not share these with a stranger-
The implication is that the foolish wear their hearts on their sleeves and share their feelings. But that is not necessarily foolish, but rather a function of personality; some are wired to need to share their emotions, others aren't. But Solomon as ever seeks to justify his own personality type as the right and wise one; hence he commends industry and hard work, because that was how he was wired himself. The lesson is to be aware that spirituality is not about simply reinforcing our own native personality type and wiring.

Pro 14:11 The house of the wicked will be overthrown, but the tent of the upright will flourish-
Because the salvation of others is in our hands, both in and outside of the ecclesia, we are held responsible for their eternal loss if we do not minister to them. “Rescue those being led away to death [if we don’t, then they will die]…if you say, “But we knew nothing about this”, does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards *your* life [as you keep your brother’s life] know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done? [at judgment day]” (Prov. 14:11,12 NIV).

Here as in Prov. 3:33, Solomon again fails to have the subtlety he ought to have learnt from the book of Job. For Job was righteous but his "house" was overthrown, and the house of the wicked apparently prospered at the time of his affliction. Spiritual reality is that things are far more nuanced than the simplistic picture Solomon presents, true as it is in outline and ultimate terms.

Pro 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death-
We all know from our own experience with temptation that we can justify *anything*.

Every way of man can seem right in his own eyes because of this feature of our nature (Prov. 14:12; 16:25; 21:2). The truth of this statement demonstrates the error of the humanistic approach of 'follow your heart', 'do what feels good and right to you'. There must be the influence of God's word to put us on the path to life.

Pro 14:13 Even in laughter the heart may be sorrowful, and mirth may end in heaviness-
But in Ecclesiastes, Solomon gave his heart to mirth, to see if there was wisdom to be found through this. He ended up re-learning the truth that he had earlier presented as prepositional truth. Despite recognizing that "even in mirth there is sorrow" and knowing that fools love mirth (Ecc. 7:4), still Solomon wanted it and indulged that desire (Ecc. 2:2). He rejected this wisdom and only came to agree with it through doing just what Prov. 14:13 condemns (Ecc. 2:2). Another example of this is in Prov. 5:4; 22:14 cp. Ecc. 7:26.

Pro 14:14 The unfaithful will be repaid for his own ways; likewise a good man will be rewarded for his ways-
This is only finally true in the judgment of the last day, and the eternal outcomes of our lives in God's future Kingdom on earth. But they were things which Solomon didn't seem to factor in to his reasoning, as he assumed he was the Messianic figure and his kingdom was God's. So we can conclude that he assumes that the 'reward' for living is in this life. But LXX introduces a more subtle difference between the faithful and unfaithful: "A stout-hearted man shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man with his own thoughts". This would emphasize the power of spiritual mindedness over simply tramping on in our own ways.

Pro 14:15 A simple man believes everything, but the prudent man carefully considers his ways-
Solomon suggests here that our "ways" are influenced by what we hear in teaching from others. Believing everything is compared with self examination. But Paul seems to quote the LXX of this verse in saying that love believes everything (1 Cor. 13:7). This is another example of where the New Testament subtly deconstructs, or adds nuance to, the otherwise simplistic dualism found in Proverbs.

Pro 14:16 A wise man fears, and shuns evil, but the fool is hotheaded and reckless-
Removing / shunning or departing from evil is a major theme of Proverbs (Prov. 13:19; 14:16; 16:6,17). Solomon uses the same phrase in Ecc. 11:10, but he gives the reason as being because youth is vanity; old age will prove that there is no point in not departing from evil, and going the way of evil, like going the way of righteousness, is all the same vanity. This nihilistic approach is because Solomon failed to discern that the

end point of the path of righteousness, departing or removing our foot from the way of evil, is the redemption of the body in God's future Kingdom. But because he failed to understand that, he ends up concluding as he gets older that the choice between evil and good is all the same vain and meaningless. It is the hope of the resurrection of the body, the reality of judgment to come and the future Kingdom of God, which make morality of so much meaning today. We may also note again Solomon's overly simplistic idea that if a man removes himself from evil, all will go wonderfully for him in life. The same phrase is used of how Job removed himself from, or "eschewed", evil; but his life was traumatic and without all the blessings for wisdom which Solomon liked to imagine.

Pro 14:17 He who is quick to become angry will commit folly, and a crafty man is hated-
The parallel is between those who are crafty to commit sin, doing so quietly and discreetly; and those who sin openly because they have no self control.

Pro 14:18 The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge-
He saw his wisdom and knowledge as some sort of a reward in themselves: “the prudent are crowned with knowledge”. This is of course true in a sense, as all the Proverbs are. But Solomon surely had the idea that he, who was so renowned for his knowledge, was somehow thereby rewarded by having it. This assumption by Solomon was likely behind each of the many references he makes to the value of wisdom and the blessedness of the man who has it. It is rather like feeling that ‘we have the truth’ because somehow our correct understanding of doctrines is a reward for our righteousness, and mere possession of doctrinal truth means that we are acceptable to God.

Pro 14:19 The evil bow down before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous-
The "gates of the righteous" is specifically the gates of Zion (Ps. 118:20; Is. 26:2 s.w.). What Solomon says will only ultimately be true in the future Kingdom, but he is implying that in his exaltation as the Davidic king, he was declared as "good" and "righteous", and all his opponents as evil and wicked. Self justification seems never far from Solomon's thought and expression.

Pro 14:20 The poor person is shunned even by his own neighbour, but the rich person has many friends-
Again Solomon implies that poverty is a sign of curse, and wealth is a sign of blessing. But that is simply not how God works. Solomon was given wealth by God, and he goes on to assume that this is a sign of acceptability with Him, when it isn't. David laments

how his friends turned away from him and he was shunned by his neighbours, as a result of his sin with Solomon's mother Bathsheba (Ps. 38:11; 88:18). The way Solomon appears ignorant of this indicates the degree to which he had whitewashed his parents, and considered the effects of that sin not to be consequence for sin, but rather the unreasonable and wrong behaviour of his own half brothers. And he believed they had been condemned for that behaviour, as his Proverbs often allude to them.

Pro 14:21 He who despises his neighbour sins, but blessed is he who has pity on the poor-
Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to so obsessively forbidding the giving of collateral to guarantee a loan. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom. The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis). Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan; what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others.

Pro 14:22 Don't they go astray who plot evil? But love and faithfulness belong to those who plan good-
"Plot evil" is the phrase used of Saul's plots against David (1 Sam. 23:9). Saul likely still had his supporters even in Solomon's time, and Solomon came to the throne after period of continual attempts to take the throne from the Davidic line through Absalom. And he uses his Proverbs, true as they are, to do down any potential opposition, and to present support of him as the only way to national peace and unity- an old ploy.

Pro 14:23 In all hard work there is profit, but the talk of the lips leads only to poverty-

Here again we see Solomon's works based attitude. He sees poverty as the result of laziness, and profit / plenty coming from hard work (Prov. 14:23; 21:5). He fails to appreciate the wider narrative in spiritual life. The good news is for the poor, which group may include the lazy. And works will not save, and God's salvation is what is ultimately required by man. But Solomon had no eternal perspective, because he thought his kingdom was God's. And so as he got older and closer to death, he reasons that the reality of death means that man has no profit or preeminence (s.w. Ecc. 3:19). If he had accepted the Gospel of the future Kingdom of God, he would have focused more upon salvation by grace through faith, and less upon the supremacy of hard work and profit / preeminence in this life.

Pro 14:24 The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools crowns them with folly-
It was Solomon who was the king and wore the ultimate crown in his society. And he implies that his fantastic riches were a result of his wisdom, and that his pattern should be followed by others. But he fails to remember that his desire for wisdom was recognized by God in that He gave Solomon riches. Those riches were a gift from God, by grace, and not acquired or generated by his own application of wisdom (1 Kings 3:13). He therefore misused his possession of wisdom and experience of grace to justify himself, and present himself as a self made man; when he was not that at all.

Pro 14:25 A truthful witness saves souls, but a false witness is deceitful-
Solomon has much to say about true and false witnesses (Prov. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18). Whilst his warnings are true enough, he surely has an element of self justification in what he writes. Because he was aware that his parents, David and Bathsheba, had been accused of many things which had led to all the opposition against David at the end of his reign, and which opposition Solomon had to contend with in order to retain the throne for himself. David laments the false witness of the house of Saul and his own sons, Solomon's half brothers (Ps. 27:12; 35:11). The continual condemnation of false witnesses must be understood in this context. Whilst it is all true so far as it goes, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 14:26 In the fear of Yahweh is a secure fortress, and He will be a refuge for His children-
The secure fortress was Zion (Is. 32:18; Ps. 125:1 s.w.), "the stronghold of Zion, the same is the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). Whilst what Solomon says is true, and repeats the multiple cases of David in the Psalms professing trust in Yahweh as his strong fortress, Solomon as ever has his agenda of self justification; he saw his possession of Zion as a

sign that he feared Yahweh acceptably, and that his children would continue the Davidic line of glory. But sacred space is not so ultimately important to God. Possession of the literal stronghold of Zion was nothing compared to trust in Yahweh.

Pro 14:27 The fear of Yahweh is a fountain of life, turning people from the snares of death-
Solomon uses the figure of a well of living water to describe spiritual words and thinking (Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22). Yet this is the very figure which he uses concerning his worldly bride (Song of Solomon 4:15). It could be argued that this typifies the massive imputation of righteousness which the Lord Jesus grants to us, His worldly Gentile bride. But I would rather see it as an example of how he chose to justify his love for worldly women by as it were clothing those women in his own mind with the imagery of spirituality.

Solomon claims that the righteous / wise live long lives, and therefore the unwise have shorter lives (Prov. 9:11; 10:27). This was the promise for obedience to the old covenant (s.w. Dt. 11:21). But it is not always the case, as Job learned (s.w. Job 29:18); righteous men like David and Hezekiah felt their days had been shortened (s.w. Ps. 89:45; 102:23). And it was so with the Lord Jesus. And faithful men often lament that the wicked seem to get long life, whilst the righteous don't. The answer to that conundrum is that final blessing of long life is at the resurrection, at the last day; and not in this life. But Solomon didn't see that; he thought that long life now was the only reward. He failed to perceive the real meaning of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Pro 14:28 In the multitude of people is the king's glory, but without people the prince is nothing-
GNB "A king's greatness depends on how many people he rules; without them he is nothing". Solomon is again justifying himself, for the people at his time are described as very many at his time (1 Kings 4:20). Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 14:29 He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a quick temper displays folly-
This is true, but there are several examples of David's quick temper. We recall his furious desire to slay Nabal's family. But all the historical weaknesses of David are passed over by Solomon. He seems to have subconsciously whitewashed his father, and presents him elsewhere as the glorious example of wisdom, and all his opponents as fools.

Pro 14:30 The life of the body is a heart at peace, but envy rots the bones-

GNB "Peace of mind makes the body healthy, but jealousy is like a cancer". Solomon has much to say about the evil of envy (e.g. Prov. 14:30; 23:17; 24:1,19; 27:4). But true as his condemnations of envy are, he surely has in mind the way that Ephraim envied Judah, and envied his throne (s.w. Is. 11:13). This all came to full term after his death, when Ephraim departed from Judah under Jeroboam. Again, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning. But as he faced death, he came to realize that all such envy is as nothing before the reality of death, which he understood as the end of life, as he had assumed this life was the time for reward and expresses no personal hope in a resurrection of the body (Ecc. 4:4; 9:6).

Pro 14:31 He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy honours Him-
Oppression seems to have been a characteristic of the reigns of Saul and Absalom. See on Ps. 62:10. This was the equivalent of how Saul oppressed David (Ps. 119:121,122,134). Samuel's insistence that *he* has not oppressed the people is in the context of his warning that Saul would do this (1 Sam. 12:3,4). When Solomon later condemns the 'oppressors' (s.w. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3,24), he has in view a wishing of judgment upon the house of Saul. "The poor" whom they had oppressed would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6).

Pro 14:32 The wicked is brought down in his calamity, but in death, the righteous has a refuge-
"Brought down" is 'chased away', the language of Divine judgment at the last day (Job 18:18; 20:8; Is. 13:14; 17:13). AV "hath hope in his death". all this can be read as looking forward to the judgment of the last day; but Solomon doesn't reason as if there is such a judgment. He saw himself, armed with his Divine wisdom, as the ultimate judge of men, and his kingdom as God's Kingdom with himself as the Messiah figure. So whilst his words are recorded in such a way as to look ahead to the future, I suggest this was not the position which he himself held. Rather is he saying that the wicked are brought down in this life, and when faced with violent death, as David was at times, God will deliver them- in this life.

Pro 14:33 Wisdom remains in the heart of one who has understanding, and is even made known in the inward part of fools-
Solomon later alludes to this in saying that although he cast off his faith in Yahweh, and his heart turned aside to idols, his Divinely given wisdom [in an intellectual sense] remained with him (Ecc. 2:9). He seems to be saying that if one has wisdom, it will always remain in the heart, and thereby justify a man. But this isn't the case; one can

know Divine truths and yet live otherwise, without at all personalizing them. And so turn away from the true God, just as Solomon did. The last half of the verse would simply be saying that fools don't get it, and never will, hence GNB "fools know nothing about wisdom".

Pro 14:34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people-
Israel were exalted under Solomon to the peak of their power and extent. And he sees this as being due to "righteousness". But he himself was far from righteousness, as were his people. Their exaltation was due to the work done by David, and God's recognition of David. Material blessing in secular terms is no guarantee of righteousness, nor is a lack of such blessings a sign of sin; as the book of Job makes clear. But Solomon sees only the immediate and the secular, and assumes that the exaltation of Israel was because of their or his righteousness. But that is simply not the case.

Pro 14:35 The king's favour is toward a servant who deals wisely, but his wrath is toward one who causes shame- See on Prov. 12:16. Although what Solomon writes is true and inspired, he clearly has in view his favour and then wrath against his servant Jeroboam (1 Kings 11:26). Solomon uses his own feelings against Jeroboam as a basis for a global truth about kings and their servants. His Proverbs were indeed inspired, but there was a human element behind his words, ever seeking to use God's truths in order to justify himself.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 15

Pro 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger-
LXX "Anger slays even wise men; yet a submissive answer turns away wrath: but a grievous word stirs up anger". There are several similarities here with David's hotheaded desire to kill Nabal and all his family because of harsh words. And indeed Abigail's wise and gentle answer turned away David's wrath. Abigail remained a favourite wife with David, and so Solomon here appears to be justifying her. Although another alternative is that he had so whitewashed the failures and rashness of his father David that he writes this without any awareness that it all applies to his father, and shows him up in a bad light; whereas Solomon is everywhere glorifying "my father David".

Pro 15:2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of fools gushes out folly-
Solomon speaks truly, but he seems to have a subtext of declaring himself the ultimate tongue of the wise; see on :4.

Pro 15:3 Yahweh's eyes are everywhere, keeping watch on the evil and the good-
Perhaps a reference to the Angels. The point is that both evil and good are watched over by them, for God is the ultimate creator of both (Is. 45:5-7). This would have been (and still is) at radical variance with the common misconception that some cosmic forces of evil watch over the evil, whilst God watches over the good. See on :11.

Pro 15:4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but deceit in it crushes the spirit-
AV "a wholesome tongue". Solomon has early predicated "life" upon his own words (Prov. 4:20,22); so it may be that he again has himself in view as the ultimately good and true tongue. For he considers that his tongue is the ultimate "tongue of the wise" of :2.

Access to the tree of life has been taken away because of human sin; only in the restored Eden of the Kingdom of God on earth will we be able to eat the fruit of the tree of life. Indeed God in His grace and wisdom barred access to the tree of life, knowing that eternity in our present state would be a curse. But Solomon likes to think that his kingdom is the Kingdom of God, and the life according to his wisdom was effectively the life eternal. Again we see a failure in Solomon to perceive that the true life and restoration of Eden was yet future. This would explain why as he got older and approached death, he became disillusioned; for clearly his life had not been the life of the Kingdom.

Pro 15:5 A fool despises his father's correction, but he who heeds reproof shows prudence-

Solomon's prophetic sonship of David was conditional upon him preserving or observing Yahweh's ways (1 Kings 2:4; 1 Chron. 22:13; 2 Chron. 7:17); but he didn't preserve of observe them (1 Kings 11:10,11); despite David praying that Solomon would be given a heart to observe them (1 Chron. 29:19). We can pray for God to work upon the hearts of others, but He will not force people against their own deepest will and heart position. Solomon stresses overmuch how God would keep or preserve the righteous (Prov. 2:8; 3:26), without recognizing the conditional aspect of this. Why did Solomon go wrong? His Proverbs are true enough, but he stresses that obedience to his wisdom and teaching would preserve his hearers (Prov. 4:4; 6:22; 7:1; 8:32; 15:5), preservation was through following the example of the wise (Prov. 2:20); rather than stressing obedience to God's ways, and replacing David his father's simple love of God with a love of academic wisdom: "Yahweh preserves all those who love Him" (Ps. 145:20).

Pro 15:6 In the house of the righteous is much treasure-
Solomon continues his mistaken attitude to wealth, alluding to the houses he built in which to store his treasures. But he was given wealth by God's grace, as a gift, in recognition of his preference for wisdom. But he abuses this grace, as we can, in assuming that the gift was given because he was righteous- when he wasn't.

But the income of the wicked brings trouble-
The initial reference would be to Achan who loved and coveted wealth and thereby troubled Israel (s.w. 1 Chron. 2:7). But Solomon always has some self justification in his agenda in the Proverbs, and he surely has in mind how Saul troubled Israel (1 Sam. 14:29 s.w.), and was therefore replaced by the line of David through Solomon.

Pro 15:7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so with the heart of fools-
Again the heart and the mouth are paralleled. We cannot hope to think things in our hearts, and they don't ultimately issue forth as words (Mt. 12:34). Solomon considers that he is justified as personally wise, because of his spreading of knowledge in the form of the anthology we have in the book of Proverbs. But teaching others doesn't of itself justify us. He pronounces himself as the "teacher" in Ecclesiastes, at a point where he has clearly lost any personal faith he ever had.

Pro 15:8 The sacrifice made by the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, but the prayer of the upright is His delight-
We note here the parallel between prayer and sacrifice. This is a major Biblical theme (Hos. 14:2 etc.). Indeed, it is "not for ease that prayer shall be". True prayer involves giving something deeply personal of ourselves.

Pro 15:9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to Yahweh, but He loves him who follows after righteousness-
This is true. But Solomon was 'the one whom Yahweh loves' (2 Sam. 12:24; the same words are used), and there is a subtext here of self justification. See on Prov. 3:12. Solomon's experience of God's love led him to conclude that he must therefore be following righteousness. But he failed to perceive that God's love is by grace, and not a reward for our righteousness.

Pro 15:10 There is stern discipline for one who forsakes the way: whoever hates reproof shall die-
Solomon here quotes his father's words in Ps. 50:17 "since you hate instruction". Solomon thus accuses any who refuse his Proverbs of doing just this, hating instruction, which in the context of Ps. 50:17 means 'You are condemned' (s.w. Prov. 5:12; 12:1; 15:10). As in Prov. 2:13, Solomon sees the wicked as those who once knew the right path and have left it. He contrasts the path of uprightness and that of darkness (Prov. 2:13). But life is not so clear cut. The same phrase is used of how Job felt he was walking the path of darkness (Job 19:8). David, Solomon's father, likewise partially strayed from the path. This inability to recognize that spiritual life is not so black and white led to Solomon assuming he was totally on the way of righteousness. He was unable therefore to appreciate that he himself failed at some points at some times. And this is true for those who have a similarly black and white view of people and spirituality.

Pro 15:11 Sheol and Abaddon are before Yahweh- how much more then the hearts of the children of men!-
Death and the grave are therefore not seen as presided over by some lord of the underworld, a Satan-like figure. Rather God is presented as all powerful and alone in control of good and evil; see on :3. Solomon correctly perceives that the hearts of men are what determine their destiny. But he presents this truth without personalizing it, for his own heart was turned away to idolatry.

Pro 15:12 A scoffer doesn't love to be reproved; he will not go to the wise-
David had spoken of the house of Saul as scoffing at him (s.w. Ps. 119:51). And the line of David had been chosen to replace Saul because he had refused Samuel's reproof. David had accepted reproof and was open to it, notably from Nathan the prophet (Ps. 38:1; 141:5); and so again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father. But Solomon was only to remain the prophetic son of David if he accepted reproof (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:14); and he didn't. He refused to personalize his own wisdom, as we can.

Pro 15:13 A glad heart makes a cheerful face; but an aching heart breaks the spirit-
Solomon teaches that a broken spirit is a curse (Prov. 15:13; 17:22; 18:14), and an indication that something is wrong with the core of a person; because an unbroken spirit will "make a cheerful face" (Prov. 15:13), and external appearance and having joy in this life was of primary importance to Solomon. He fails to realize that his father David had a broken spirit (Ps. 31:12; 38:8; 44:19; 51:8,17; 69:20- all a fair emphasis), and had thereby understood that Yahweh is especially close to those with a broken spirit (Ps. 34:18; 147:13), indeed the Gospel is for the broken spirited, and the broken hearted are not to be mocked (Ps. 109:16).

Pro 15:14 The heart of one who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly-
Again the message is that wisdom is manifested in terms of who a person seeks as their teacher. This is indeed true, confirmed by 2 Tim. 4:3. But as ever there is the subtext, that anyone who refuses to accept Solomon as the teacher of Israel is foolish. And yet Solomon was himself morally compromised by his fleshly lifestyle.

Pro 15:15 All the days of the afflicted are wretched, but one who has a cheerful heart enjoys a continual feast-
Again, this is typical of the simplistic dualism of Solomon. The wise have a continual feast, whereas the unwise live wretched lives. But this is simply not true to spiritual reality, and the Bible is full of lament that the wicked have a great life now whilst the righteous suffer, with the final resolution of things only made at the last day. But Solomon assumes that he is the Messianic seed of David and his kingdom is God's Kingdom, and therefore the reward for wisdom has to be immediately in this life.

Pro 15:16 Better is little with the fear of Yahweh, than great treasure with trouble-
This is true, but it is in tension with Solomon's idea that increased wealth comes as a blessing for wisdom. Perhaps LXX is therefore more accurate, speaking of the size of an inheritance: "Better is a small portion...". This may refer to Solomon's tribe of Judah not having the largest portion or inheritance, a source of tension between Judah and Ephraim.

Pro 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fattened calf with hatred-
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. The Proverbs which lament the rich man who has bitterness in his family life no doubt came true of Solomon in later life. He is a parade example of knowing Divine truth but living the very opposite.

Perhaps Solomon has in view the "hatred" of his brother Amnon (2 Sam. 13:15). The word for "hatred" is used by David in the Psalms, about both the house of Saul and also Solomon's half brothers (see on Ps. 25:19; 103:9; 109:5). All these were contenders to Solomon's throne, and he appears to here condemn them as fools who shall therefore be condemned. This constant focus upon the judgment of others led Solomon to be quite unaware of his personal responsibility to judgment himself.

Pro 15:18 A wrathful man stirs up contention, but one who is slow to anger appeases strife-
Solomon seems to overlook the fact that his father David was known as a "wrathful man" (s.w. 2 Sam. 11:20), who was hardly "slow to anger", as witnessed by his behaviour at the time of Nabal's provocation. He refuses to see any weakness in his father, and instead presents him as the wise and righteous man.

Pro 15:19 The way of the sluggard is like a thorn patch, but the path of the upright is a highway-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 15:20 A wise son makes a father glad, but a foolish man despises his mother-
This is true, but Solomon saw himself as the supremely wise man, who made his father David glad. And he may also have in mind how his rival half brother Absalom had reduced David his father to tears, through his unwisdom.

Pro 15:21 Folly is joy to one who is void of wisdom, but a man of understanding keeps his way straight-
Solomon thinks of the righteous as walking unflinchingly forward in wisdom, never turning to the right or left, refusing to be distracted by any wicked person who suggests walking another way (Prov. 9:15 "to call travellers who go directly on their way"). This approach fails to take account of the simple fact that righteous people sin and stray from the direct path every day, and are saved finally into God's Kingdom by grace alone. That is all something Solomon failed to have any grasp of, whereas David his father did.

Prov. 11:5 makes the somewhat tautological statement that "the righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way", s.w. Prov. 4:25 "fix your gaze directly before you". This contrasts with how David uses the word in Ps. 5:8: "Lead me, O Yahweh… make Your way straight [s.w. direct] before my face". The same statement of God directing in the straight way is found in Is. 45:13; Jer. 18:4 s.w. Solomon didn't see this need for the Spirit of God to direct his path because he assumed that mere possession of Divine truth would itself keep him in the way; hence he teaches that "understanding" makes a man walk "directly" (Prov. 15:21). And he failed miserably because of that arrogant position.

Pro 15:22 Where there is no counsel, plans fail; but in a multitude of counsellors they are established-
But Solomon disobeyed this, reflecting in Ecc. 4:13 how he had become the king who wouldn't be admonished / counselled.

Pro 15:23 Joy comes to a man as a result of the reply of his mouth. How good is an appropriate word at the right time!-
This is true, but gives rise to a whiff of smug, self congratulatory complacency. For it is as if Solomon see himself and the wise as joyful or happy with themselves because they had used words rightly to others. Solomon fails to appreciate that spiritual reality is not so simplistic; James is nearer the mark when he writes that we cannot seem to always control our tongues (James 3:1-5). Whereas Solomon is smug at the thought that he always gave the right and appropriate reply.

Pro 15:24 The path of life spirals upward for the wise, to keep him from going downward to Sheol-
Solomon elsewhere clearly understands *sheol* as the grave, and not some place of punishment for the wicked at their death. So his idea is that the wise would be kept from death, perhaps violent death, in their lifetimes. But as Solomon himself got older and approached death, he realized that death was an inevitable factor in every human life; and hence Ecclesiastes is full of reflection that death means that wisdom or unwisdom is ultimately a vain choice. This all arose because Solomon wrongly assumed that this life is the time for reward and punishment for wisdom or unwisdom. He had no perspective on a future day of judgment and eternal reward. These things were clearly understood from Abraham to David, but he chose not to accept that message. But it is indeed true that there is an upward spiral in spiritual life for the wise, empowered in our days by the activity of the Spirit in human life.

Pro 15:25 Yahweh will uproot the house of the proud, but He will keep the widow's borders intact-

This is true, but the house of Solomon had competed for the throne against other families / houses. And he here alludes to that, assuming all the competing houses had been punished for their pride. But that didn't mean Solomon was the humble, wise, righteous one as he assumed. The defence of the widow alludes to David being willing to do this in 2 Sam. 14:5. There may also be an allusion to David promising not to destroy the house of Saul (1 Sam. 24:21); but Solomon considers that Yahweh would do this.

Pro 15:26 Yahweh detests the thoughts of the wicked, but the thoughts of the pure are pleasing-
"Abomination" [s.w. "detests"] is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 15:27 He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live-
The initial reference would be to Achan who loved and coveted wealth and thereby troubled Israel and his own house (s.w. 1 Chron. 2:7). But Solomon always has some self justification in his agenda in the Proverbs, and he surely has in mind how Saul troubled Israel (1 Sam. 14:29 s.w.), and was therefore replaced by the line of David through Solomon.

Pro 15:28 The heart of the righteous weighs answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes out evil-
Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

Pro 15:29 Yahweh is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous- "The Lord is far from the wicked: but He heareth the prayer of the righteous". This implies that God is too physically far away from the wicked to hear their prayer. Ps. 10:1 is one of the many references in the Psalms to God being physically far away when a prayer is not answered: "Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?". This is the language of limitation- God Himself hears every sound of our lips, including the prayers of the wicked, which He says are like smoke in His nostrils and an annoyance to Him. So if our prayers are heard when God is 'near' us, does it not follow that when our Angel is physically near us, then our prayer is more quickly heard? Hence Jesus' Angel was physically with Him in Gethsemane in order to encourage Him in prayer. Once we accept that prayer goes first to an Angel, then this suggestion looks more sensible.

LXX adds "Let the heart of a man think justly, that his steps may be rightly ordered of God". This suggests that the thinking of man is confirmed by God. This has ever been the work of the Holy Spirit.

Pro 15:30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart; good news gives health to the bones- The Hebrew isn't clear, and perhaps the GNB may be closer to the sense: "Smiling faces make you happy, and good news makes you feel better". The immediate context in :31,32 is about the positive result of hearing wisdom, so the idea may be that if Solomon smiled on a person and they received his gospel or good news, then the person would be happy; whereas if his words were refused, there would be grief (:32). But again we note that the emphasis is upon blessing right now in this life, with no perspective of a future eternal Kingdom as the time of blessing.

Pro 15:31 The ear that listens to reproof lives, and will be at home among the wise- This appears to be an out of context allusion to David's words in Ps. 38:14, reflecting on his sin with Bathsheba, and how he felt unable to give reproof to others: "Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs". Solomon was obsessed with David his father, speaking hundreds of times of "David my father". But he failed to have his humility; he endlessly dishes out reproofs in Proverbs, indeed he sees his Proverbs as reproofs to people (e.g. Prov. 1:25; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5,31; 29:15); whereas David humbly felt unable to do so because of his awareness of his sins. And at the time David wrote the Proverbs, when he received wisdom at the start of his reign, he was sinning likewise [in essence] by marrying foreign women.

Pro 15:32 He who refuses correction despises his own soul, but he who listens to reproof gets understanding-

Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 15:33 The fear of Yahweh teaches wisdom; before honour is humility-
This is true, but Solomon supposes that wisdom is received by firstly fearing Yahweh. Solomon was given wisdom as a gift, by grace. But once he possessed it, he begins to reason as if he received it because of some prior righteousness on his part. He abused the gifts of grace, just as we can.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 16

Pro 16:1 The plans of the heart within man, and the answer of the tongue, is from Yahweh-
This is the introduction to the section from :1-9 about the heart. Although we are responsible for our hearts, there is this 'other' factor, over and above our mental efforts. This is the work of the Spirit, that element "from Yahweh" over and above our freewill thought control. Note how the tongue and the heart are paralleled- for as the Lord stated specifically, our words reflect our thoughts. And yet the "answer of the tongue is from Yahweh" in that at times we find ourselves saying things which are beyond us or not fully of ourselves. It could be that the last verse in the section, :9, concludes by saying the same- "A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps".

Pro 16:2 All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but Yahweh weighs the motives-
The Hebrew refers to balancing weights. He doesn't make an automatic judgment, but consciously considers the positives and negatives within our spirits [*ruach*- "motives", NEV]. He does it this way, although He could do it without any process and instantly, in order to encourage us to do likewise, realizing that our self-examination is mirroring His.

Pro 16:3 Commit your deeds to Yahweh, and your plans shall succeed-
"Commit" is the word used by David in Ps. 37:5 "Commit your way to Yahweh. Trust also in Him, and He will do this". What He will "do" is to grant the desire of our heart (Ps. 37:4), which is defined in this Psalm as eternally inheriting the land. And this will be achieved by imputing righteousness to us (Ps. 37:6). We are to commit our life's way to Yahweh, knowing that it is His desire to grant us our heart's desire- a place in His Kingdom. So David speaks of committing our life's way to Yahweh and then trusting that He will bring us to His Kingdom; but here Solomon tweaks this into "Commit [s.w.] your *works* unto Yahweh" (Prov. 16:3). We see here Solomon's works-based approach.

Works and His thoughts are paralleled here (as in Ps. 40:5; 92:5). Thoughts are therefore our "way" of life in practice (Is. 55:7). This is because thought and action are understood as essentially the same; hence the sermon on the mount condemns thoughts of sin as if they are the sin itself.

Pro 16:4 Yahweh has made everything for its own end-- yes, even the wicked for the day of evil-
Nothing is wasted in the Divine ecology. God uses wicked people, and when He brings evil / disaster, He uses them. Sin does not, therefore, achieve its intention- of rebellion against God and the attainment of radical freedom from His purpose.

Pro 16:5 Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to Yahweh: they shall certainly not be unpunished-
AV "though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished". The idea that God somehow will forget or omit to punish sin is rooted in pride. The punishment will surely come. And even if we are hand in hand with others who are doing the same, this will not take away Divine judgment.

"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

An example of indirect reference to Solomon's pride is found in the way the record points a similarity between Paul and Solomon. Each was given wisdom, and each was given a Satan to humble them because of the way wisdom bloats a man's ego. The fact that we have 'the truth' in basic doctrinal terms - plus a fair bit of other Divine wisdom - really will tempt us to be proud. This is the sort of thing we individually and collectively need to exhort ourselves strongly about. Like us, Solomon knew theoretically the paramount danger of pride; he lists it as the most fundamental of the seven things God hates (Prov. 6:17 cp. 16:5,18). Indeed, Solomon correctly implies in Prov. 28:25 that pride is an outcome of lack of faith, and this was exactly true in Solomon's case. His lack of faith in the future kingdom led him to be proud.

Pro 16:6 By mercy and truth iniquity is atoned for; by the fear of Yahweh men depart from evil-
A radical idea at the time of the Mosaic law, which taught that atonement was through the blood of sacrifice. "Mercy and truth" is a term often associated with the promises to David; Solomon, as David's son, was surely aware of this. The salvation envisaged in those promises was not dependent upon obedience to the Law. And yet quite simply the message may be that we must show true mercy in order to obtain mercy / atonement.

Pro 16:7 When a man's ways please Yahweh, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him-
A reference to Esau's surprising peace with Jacob (Proverbs is packed with such historical commentary). Yet as they made peace, Jacob was saying that Esau was his

Lord, and he was Esau's servant (32:18; 33:14), in designed denial of the Divine prophecy that Esau was to serve Jacob (25:23). Yet at this very time, Jacob's ways pleased Yahweh. See on :9.

Pro 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues with injustice-
This is true, but it is in tension with Solomon's idea that increased wealth comes as a blessing for wisdom. Perhaps LXX is therefore more accurate, speaking of the size of an inheritance: "Better is a small portion…". This may refer to Solomon's tribe of Judah not having the largest portion or inheritance, a source of tension between Judah and Ephraim.

Pro 16:9 A man's heart plans his course, but Yahweh directs his steps-
It is within the power of choice within each human mind to decide which overall path we take in life; but we are led along that path, step by step, by God. He confirms us in our choice. The same Hebrew word *derek*, translated "course", is found translated "ways" in :7. If our choice of way or path is pleasing to God, then He will confirm us in it.

David considered his ways and turned his steps / ways towards obedience (Ps. 119:59); Solomon takes this further, using the same phrase, but saying that God directs the ways / steps of the man who considers his ways (s.w. Prov. 16:9). We have here an example of how the Spirit confirms a Godly person in the way they consciously wish to go.

David had earlier understood that for the humble and righteous, God can "prepare their heart" (Ps. 10:17). This is evidence enough that God works directly upon the human heart and psychology, which He does today through the work of His Spirit upon the human spirit. For it is men who must prepare their heart in prayer and relationship toward God (s.w. 2 Chron. 12:14; Job 11:13; Ps. 7:9). But God can also do this for the humble. Hence David later asks God to create in him a 'prepared' heart (s.w. Ps. 51:10). And God heard; for the same phrase is used of how God 'prepared' or (AV) "fixed" / NEV 'made steadfast' his heart (Ps. 57:7; 108:1; 112:7). In allusion to this, Solomon was to later reflect that God can direct or 'prepare' (s.w.) the heart of man, even if he is thinking to direct his steps elsewhere (Prov. 16:9).

Pro 16:10 Inspired judgments are on the lips of the king. He shall not betray his mouth-
Solomon writes inspired truth in Proverbs of course, but it is inevitable that much of what he writes about the need to respect the man who has wisdom, and his superiority over all others, was written with an eye to his own self-justification. He even writes as if the king must be accepted as automatically infallible: "A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; his mouth transgresseth not in judgment… the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul" (Prov. 16:10; 20:2 AV). It was really Solomon's self-justification. See on :15.

Pro 16:11 Honest balances and scales are Yahweh's; all the weights in the bag are His work-
The idea may be that no matter how men make false weights, Yahweh works through that ultimately and controls all the scales. Or the stress may be on the fact that Yahweh is the ultimate judge, weighing all things in perfectly accurate balances and with ultimately true weighting. This then leads on to the comment in :12 that a true king, and Solomon refers to himself, cannot judge wrongly because he is king on God's behalf. His judgment must therefore be accepted as correct, because he is king on behalf of Yahweh, the ultimately true and fair judge. Hence LXX "or the throne of rule is established by righteousness". But this is reasoning which is biased towards Solomon's self justification, and desire to cement himself as the unquestioned moral judge and teacher of Israel- although personally he was so far from it.

Pro 16:12 It is an abomination for kings to do wrong, for the throne is established by righteousness-
This cannot be without reference to the fact that Solomon's throne was "established"- and he assumed it was thanks to his righteousness, and his father's good standing with God. *Faith* and an acceptance of God's grace in doing this just didn't come into it. His father's high parental expectation of him led him to self-assurance, arrogance, an assumption he was right and could never be wrong. And one sees this in many a Christian family.

Pro 16:13 Righteous lips are the delight of kings; they value one who speaks the truth-
As noted on :11, this may be true, but it is Solomon's self justification. He claims to have righteous lips, and therefore to be only interested in truth. But his passion for intellectual truth was related to his mistaken idea that mere possession of Divine truth or "wisdom", as he terms it, of itself justifies a man. And Solomon utterly failed to personalize all his knowledge of truth, and his own way of life was far from what God required- because of his obsession with "truth" for its own sake. And this path to failure has been seen in so many small time Protestant groups likewise obsessed with possession of "truth" for its own sake.

Pro 16:14 The king's wrath is as a messenger of death, but a wise man will pacify it-
"The wrath of a king is as messengers (Angels) of death" (Prov. 16:14 AV)- as if to say that as the Angels- of evil and death in this case- are zealous to obey the king of Heaven's command, so are the messengers who obey a human king's over-hasty command to kill someone. As God sends out angels of death, as on Passover night, it's a reflection of His decision as King in the court of Heaven. But Solomon decided that his court was as

God's court, and therefore his thoughts, emotions and decisions would therefore be somehow Divinely fulfilled, with Angels sent out to fulfil them. He took 'God manifestation' to such a degree that he denied his own humanity, and this destroyed his own person. We see it happening all around us- church pastors, visual artists who think somehow God is speaking through them to the point they see themselves as "Gods in their own right" [as Dali and Picasso have been described as seeing themselves], Kings and political leaders and corporate directors and office managers and working class husbands and obsessive, domineering single mums… who all somehow come to see themselves as little gods with a 'Divine right' to infallible decision making for others. See on :15.

Pro 16:15 In the light of the king's face is life. His favour is like a cloud of the spring rain-
He says that a wise son makes a glad father (Prov. 10:1), so intent was he on living out his father's expectations even after David's death. Because of this he teaches that the King must always be right and be respected, whatever happens (Prov. 16:10-15). He saw himself as the Messianic King and therefore infallible. He again and again failed to realize the conditionality of all God has promised.

Solomon was so sure that he was acceptable with God by reason of being David's son, that he ended up playing God. He did this by assuming that *his* feelings were actually those of God. When he says, with reference to himself, that "the wrath of a king is as messengers [angels] of death" (Prov. 16:14), he meant that his feelings of anger would, he thought, be implemented by the Angels. He assumed, with reference to himself, that "a divine sentence is in the lips of the King" (Prov. 16:10). He was infallible, because of who he was, because he 'knew the truth', and had been raised in it, and was 'to the manner born'. So he thought. And thus he ended up appropriating to himself language relevant to God alone: "In the light of the King's countenance is life; and his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain" (Prov. 16:15).

Pro 16:16 How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! Yes, to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver-
This commendation of choosing wisdom over wealth could be read as Solomon's self-justification and self-commendation for his own choice of wisdom. The whole section from :10-32 can be read as Solomon's justification of his own judgments.

Often Solomon's Proverbs bring out the tension between wealth and wisdom, and the need to choose wisdom (Prov. 8:11; 16:16). But whilst he was inspired to write this, and true as it all was, it is inevitable that Solomon said all this with his mind on the way that he had rejected wealth for wisdom when asked by God for his wish. He thought that his right choice in early life [cp. Christian baptism] justified him in later loving wealth rather

than wisdom. He taught that wisdom filled the treasuries of the wise (Prov. 8:21 RV)- just as his treasuries were filled with wealth.

Solomon's father David concluded that the law of God was better than gold and solver (s.w. Ps. 119:72). But as so often in the book of Proverbs, Solomon speaks of the wisdom he was teaching in the same terms as the Bible elsewhere speaks of God's entire revelation. And he saw fit to flout God's law. It was as if his obsession with the wisdom material he was teaching had led him to effectively replace God's laws with his own. He saw the particular Divine truths he had been given as eclipsing the rest of God's revelation; a mistake we see commonly made.

Pro 16:17 The highway of the upright is to depart from evil. He who keeps His way preserves his soul-
Removing / turning or departing from evil is a major theme of Proverbs (Prov. 13:19; 14:16; 16:6,17). Solomon uses the same phrase in Ecc. 11:10, but he gives the reason as being because youth is vanity; old age will prove that there is no point in not departing from evil, and going the way of evil, like going the way of righteousness, is all the same vanity. This nihilistic approach is because Solomon failed to discern that the end point of the path of righteousness, departing or removing our foot from the way of evil, is the redemption of the body in God's future Kingdom. But because he failed to understand that, he ends up concluding as he gets older that the choice between evil and good is all the same vain and meaningless. It is the hope of the resurrection of the body, the reality of judgment to come and the future Kingdom of God, which make morality of so much meaning today. We may also note again Solomon's overly simplistic idea that if a man removes himself from evil, all will go wonderfully for him in life. The same phrase is used of how Job removed himself from, or "eschewed", evil; but his life was traumatic and without all the blessings for wisdom which Solomon liked to imagine.

Pro 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall-
It must be more than ironic that it was Solomon who wrote that before a fall there is pride (Prov. 16:18). Clearly Solomon never considered he could fall, so he never considered the possibility that he was proud. The words of Dt. 17:16-20 are evidently a prophecy of Solomon. He did multiply silver, gold, horses and wives; his heart *was* turned away (Dt. 17:16,17= 2 Chron. 9:20). Yet this passage says that if he studied the Law all his life, this would *not* happen, and also his heart would not be "lifted up above his brethren" (Dt. 17: 20). Solomon's whipping of the people and sense of spiritual and material superiority (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9) shows how his heart *was* lifted up. Yet Solomon knew the Law, despite his explicit disobedience to the commands concerning wives, horses etc. But his knowledge of the word didn't bring forth the true humility which it was intended to. This, surely, is what we need exhortation about: the need to achieve a

true humility in this evil, arrogant world. Solomon *assumed* he wasn't proud; he assumed the word was having its intended effect upon him. Such spiritual assumption is a major temptation for every child of God. The fact that Solomon's pride is only inferred is a reflection of the fact that his pride was not publicly apparent, either to himself or to Israel; we learn of it indirectly through Dt. 17:16-20.

Pro 16:19 It is better to be of a humble spirit with the poor, than to divide the plunder with the proud-
This may appear to contradict Solomon's ideas expressed elsewhere that wealth is a blessing from God, and the poor are poor because of their unwisdom. Perhaps the LXX is therefore correct: "Better is a meek-spirited man with lowliness, than one who divides spoils with the proud". But it can be that quite simply, Solomon's statements in the book of Proverbs do contradict themselves. Some are his direct repetition of Divinely inspired wisdom, whereas others are based upon his own observations and nuanced by his own biases and obsessions; see on Prov. 7:6; 24:32.

Pro 16:20 He who heeds the word finds prosperity; whoever has faith in Yahweh is blessed-
"Has faith" is s.w. "trusted" in Prov. 3:5. Trust in God is indeed predicated upon some form of "understanding" or 'heeding the word', for faith comes by hearing the word of God; although not necessarily of the abstract, academic type which Solomon had in view. Trusting and heeding the word are parallel; to trust in Yahweh requires "understanding" and "heeding" of Him. For faith must have some basis, there are things which need to be believed before "faith" can be faith. Thus David predicates "trust" (s.w.) upon knowing Yahweh's Name, His character (Ps. 9:10). But David's "trust" in God was connected with his trust or belief in God's mercy to him regarding his sins (Ps. 13:5; 21:7; 32:10 s.w.). But Solomon doesn't seem to have had any conscience of personal sin, and so trust in the Yahweh whose lead characteristic is grace and forgiveness was not elicited within him.

Pro 16:21 The wise in heart shall be called prudent. Pleasantness of the lips promotes instruction-
GNB "A wise, mature person is known for his understanding". The idea seems to be that wisdom is a good thing in this life, because it gets you a good reputation. Constantly, Solomon has the attitude that the blessings of righteousness are just for this life. He has no willingness to accept the perspective offered by the future Kingdom of God. See on :23,24.

Pro 16:22 Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, but the punishment of

fools is their folly-
Solomon uses the figure of a well of living water to describe spiritual words and thinking (Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22). Yet this is the very figure which he uses concerning his worldly bride (Song of Solomon 4:15). It could be argued that this typifies the massive imputation of righteousness which the Lord Jesus grants to us, His worldly Gentile bride. But I would rather see it as an example of how he chose to justify his love for worldly women by as it were clothing those women in his own mind with the imagery of spirituality. See on Prov. 7:22.

Solomon has little patience with those whom he considers 'foolish'; hence GNB "Wisdom is a fountain of life to the wise, but trying to educate stupid people is a waste of time". This contrasts with the desire of God, and David his father, to bring the simple and unwise to God's saving grace. A simple division of the world into stellar examples of wisdom on one hand, and sinful fools on the other, militates against any efforts at evangelism in order to save those in the 'other' category. And there is no lack of exemplification of this in believing communities.

Pro 16:23 The heart of the wise instructs his mouth, and adds learning to his lips-
The argument is that if wisdom is possessed, then words will automatically be learned. But whilst this is true in a sense, it also overlooks the fact that intellectual assent to and possession of Divine truths doesn't therefore make all words spoken sweet and blessed (:24). And there is also the sense that the advantage of wisdom is that ones words appear impressive, hence LXX "and on his lips he will wear knowledge". External appearance is still the ultimate outcome for Solomon, even if he says that this appearance comes from wisdom in the heart.

Pro 16:24 Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones-
This is true, but as explained on :21,23, Solomon's concern seems to be that the wise words of the wise will be attractive and tasty to the hearers; the advantage of wisdom is that others will think well of us. And this is not the correct perspective. By contrast, David emphasized that God's word, and not the words of men, was sweet as the honeycomb to him.

Pro 16:25 There is a way which seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death-
We all know from our own experience with temptation that we can justify *anything*. Every way of man can seem right in his own eyes because of this feature of our nature (Prov. 14:12; 16:25; 21:2). The truth of this statement demonstrates the error of the humanistic approach of 'follow your heart', 'do what feels good and right to you'. There must be the influence of God's word to put us on the path to life.

Pro 16:26 The appetite of the labouring man labours for him; for his mouth urges him on-
This presents people as automatons, their mouth or need to eat makes them labour, and they are merely slaves to their own basic desires. But this is all part of the human condition described in Genesis; in the sweat of our face man must eat bread. And yet Solomon seems to find some fault in this, as if his wisdom can somehow lift man above it. He then goes on in the next verses to condemn the tongue, the words which come out of the mouth. So perhaps Solomon is arguing that the tongue must be controlled, and we are not to merely drift through life in slavery to our natural thoughts and feelings, in the way that seems right to us (:25) in that it is what we naturally feel the need to do and be.

Pro 16:27 A worthless man devises mischief; his speech is like a scorching fire-
True as the Proverbs are which condemn "a worthless / wicked person" (Prov. 6:12; 16:27; 19:28), again we have a subtext of Solomon seeking to justify himself and his father David, and to criticize the various competitors to Solomon's throne. "A worthless person" is the term used for Nabal (1 Sam. 25:17), those in David's camp who were not fully supportive of David (1 Sam. 30:22), Sheba who plotted to overthrow the Davidic line as king (2 Sam. 20:1), and particularly of those who wanted to overthrow Solomon as king (2 Chron. 13:7).

Most people were illiterate, and so the book of Proverbs was designed to be memorized. There are many patterns in the book which depend upon the alliteration and rhyming of words and ideas to enable memorization. This was typical of wisdom literature of the time. There are similar initial syllables of words and verses, or beginning with the same letter. There's much word play, similar sounds repeat between verses if read out loud. Thus the root 'sdq' [righteousness] occurs in various words which connect various proverbs which appear unrelated to each other in English translation. These sound patterns form a chain which enables memorization. Thus Prov. 16:27-29 all begin with the word *ish*, 'a man'. Catchwords link adjacent verses.

Pro 16:28 A perverse man stirs up strife, a gossiper separates close friends-
Solomon rightly condemns gossip and the stirring up of divisions. But he is writing up his Divinely given wisdom at the start of his reign, where there were various groups of opposition to him. These groupings had all arisen from the divisions which arose after his parents' sin with each other; they were a consequence for David's sin, which Nathan had prophesied. Inevitably, David's behaviour had invited all manner of gossip and strife. But Solomon seems to blame this on the gossipers, and carefully considers they alone are guilty; for he is ever glorifying and whitewashing his father David.

Pro 16:29 A man of violence entices his neighbour, and leads him in a way that is not good-
He may specifically have Saul in view (David uses the term "violent man" about him in Ps. 18:48; 140:1). Solomon's idea of avoiding sin was in resisting the enticement of very sinful people. He pays no attention to the heart, whereas the Biblical message is always that sin is to be avoided in the heart. Spiritual mindedness, rather than mere disassociation from sinners, is of the essence. Dt. 11:16 warns that our heart should not be enticed (s.w.); but Solomon sees enticement as merely from very sinful individuals.

The implication is that God will lead us in the way which *is* good. One cannot help notice the great stress placed by Solomon on *teaching* his children, as David had *taught* him. It could be that there was too much emphasis on theory, thinking that by merely teaching the Law, the children would turn out well. But Dt. 6:1-7 taught that Israel must "*do*" the commandments of the Lord "so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes... these words... you shall teach them diligently to your sons". It was by the parents both doing and teaching the Law that their children would "do" it too. Behaviour patterns are learnt by observation and experience of parents, not by mere theoretical inculcation. So could it not be that there is a lesson here for us- that the diligent teaching of the Law, as David did to Solomon and as Solomon so proudly did to his children, actually has no lasting effect unless that Law is lived out in a daily life. It seems to me that the Western Christian attitude and program for child-rearing is based very much on the assumption that both parents are believers, marry in their 20s, mother raises the kids and father brings in the money, with the result that the children will in due time also be baptized and repeat the cycle. This is all well and good. But the reality is that only a small percentage of the population fits the traditional nuclear family profile. Our style of Sunday School material and teaching needs to be appropriate to this reality, if we seek to win this world for Christ rather than just reproduce within the existing Western community. The brethren and sisters of our community and ecclesias must be the de facto spiritual parents of many of our children. Mere doctrinal teaching *alone* is not enough- it must be seen regularly and meaningfully and relevantly to be lived out in transformed lives. Solomon's Proverbs, although inspired by God, have so many similarities with the Psalms of his father David. It seems to me that although he was of course inspired in writing Proverbs, he chose to articulate the wisdom given him in terms which his father had used in his songs, prayers and Psalms. Thus when Solomon teaches that God must be allowed to establish or direct our way (Prov. 4:26; 16:29), he is using the same Hebrew words as in Ps. 37:23 and Ps. 119:5, when David says the same. It's as if he was given God's truth and yet he never quite made it his very own- he still articulated it in terms of the faith of his fathers. And thus he lost it in the end.

Pro 16:30 One who winks his eyes to plot perversities, one who compresses his lips, is bent on evil-
Solomon likely has in view his half brother Absalom, and the other contenders for Solomon's thrown.

Pro 16:31 Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is attained by a life of righteousness-
The idea may be *if* it is attained by a good life; for as the book of Job teaches, gray hair is far from always a sign of wisdom. We appear to have a series of allusions here in :27-33 to incidents in the life of David. The reference here would be to David's command to Solomon to bring down the gray hair of Shimei to the grave with blood (1 Kings 2:9).

Pro 16:32 One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty; one who rules his spirit, than he who takes a city-
This may allude to the hot headed anger of Joab and the "sons of Zeruiah", who had opposed Solomon and sought the throne for themselves towards the end of David's life. It was Joab who had taken the citadel of Zion and also the city of Rabbah (2 Sam. 12:26), but this is dismissed by Solomon as cancelled out, as it were, by his hot headed lack of mental self control. The allusion is also to Samson.

Pro 16:33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from Yahweh-
The previous verses have all alluded to incidents in the life of David, with Solomon using these statements of wisdom to thereby justify David and the line of succession through Solomon. The majority of Biblical references to "the lot" are to the usage of this system in deciding inheritance portions within the land of Israel. The "lot" of Solomon's tribe, Judah, was a cause of contention with Ephraim (Is. 11:13), especially regarding the vexed issue of into whose lot Jerusalem fell. Solomon may be urging for all contention to cease over this, and to just accept the position of Judah and Jerusalem, because he says that Yahweh had worked through the disposing of the lots (Prov. 16:33; 18:18).

PROVERBS CHAPTER 17

Pro 17:1
Better is a dry morsel of bread with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife-
Proverbs 17 is one of the best examples of where the Proverbs appear to be a muddled collection of true sayings but lacking any structure. Are the Proverbs really like precious stones that must be emptied out of the bag and rearranged by theme? In which case, why didn't God do so at the start when inspiring the book? My comments are as follows:
- Some of the Proverbs are basic truisms and maxims which have equivalents in any culture. Solomon wrote the book at the start of his reign when God gave him his wisdom.
But Solomon loved Egyptian and Gentile women right from the start of his reign. There are strong similarities both in content and genre between Proverbs and e.g. the Egyptian *Instruction of Amenemope* . It could be that Solomon took various things from the literature of his father in law in Egypt... or of course it could be that Solomon's book of Proverbs was designed to preach to the Egyptians and surrounding nations in their own terms and in a familiar genre. Much is written by Solomon about the establishment of the throne on the basis of truth and justice; and this is commonly found in Egyptian literature about the Pharaohs.
- The text hangs together far better in the original Hebrew. Most people were illiterate, and so the book was designed to be memorized. There are many patterns in the book which
depend upon the alliteration and rhyming of words and ideas to enable memorization. This was typical of wisdom literature of the time. There are similar initial syllables of words and verses, or beginning with the same letter. There's much word play, similar sounds repeat between verses if read out loud. Thus the root *sdq* [righteousness] occurs in various words which connect various proverbs which appear unrelated to each other in English translation. These sound patterns form a chain which enables memorization. Thus Prov. 16:27-29 all begin with the word 'ish', 'a man'. Catchwords link adjacent verses.
- Watch out for clusters of verses which do have the same theme; the verses which don't appear to be in a cluster are likely connected by alliteration etc. for easy memorization.
- My own hunch is that although the Proverbs are inspired by God, they were also presented by Solomon with a strong hint of self-justification. He wrote them when he had just inherited the throne from his father David, whom he idolized and was obsessed with. He sought to justify his father against all the various factions who were in Israel who were not sympathetic to David and therefore to Solomon. Almost every other verse in the book appears to have some such sideways swipe at the likes of Saul, Nabal, Absalom or Joab- whilst presenting Solomon as the wise son with whom alone David was pleased. Solomon should've sought his self-worth and value in God's opinion of

him; and he should've trusted the promises to David of God establishing his throne and line, rather than seeking to as it were fulfill them for himself by using God's Truth and Wisdom to establish himself at others' expense. Chapter 17 is a parade example of this.

Pro 17:2 A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who causes shame, and shall have a part in the inheritance among the brothers-
The son who causes shame would be a reference to Absalom and other half brothers of Solomon who had contended with him for the throne. I have suggested that the book of Proverbs was written early in Solomon's reign, when he was first given wisdom from God with which to govern Israel. The servant who is to be exalted would then refer to Jeroboam, who was Solomon's servant whom he trusted and exalted at the start of his reign, although he later rebelled against Solomon (1 Kings 11:26-29).

Pro 17:3 The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but Yahweh tests the hearts-
The idea is that Yahweh seeks purified hearts, spiritual mindedness, more than anything else; and the fire of affliction is used to purify our thinking. Purified hearts or spirits is the aim of the work of the Holy Spirit as taught in the New Testament. Yet a man must use the refining pot when he receives praise (Prov. 27:21). We have some election over this refining process, we are to work together with God in it; but the end result is the purification of the heart / mind / spirit.

Pro 17:4 An evildoer heeds wicked lips; a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue-
Saul promised to no more 'do wickedly' to David (1 Sam. 26:21). The wicked doer is therefore an allusion to Saul, who listened to lies against David from the likes of Doeg. Note how "false" is the same word in as in 1 Sam. 15:23 about Saul's iniquity; "give heed" is s.w. "hearken" in 1 Sam. 15:22.
"Destructive" or "wickedness" is the word used of the wickedness of Ahithophel and Absalom (Ps. 55:11). Solomon's Proverbs seem in places a justification of himself as king over his brother Absalom. He uses the same word to speak of "transgressors are taken in their own wickedness / destructiveness" (Prov. 11:6); how a liar [Absalom] listens to a 'destructive' tongue [in taking advice from Ahithophel] (Prov. 17:4); and how a foolish son [Absalom] is the calamity or destruction of his father (Prov. 19:13).

Pro 17:5 Whoever mocks the poor reproaches his Maker. He who is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished-
Yet Solomon's teachings about poverty do very often mock them and draw caricatures about them (e.g. Prov. 20:4), for he implies at several points that poverty is due to unwisdom and laziness, and the blessing of wisdom is wealth (:6 LXX). Yet again we see Solomon failing to personalize his wisdom; he disobeyed it because he seems to have

reasoned that mere possession of Divine truth was all that was required for acceptability with God. And the same mistake is seen in so many.

Pro 17:6 Children's children are the crown of old men; the glory of children are their parents-
This is only true if the parents and children are righteous and not the "son who causes shame" and not glory (:25). So Solomon doesn't have every child and every parent in view. Rather is he clearly alluding to his own constant glorification (and whitewashing) of his parents. LXX adds "The faithful has the whole world full of wealth; but the faithless not even a farthing". Solomon was given his wealth by God as a gift, as grace; and not because he was faithful. But he abuses that grace and assumes that gift was some kind of reward for his faithfulness. And again he argues that poverty is a result of lacking faith.

Pro 17:7 Arrogant speech isn't fitting for a fool, much less do lying lips fit a prince-
LXX has "faithful lips" for "arrogant speech". The contrast is between a fool and a prince; not a fool and a wise man. Solomon assumes that a prince is the wise man. And we see here his problem; he assumed that because he was David' son and was on the throne, that therefore he was wise- because he was a prince. But the wisdom given to him was a gift, by grace, just as is any Divine truth which we hold. But Solomon came to see that gift as having been deserved by him, and thinks that his position is of itself a sign that he must be wise.

Pro 17:8 A bribe is a precious stone in the eyes of him who gives it; wherever he turns, he apparently prospers-
"Prospers" is a word commonly used about David being wise and prospering wherever he turned during his period at the court of Saul (s.w. 1 Sam. 18:5,14,15,30). The words are also those used by David to Solomon when he charged Solomon to follow God's word so "that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn" (1 Kings 2:3). It could be argued that the "evil" and "foolish" man in Proverbs is often alluding to Saul and Nabal ['fool'- s.w., the former husband of David's wife Abigail], and the wise and righteous to David and Solomon- confirming the impression that whilst all that is said is true and inspired, it was also spoken by Solomon to the end of justifying both himself and his father David, whose name was under a cloud in some parts of Israel. There are probably many more allusions to David's life in Proverbs which we don't pick up on because we don't know all that happened in David's life.

Pro 17:9 He who covers an offence promotes love; but he who repeats a matter separates best friends-

The idea of 'covering sin' is surely an allusion to the words of David, Solomon's father, who wrote a song he wished all Israel to sing- the 'maschil' Psalm 32: "Blessed is he whose transgression... is covered... I acknowledged my sin, my iniquity I did not hide [s.w. "cover"]' I said, I will confess my transgressions to the Lord" (Ps. 32:1,5). Because David did not cover his sin, God covered it. This is clearly in Solomon's mind in Prov. 28:13: "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy". So in line with Solomon's obsession with David, it's likely he also has David in view here in 17:9. In which case, the One seeking love by covering sin is God. Love is to be our response to the covering of our sins. And yet the words also apply to us- we are to cover others sins in forgiving them, and gossiping to others about them [the second half of the Proverb] is therefore rooted in our unforgiveness. This is a helpful thought in analyzing why we gossip or repeat others' sins to others- it's because we've not forgiven the sin. See on 17:13.

Pro 17:10 A rebuke enters deeper into one who has understanding than a hundred lashes into a fool-
If 17:9 alludes to David's sin with Bathsheba, this verse would allude to Nathan's rebuke of David being accepted by him.
Solomon seems to comment upon God's arrows piercing or 'entering' (s.w.) David (Ps. 38:2). True as this is, Solomon was all the same justifying his father's response to the rebuke of Nathan and the Divine arrows which 'entered deep' to David. By the end of his reign, Solomon was whipping his people (1 Kings 12:11); he came to consider that most of God's people were fools, and had refused the rebuke of his wisdom, and therefore he could lash them. Those who are lifted up with pride at their possession of "truth" often come to despise and abuse others.

Pro 17:11 An evil man seeks only rebellion; therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him-
The "evil man" is often an allusion to Saul, and the Proverb related to it is often a justification of Solomon's father David. The Hebrew for "rebellion" is exactly that used about Saul in 1 Sam. 15:23. The "cruel *malak* / Angel" sent by God would then refer to the evil spirit / Angel *from the Lord* sent upon Saul (1 Sam. 16:14; 19:9).

Pro 17:12 Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly-
An allusion to Nabal, 'fool', going out to meet David. "A bear robbed of her whelps" is exactly how David is described in 2 Sam. 17:8. LXX "Care may befall a man of understanding; but fools will meditate evils".

Pro 17:13 Whoever rewards evil for good, evil shall not depart from his house-

This is another of the many references by Solomon in the Proverbs to the life of his father David. The Hebrew words for "requite evil for good" are found in 1 Sam. 25:21 concerning how Nabal requited evil for David's good. The impression that the Proverbs are merely isolated sayings is somewhat ameliorated when we consider that many of them are a running commentary upon David's life, and they are connected by the common theme of allusion to David rather than a semantic connection between them.

Pro 17:14 The beginning of strife is like breaching a dam, therefore stop contention before quarreling breaks out-
Blaming strife and "contention" upon sinners is a common theme in Proverbs. But the same root word is used in 2 Sam. 19:9 regarding the "strife" and division which there was amongst Israel after Absalom's rebellion. Rather than seeing this as all part of the consequence of David's sin, Solomon instead justifies his father and blames his half brothers by saying that that "strife" was the result of their unwisdom. It could be argued that Solomon is making rather a crude allusion to this period by saying it is like urination... and the problem was with the person who began it, an allusion surely to Absalom, whom Solomon would've blamed for it all, rather than seeing it as partly the promised judgment upon David for his sin with Bathsheba.

Pro 17:15 He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to Yahweh-
This seems to be Solomon condemning his rival brother Absalom. 2 Sam. 15:4 records how "Then Absalom would say, "Oh that I were judge in the land! Then every man with a dispute or cause might come to me, and I would give him justice"". The Hebrew for "justice" is the noun of the verb used here in Prov. 17:15. The implication is that Solomon blamed the 'time of strife' in Israel upon Solomon and his followers, whom Solomon is claiming were wicked men whom Absalom wrongly justified. "The just" is how Saul described David (1 Sam. 24:17 s.w.). Verse 16 may be an allusion to some unrecorded incident in Absalom's life where he showed himself as having no interest in wisdom and thought it could be purchased with money.

"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 17:16 Why is there money in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom, since he has no

understanding?-
This may be Solomon's comment upon the various ambassadors who came to him from other nations with gifts and money in their hands, wanting to as it were buy wisdom. LXX "Why has the fool wealth? for a senseless man will not be able to purchase wisdom. He that exalts his own house seeks ruin; and he that turns aside from instruction shall fall into mischief". The one who exalted or 'lifted up' his own house would refer to the various attempted coups against David and Solomon (e.g. 2 Sam. 18:28; 20:21; 1 Kings 11:26).

Pro 17:17 A friend loves at all times; and a brother is born for adversity-
There could be a reference here to David's 'friends' during the wilderness years (s.w. 1 Sam. 30:26; 2 Sam. 16:17) who were faithful to him even in his hard times, perhaps especially Solomon is alluding to Hushai, David's "friend" who was so loyal to him (2 Sam. 16:17). The same Hebrew word is used about Hushai in 1 Chron. 27:33, where it seems he was given an official title of "The King's Friend". The same Hebrew words "all times" is used in the eulogy of David in 1 Chron. 29:30 about "all the times" of David's life. See on :18.

Pro 17:18 A man without understanding strikes hands, and becomes collateral in the presence of his neighbour-
"Strikes hands" are the same two Hebrew words used about Joab 'thrusting his hand' into Absalom to kill him (2 Sam. 18:14). Joab later turned against David, and so again we see Solomon establishing his father's name and dynasty by using his 'wisdom' to conveniently condemn all the parties who were politically against him. Likewise 17:19 speaks of the man who is "exalted", but the same word is in 1 Sam. 10:23 about how Saul was "taller" than his brethren- it is an allusion to Saul, but rather indirectly, couched within the wisdom and truth being spoken. We can likewise so easily use God's Truth and wisdom in order to fuel our own petty self justification and family politics.

The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis*)*. Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan; what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts

in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to this matter. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom.

Pro 17:19 He who loves disobedience loves strife. One who builds a high gate seeks destruction-
Again this is true, but so often Solomon's Proverbs include his own. He is implying that all the strife about his being the one to have the throne merely came from pride (Prov. 13:10) or disobedience, and the wise will accept Solomon's kingship. Those who build their own gate, i.e. set themselves up for the kingship, will be destroyed.

Pro 17:20 One who has a perverse heart doesn't find prosperity, and one who has a deceitful tongue falls into trouble-
Solomon rightly emphasizes that the "perverse" or "wayward" are wayward in their hearts (Prov. 11:20; 17:20), leading to wayward tongues and ways in practice (Prov. 2:15); but he repeats his father's mistake, in saying he will have nothing to do with those who are wayward in their hearts (s.w. Ps. 101:4). The mistake was in assuming that he could judge human hearts. It continues the far over simplified view of people which Solomon has; the righteous have pure hearts, always obedient; and wicked have bad hearts. But the Bible warns that all of us have hearts which are fountains of evil thoughts (Mk. 7:15,21-23 etc.).

Pro 17:21 He who becomes the father of a fool grieves; the father of a fool has no joy-
Perhaps this is a commentary upon David's sorrow at the death of his foolish son Absalom (as :25).

Pro 17:22 A cheerful heart makes good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones-
Solomon's criticism of the melancholy are likely intended allusions to Saul. Solomon teaches that a broken spirit is a curse (Prov. 15:13; 17:22; 18:14), and an indication that something is wrong with the core of a person; because an unbroken spirit will "make a cheerful face" (Prov. 15:13), and external appearance and having joy in this life was of primary importance to Solomon. He fails to realize that his father David had a broken

spirit (Ps. 31:12; 38:8; 44:19; 51:8,17; 69:20- all a fair emphasis), and had thereby understood that Yahweh is especially close to those with a broken spirit (Ps. 34:18; 147:13), indeed the Gospel is for the broken spirited, and the broken hearted are not to be mocked (Ps. 109:16).

Pro 17:23 A wicked man receives a bribe in secret, to pervert the ways of justice-
Solomon's criticism of unjust judges surely looks back to how Absalom judged the cases of the men of Israel and by his injustice built up support for his rebellion against David and Solomon. There were few judges in Israel, and Solomon's condemnation of how others judge was therefore only really relevant to himself and a few others, it was not wisdom for the masses; and it was a kind of self-justification.

Pro 17:24 Wisdom is before the face of one who has understanding, but the eyes of a fool wander to the ends of the earth-
The idea may be that wisdom affects the outward appearance of a person's face; hence LXX "The countenance of a wise man is sensible; but the eyes of a fool go to the ends of the earth". Again, wisdom is seen to be advantageous because of the image it gives to those who possess it. Solomon never seems to emphasize that the real intention and blessing of wisdom is to lead us to God's eternal Kingdom in the future. He sees the reward of wisdom as solely in this life, because he considered his kingdom to be God's Kingdom, and himself to be the Messiah figure.

Pro 17:25 A foolish son brings grief to his father, and bitterness to her who bore him-
A reference to David's grief over the foolish Absalom, whose supporters were contenders for David's throne and wished to displace Solomon from it. Always Solomon seems to be harnessing these Divine truths to his own agenda and self justification, just as we can.

Pro 17:26 Also to punish the righteous is not good, nor to flog officials for their integrity-
This was totally disobeyed by Solomon, for he became famed for flogging his people (1 Kings 12:11). Likewise what he writes in Proverbs about foreign women was personally disobeyed by him. It was almost as if the more he knew Divine truth, and thought he was justified by mere possession of it, the more he disobeyed it. This perverse feature of human nature is widely observable.

Pro 17:27 He who spares his words has knowledge. He who is even tempered is a man of understanding-
LXX "He that forbears to utter a hard word is discreet, and a patient man is wise". But

possession of knowledge does not of itself mean that a person controls their words. Solomon again gives far too much power to the idea of mere possession of knowledge.

Pro 17:28 Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is counted wise. When he shuts his lips, he is thought to be discerning-
The very same words used about Saul, whom Solomon saw as the archetypical "fool", wisely holding his peace when despised at the start of his reign (1 Sam. 10:27). Always Solomon seems to be 'having a go' at his father's opponents, whose children now in the next generation were his competitors for the throne.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 18

Pro 18:1 An unfriendly man pursues selfishness, and defies all sound judgment-
AV "a man, having separated himself, seeketh and intermeddleth with all wisdom"; LXX "A man who wishes to separate from friends seeks excuses; but at all times he will be liable to reproach". The same word is used in Prov. 19:4: "The poor is separated from his friend". Separation from others is seen as unwisdom, and therefore associated with poverty; for Solomon thinks that wisdom brings wealth and unwisdom brings poverty. Solomon presents a picture of any deviation from the society which he presided over being punished; by poverty, and being reproached as unwise.

Pro 18:2 A fool has no delight in understanding, but only in revealing his own opinion-
This is true, but we must remember that Solomon is presenting himself as the teacher of understanding; anyone who doesn't want to accept him, or has "his own opinion", gets reproached and mocked by Solomon.

Pro 18:3 When wickedness comes, contempt also comes, and with shame comes disgrace-
Solomon presents the disadvantage of sin as being the shame and disgrace it brings in this life. Solomon never seems to emphasize that the real intention and blessing of wisdom is to lead us to God's eternal Kingdom in the future. He sees the reward of wisdom as solely in this life, because he considered his kingdom to be God's Kingdom, and himself to be the Messiah figure.

Pro 18:4 The words of a man's mouth are like deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is like a flowing brook-
LXX "A word in the heart of a man is a deep water, and a river and fountain of life spring forth". The sense may be that if a word of wisdom is placed within a man's heart, it becomes a fountain of life for others. The Lord uses a similar figure in Jn. 7:38,39 for the water of life which can pour from a man's innermost being, once he truly accepts the word of the Gospel. When He says that this was "as the scripture has said", this may be one of the passages He had in mind. Our witness to others is therefore from our innermost being, from the word of the Gospel believed and firmly lodged in the deepest heart.

Pro 18:5 To be partial to the faces of the wicked is not good, nor to deprive the innocent of justice-
The idea is that the man of wisdom will judge cases fairly. But the average Israelite was not a courtroom judge. And so Solomon, as so often, has himself in view as the parade example of what he means. And the implication is that his judgments were perfect and beyond question, apart from by fools. But he fails to appreciate that a man can hold Divine truth and correct judgments in his intellectual understanding, and yet judge and live otherwise.

Pro 18:6 A fool's lips come into strife, and his speech asks for beatings-
Solomon became famed for beating his people (1 Kings 12:11). He came to assume that his people were fools, and he could abuse them therefore, at will. Those who are

lifted up with pride at their possession of "truth" often come to despise and abuse others.

Pro 18:7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are a snare to his soul-
This continues the major Biblical theme that the condemned are essentially self condemned; out of their own mouths they will be judged at the last day (Lk. 19:22). In this we see the critical importance of our words, and the thinking which they inevitably express (Mt. 12:34). But Solomon sees the outcome of folly as being in this life, for he has nothing much to say about the last judgment and the future Kingdom; for he considered himself the ultimate Messianic judge of men, and his kingdom to be God's Kingdom.

Pro 18:8 The words of a gossip are like tasty morsels: they go down into a person's innermost parts-
Solomon rightly condemns gossip and the stirring up of divisions. But he is writing up his Divinely given wisdom at the start of his reign, where there were various groups of opposition to him. These groupings had all arisen from the divisions which arose after his parents' sin with each other; they were a consequence for David's sin, which Nathan had prophesied. Inevitably, David's behaviour had invited all manner of gossip and strife. But Solomon seems to blame this on the gossipers, and carefully considers they alone are guilty; for he is ever glorifying and whitewashing his father David. And yet what he writes is so true; throwaway comments of gossip take deep lodgment in the hearers.

LXX "Fear casts down the slothful; and the souls of the effeminate shall hunger".

Pro 18:9 One who is slack in his work is brother to him who is a master of destruction-
Again Solomon is exalting works and therefore condemning laziness as the worst sin. To omit to do anything is, in his book, as bad as the man who actively and zealously destroys. But Solomon was wired to be an active, hard working person; and he is glorifying his own personality type, reinforcing who he was anyway as a person; rather than exploring the wonder of salvation by grace without works. LXX implies that hard work is necessary to help ourselves; all idea of God helping us by grace is just not considered: "A man who helps not himself by his labour is brother of him that ruins himself".

Pro 18:10 The name of Yahweh is a strong tower: the righteous run into Him, and are safe-
Solomon presents his father David's being 'set on high' (Ps. 69:29) as programmatic for the exaltation of all the righteous; he sees David as the epitome of the righteous, and thereby justifies the Davidic dynasty (s.w. Prov. 18:10; 29:25). Ultimately these words come true in entering the Name by baptism into it.

Pro 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, like an unscalable wall in his own imagination-
This was precisely what Solomon did. Solomon was given his wealth by God as a gift, as grace; and not because he was faithful; see on Prov. 17:6. But he abuses that grace and assumes that gift was some kind of reward for his faithfulness. And elsewhere he argues that poverty is a result of lacking faith. Solomon realized the danger of the rich man's wrong "own imagination". But he goes and makes that very

mistake. He has no self-examination, no personalization of truth, because he considered that the mere possession of truth thereby justified him.

Pro 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is proud, but before honour is humility-
This is the very phrase used about David, when he says his heart is not lifted up (Ps. 131:1). Solomon is presenting his father as the pinnacle of spirituality.

Pro 18:13 He who gives answer before he hears, that is folly and shame to him-
LXX "Whoso answers a word before he hears a cause". This is the language of the courtroom. But the average Israelite was not a courtroom judge. And so Solomon, as so often, has himself in view as the parade example of what he means. And the implication is that his judgments were perfect and beyond question, apart from by fools. And again we note that he considers folly to be bad because it can lead to shame in this life; he has no sense of the connection between present behaviour and our eternal outcomes at the last day of judgment.

Pro 18:14 A man's spirit will sustain him in sickness, but a crushed spirit, who can bear?-
Solomon teaches that a crushed or broken spirit is a curse (Prov. 15:13; 17:22; 18:14), and an indication that something is wrong with the core of a person; because an unbroken spirit will "make a cheerful face" (Prov. 15:13), and external appearance and having joy in this life was of primary importance to Solomon. He fails to realize that his father David had a broken spirit (Ps. 31:12; 38:8; 44:19; 51:8,17; 69:20- all a fair emphasis), and had thereby understood that Yahweh is especially close to those with a broken spirit (Ps. 34:18; 147:13), indeed the Gospel is for the broken spirited, and the broken hearted are not to be mocked (Ps. 109:16).

Pro 18:15 The heart of the discerning gets knowledge; the ear of the wise seeks knowledge-
"Gets" is LXX "purchases". But elsewhere Solomon implies that wisdom cannot be bought. He may be alluding, as in :16, to the ambassadors of the nations who came to him, bearing gifts in order to hear and 'get' Solomon's Divine wisdom. But what he says is true enough; there is an upward spiral in spirituality, whereby the wise get wiser, and part of their wisdom is to desire more of it.

Pro 18:16 A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men-
He may be alluding, as in :15, to the ambassadors of the nations who came to him, bearing gifts in order to hear and 'get' Solomon's Divine wisdom. And yet he thereby implies that he is one of the "great men", possibly an intensive plural referring to the one great man, referring to himself.

Pro 18:17 He who pleads his cause first seems right; until another comes and questions him-
As in :13, this is the language of the courtroom, and is advice to judges. But the average Israelite was not a courtroom judge. And so Solomon, as so often, has himself in view as the parade example of what he means. And the implication is that his judgments were perfect and beyond question, apart from by fools. He is alluding to his judgment of the two prostitutes in 1 Kings 3:17.

Pro 18:18 The lot settles disputes, and keeps strong ones apart-
The majority of Biblical references to "the lot" are to the usage of this system in deciding inheritance portions within the land of Israel. The "lot" of Solomon's tribe, Judah, was a cause of contention with Ephraim (Is. 11:13), especially regarding the vexed issue of into whose lot Jerusalem fell. Solomon may be urging for all contention to cease over this, and to just accept the position of Judah and Jerusalem, because he says that Yahweh had worked through the disposing of the lots (Prov. 16:33; 18:18).

LXX "A silent man quells strifes, and determines between great powers".

Pro 18:19 A brother offended is more difficult to be won than a fortified city; and disputes are like the bars of a castle-
To win a fortified city is presented as a human impossibility; but David is described as taking the fortified cities of Zion and then later Rabbah. Always there is the hint of justification and glorification of "my father David", a phrase Solomon uses a few hundred times. LXX "A brother helped by a brother is as a strong and high city; and is as strong as a well-founded palace". The implication is that Solomon's half brothers, who had been against him and whose families were contenders for his throne, lacked wisdom; otherwise they would have helped their brother Solomon to the throne.

Pro 18:20 A man's stomach is filled with the fruit of his mouth. With the harvest of his lips he is satisfied-
This emphasis upon the critical importance of the tongue (:21) is reflected in James 3. But there is still an element of self congratulation here, as if the wise always say wise words and are smugly satisfied with themselves because of it. Whereas James 3:3-5 warns that we seem unable to fully control the tongue, it refuses to be tamed, and in some words we say we offend all. This is spiritual reality, rather than the simplistic differentiation Solomon makes between the sinful fools, and the wise who always speak wise words.

Pro 18:21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue; those who love it will eat its fruit-
This is true insofar as by our words we will be justified, and by our words condemned (Mt. 12:37). Perhaps the Lord had this verse in mind when saying this. But again, it is only part of the picture. James 3:3-5 warns that we seem unable to fully control the tongue, it refuses to be tamed, and in some words we say we offend all. And so consideration of the matter of the tongue drives us to throw ourselves upon God's grace for salvation; whereas Solomon seems to imply that the wise have steel self control in their souls which empowers them to always say the right thing (see on :20). But this is simply not the case in spiritual reality.

Pro 18:22 Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains grace of Yahweh-
One wonders whether Solomon justified his many wives by reasoning that they were all gifts to him by Yahweh's grace [gift]. He claims that possessing understanding leads to finding good (Prov. 19:8 s.w.). He assumes therefore that the mere possession of wisdom meant that the wives he found must be "good"; but his subsequent experience with them shows how wrong he was. LXX "He that puts away a good wife, puts away a good thing, and he that keeps an adulteress is foolish and ungodly". This reading would then be a justification of how Solomon's father David had put

away his wife Michal, Saul's daughter, who had then married Phaltiel, a relationship Solomon liked to see as adultery (2 Sam. 3:15). Constantly Solomon uses his knowledge of Divine truths to justify himself and his father, just as God's truth can likewise be abused today.

Pro 18:23 The poor plead for mercy, but the rich answer harshly-
This is not simply an otherwise rather pointless description of how life often is. It must be understood within the context of Solomon's theme that the poor are poor because of their unwisdom, and riches are the reward for wisdom. And so, within that overly simplistic worldview, Solomon seems to justify the rich treating the poor harshly. He himself treated his people as fools, whipping them (1 Kings 12:11). And so often his Proverbs draw simplistic caricatures of the folly and laziness of the poor.

Pro 18:24 A man of many companions may be ruined, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother-
AV "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly". GNB "Some friendships do not last, but some friends are more loyal than brothers". This may again be a justification of David his father, who had many friends in the course of his career, some of whom betrayed him, but he had a hard core of exceptionally loyal supporters all the way through the various revolts against him, and who gave their support to Solomon's kingship. And they were better friends to Solomon than his own brothers, who vied with him for the throne.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 19

Pro 19:1 Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is perverse in his lips and is a fool-
Solomon often mocks the poor as poor because they are unwise, and argues that wisdom brings wealth. In this he denies the wisdom he here states; that poor people can still have integrity. Or perhaps he has in view his father David, "the poor" in his wilderness years (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6), who 'walked in his integrity', as David often says about himself in the Psalms. The fool who has perverse lips would then refer to Nabal, meaning "fool". The fact the hotheaded David was restrained from sinning against Nabal by grace alone was overlooked by Solomon. He refuses to discern grace in his father's life, and seeks only to highlight his righteousness. Whereas David himself so often alludes to his own weaknesses and sins.

Pro 19:2 It isn't good to have zeal without knowledge; nor being hasty with one's feet and missing the way-
This is quoted in Rom. 10:2 about those in Israel who miss the way of the Lord Jesus, who is ultimately "the way". The fact the Proverbs are so often alluded to and quoted in later scripture confirms that they are indeed inspired by God; but Solomon presents them in ways which clearly justify himself and his father. David's feet almost ran and hasted to evil (Ps. 73:2), yet Solomon seems to overlook this. Solomon's proverbs seem

to fail to address this complexity of situations because of his own self-righteousness; and yet all he says is inspired and true so far as it goes.

Pro 19:3 The foolishness of man subverts his way; his heart rages against Yahweh-
LXX "The folly of a man spoils his ways: and he blames God in his heart". "Subverts" is the word for "overthrows". But God overthrows the wicked (s.w. Prov. 21:12). Solomon thereby equates the foolish with the wicked. But he seems to classify as foolish anyone who doesn't accept his take on life, or is ignorant of the wisdom he teaches. Ignorance, and even intellectual failure, is not of itself wickedness. Solomon has such a dualistic view of things that he assumes anyone who is not wise and thereby wealthy to be foolish and thereby wicked. But amongst God's people, things are not so black and white. And we are not to judge, largely because we simply cannot judge.

Pro 19:4 Wealth adds many friends, but the poor is separated from his friend-
This is the word used in Prov. 18:1 for how the unwise separates himself from his friends; the LXX of Prov. 18:1 makes it clearest: "A man who wishes to separate from friends seeks excuses; but at all times he will be liable to reproach". The same word is used in Prov. 19:4: "The poor is separated from his friend". Separation from others is seen as unwisdom, and therefore associated with poverty; for Solomon thinks that wisdom brings wealth and unwisdom brings poverty. Solomon presents a picture of any deviation from the society which he presided over being punished; by poverty, and being reproached as unwise.

Pro 19:5 A false witness shall not be unpunished; he who pours out lies shall not go free-
Solomon has much to say about true and false witnesses (Prov. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18). Whilst his warnings are true enough, he surely has an element of self justification in what he writes. Because he was aware that his parents, David and Bathsheba, had been accused of many things which had led to all the opposition against David at the end of his reign, and which opposition Solomon had to contend with in order to retain the throne for himself. David laments the false witness of the house of Saul and his own sons, Solomon's half brothers (Ps. 27:12; 35:11). The continual condemnation of false witnesses must be understood in this context. Whilst it is all true so far as it goes, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 19:6 Many will entreat the favour of a ruler, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts-
See on :7. Solomon surely has himself in view, the ruler who was visited by representatives from many nations, wanting his favour. He contrasts this with the poor

who have no friends (:7). The idea is that his wealth was a result of his wisdom; whereas God had given him wealth as a gift of grace. But he abused that grace by arguing that it was a result of his wisdom.

Pro 19:7 All the relatives of the poor shun him: how much more do his friends avoid him! He pursues them with pleas, but they are gone-
Here we have one of many examples of where Solomon sees poverty very negatively, coming as a result of unwisdom just as wealth supposedly comes as a result of wisdom. And yet in other Proverbs he urges pity to be shown to the poor. His attitude to poverty is very conflicted; see on :17. He compares the unpopular poor man with the popular rich man (:6); as if a chief advantage if wisdom is that it makes the wise popular with people because of the wealth it gives. This is a very human and secular view, devoid of any real spirituality.

Pro 19:8 He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding shall find good-
Whilst this is true so far as it goes, it presents a selfishness in wanting wisdom. Wisdom is to be gotten from the motive of self love, because it is profitable for this life. This reflects how Solomon misses completely the idea of living for the glory of God both now and eternally. He uses the same term for 'finding good' about how he found his wives (Prov. 18:22). He assumes therefore that the mere possession of wisdom / correct understanding meant that the wives he found must be "good"; but his subsequent experience with them shows how wrong he was.

Pro 19:9 A false witness shall not be unpunished; he who utters lies shall perish-
See on :5. Solomon is alluding to his father David's parting commandments to Solomon to destroy all the opposition to him (1 Kings 2:6,9). So whilst what Solomon writes is true, he is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 19:10 Delicate living is not appropriate for a fool, much less for a servant to have rule over princes-
Ecc. 10:7 indicates Solomon finally didn't think Prov. 19:10 was true in practice: “I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth”. He thought that in reality, servants do rule over princes. Although he retained his theoretical wisdom as a teaching position, his own heart was far from it.

Pro 19:11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger; it is his glory to overlook an

offence-
We wonder how Solomon could write this without thinking of his hot tempered father who refused to overlook the offence of Nabal, and was about to murder him and his family. But he appears to whitewash his father, and instead has in view how David overlooked the offences of the likes of Shimei at one point; although he later asked Solomon to ensure he murdered Shimei.

"Overlook" is literally 'to pass over', and the Hebrew is used for "transgression" (s.w. Josh. 23:16; 2 Kings 18:12; Jer. 2:20). God's response to human 'passing over' is at times to 'pass over' it, to overlook it. Other times He deals with sin differently, atoning for it, forgiving it, reconciling His people... but as a Father has compassion on His children, so He likewise overlooks much human failure. Indeed this 'passing by' transgression [s.w. 'overlook'] is what makes Yahweh unique- there is no other god like Him in this (Mic. 7:18). And this is to feature in our range of options in dealing with human sin. To copy God in this will be our "glory".

Pro 19:12 The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favour is like dew on the grass-
At the end of his days, Solomon recognized that although he had loved the theory of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted his soul: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me" (Ecc. 7:23). His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom. In Prov. 19:12 he speaks as if his own wisdom was like the dew coming down- as if he felt that the mere possession of wisdom made him the Messiah figure which his father had so hoped for him to be in Ps. 72:6. And he says as much in Prov. 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom [exactly what Solomon was commended for doing] rejoiceth his father".

Pro 19:13 A foolish son is the calamity of his father. A wife's quarrels are a continual dripping-
"Destructive" or "wickedness" is the word used of the wickedness of Ahithophel and Absalom (Ps. 55:11). Solomon's Proverbs seem in places a justification of himself as king over his brother Absalom. He uses the same word to speak of "transgressors are taken in their own wickedness / destructiveness" (Prov. 11:6); how a liar [Absalom] listens to a 'destructive' tongue [in taking advice from Ahithophel] (Prov. 17:4); and how a foolish son [Absalom] is the calamity or destruction of his father (Prov. 19:13).

Pro 19:14 House and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from Yahweh-

David had left Solomon an inheritance of both riches (1 Chron. 29:28) and a "house" or family line to continue. But Solomon liked to think that his many wives were "prudent", and were "from Yahweh"- when they were idolaters who were not of Yahweh, and who turned his heart away from Yahweh to their gods. This arrogant perception and persuasion led Solomon to liken his illicit Gentile girlfriend in the Song of Solomon to a true Israelite, describing her in the language of the tabernacle and likening her to various attractive places within Israel. All Solomon writes is true, but he clearly always has himself in mind as the parade fulfilment of them; and in this he was so wrong.

Pro 19:15 Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep; the idle person shall suffer hunger-
Again Solomon's works centred approach leads him to condemn laziness and sloth. In Prov. 10:3 Solomon has taught that the righteous will never "suffer hunger" (s.w.). So he considers idleness to be unrighteousness. Righteousness is thereby equated with doing many works. But this fails to appreciate that there is none truly righteous, at times God suffers men to hunger (s.w. Dt. 8:3) that He might teach them; and blessing in the end is all of grace and not of works, lest any man [like Solomon] should boast in their works, as he does in Ecc. 1.

Pro 19:16 He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, but he who is disrespectful in his ways shall die-
Solomon has no eternal perspective in his thinking. He assumes that he is the judge of all, and his kingdom is the promised Messianic Kingdom of God on earth. He presents untimely death in this life as the result for disrespect to the commandments. But in fact the wicked prosper, and the ultimate outcome of human life is not now, but in the judgment of the last day. In contrast, David wanted God to "keep his soul"" (e.g. Ps. 25:20), rather than Solomon's emphasis upon a person keeping their own soul through obedience.

Pro 19:17 He who has pity on the poor lends to Yahweh; He will reward him-
Solomon on one hand teaches pity towards the poor (Prov. 14:21,31; 19:17; 28:8). But on the other, he mocks the poor as being poor because of their unwisdom, believing that wealth is given in response to wisdom. He is very conflicted in his attitude to the poor. The Divine revelation of truth to him was clearly that he should be generous to the poor. But he fences against this in other places by saying that the poor are being punished for their unwisdom. So like us when we encounter need that requires our generosity, he hedges his position very carefully; rather than accepting the simple force of the wisdom given to him, that pity to the poor as it were transfers our wealth from earth to heaven, and we will receive it back in due time (Prov. 19:17). And he is quite obsessive about not being collateral for the poor. Solomon had not known need, neither

material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to so obsessively forbidding the giving of collateral to guarantee a loan (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis). It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom. The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27).

Another approach is to understand Solomon's positive comments about helping the poor as historical allusion to his father David. "The poor" would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6).

Pro 19:18 Discipline your son while there is hope; don't be a willing party to his death-
As will be explained on :20, this is true so far as it goes, and is a fair enough commentary upon the Mosaic instruction to stone to death a disobedient son. But Solomon took this idea of physical chastisement too far, to the point of not giving due weight to the power of God Himself through His wisdom to discipline or chastise a person.

Pro 19:19 A hot-tempered man must pay the penalty, for if you rescue him, you must do it again-
Solomon had asked for wisdom in order to know how to judge Israel. And so many of his Proverbs refer to judgment. But there is no grace in what he says; he frequently insists that the judgment for sin and unwisdom must be carried out, and any 'rescue' of the man by grace is pointless and wrong. But he totally fails to appreciate that his father had been saved by grace for his hot blooded intention to murder Nabal and all his family, and forgiven by grace alone for his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah, when the just penalty was death. He had psychologically, subconsciously whitewashed his father David; he has no sense of grace and reflecting gratitude for grace in merciful judgment of others.

Pro 19:20 Listen to counsel and receive instruction, so that you may be wise in your very end-
Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words

(Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 19:21 There are many plans in a man's heart, but Yahweh's counsel will prevail-
Yahweh's counsel is seen as the wisdom which Solomon was teaching (:20). The truth of this statement demonstrates the error of the humanistic approach of 'follow your heart', 'do what feels good and right to you'. There must be the influence of God's word to put us on the path to life.

Pro 19:22 That which makes a man to be desired is his kindness; a poor man is better than a liar-
Spiritual ambition means that we will desire to do some things which we can't physically fulfil- and yet they will be counted to us. Abraham is spoken of as having offered up Isaac- his intention was counted as the act. And Prov. 19:22 RV appropriately comments: "The desire of a man is the measure of his kindness". It is all accepted according to what a man has, not what he has not. Faith is perfected / matured by the process of works (James 2:22,23). The works, the upward spiral of a life lived on the basis of faith, develop the initial belief in practice.

Pro 19:23 The fear of Yahweh leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm-
But as the book of Job teaches, this is simply not the case. Solomon insists on a simplistic form of the prosperity Gospel, whereby the wise have a wonderful life with no "harm", and the unwise are always falling into sin and misery. But the wicked prosper; in this life. Solomon fails to appreciate that there is judgment to come, and only then will there be "life" indeed granted.

Pro 19:24 The lazy buries his hand in the dish; he will not so much as bring it to his mouth again-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of

the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 19:25 Flog a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke one who has understanding, and he will gain knowledge-
David had spoken of the house of Saul as scoffing at him (s.w. Ps. 119:51). And the line of David had been chosen to replace Saul because he had refused to "learn prudence" at Samuel's rebuke. David had accepted rebuke and was open to it, notably from Nathan the prophet (Ps. 38:1; 141:5); and so again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father. But Solomon was only to remain the prophetic son of David if he accepted reproof (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:14); and he didn't. He refused to personalize his own wisdom, as we can.

Pro 19:26 He who robs his father and drives away his mother, is a son who causes shame and brings reproach-
Solomon surely has in view his half brother Absalom, who for years had garnered support from the men of Israel in return for promises that he would judge in their favour if they helped him overthrow David. And yet the problems with Absalom were all prophesied by Nathan as a Divinely raised up punishment and consequence for the sin of David with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. But Solomon whitewashes his parents, and always puts the blame for the consequences and the trouble in the family solely upon the behaviour of his half brothers.

Pro 19:27 If you stop listening to instruction, my son, you will stray from the words of knowledge-
This may sound axiomatic and stating the obvious. Hence LXX "A son who ceases to attend to the instruction of a father will cherish evil designs"; GNB "My child, when you stop learning, you will soon neglect what you already know", AV "Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge". "Stray" is the word used for Saul straying from the words of instruction given him by Samuel (1 Sam. 26:21), whereas David kept listening to it. Again we see Solomon always seeking to justify his father David, and to criticize his competitors in the house of Saul.

Pro 19:28 A corrupt witness mocks justice, and the mouth of the wicked gulps down iniquity-
Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his

father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

True as the Proverbs are which condemn "a worthless / wicked person" (Prov. 6:12; 16:27; 19:28), again we have a subtext of Solomon seeking to justify himself and his father David, and to criticize the various competitors to Solomon's throne. "A worthless person" is the term used for Nabal (1 Sam. 25:17), those in David's camp who were not fully supportive of David (1 Sam. 30:22), Sheba who plotted to overthrow the Davidic line as king (2 Sam. 20:1), and particularly of those who wanted to overthrow Solomon as king (2 Chron. 13:7).

Pro 19:29 Penalties are prepared for scoffers, and beatings for the backs of fools- Solomon seems to justify the rich treating the poor harshly (see on Prov. 18:23). He himself treated his people as fools, beating them (1 Kings 12:11). And so often his Proverbs draw simplistic caricatures of the folly and laziness of the poor. He came to assume that his people were fools, and he could abuse them therefore, at will. Those who are lifted up with pride at their possession of "truth" often come to despise and abuse others.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 20

Pro 20:1 Wine is a mocker, and beer is a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise-
"Strong drink is a brawler" (RV). This is a metonymy- a drunk man is a brawler, not alcoholic drinks of themselves. But "strong drink" is put for 'a drunk man'. Alcohol is the alcoholic, and vice versa. This is some comfort for families of alcoholics who lament how alcohol so dominates their family member, and who marvel at the extent to which it is really so- that alcohol is the alcoholic, and the alcoholic lives for alcohol.

Solomon's warnings against alcohol were totally disregarded by Solomon in his later search for fulfilment in the flesh (Ecc. 2:3). His alcoholism contradicted his own earlier condemnations of drink as being for the unwise (e.g. Prov. 20:1). Thus by turning to drink he was throwing off his former wisdom, even though his access to it remained with him (Ecc. 2:9; cp. 'But I still believe the Truth, you know').

Pro 20:2 The terror of a king is like the roaring of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his own life-
Solomon writes inspired truth in Proverbs of course, but it is inevitable that much of what he writes about the need to respect the man who has wisdom, and his superiority over all others, was written with an eye to his own self-justification. He even writes as if the king must be accepted as automatically infallible: "A divine sentence is in the lips of the king; his mouth transgresseth not in judgment... the fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul" (Prov. 16:10; 20:2 AV). It was really Solomon's self-justification.

Pro 20:3 It is an honour for a man to keep aloof from strife; but every fool will be quarrelling-
The many exhortations to keep away from strife and "meddling" (AV) are fair enough. But it seems Solomon also had another agenda in pushing this; he didn't want his reign and policies to be questioned. He and his teaching were to be accepted without question. So often an appeal for "peace" is really a guise for insisting that a particular agenda is accepted.

Pro 20:4 The lazy will not plough by reason of the winter; therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of

the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Solomon had elsewhere taught in Prov. 17:5 that "Whoever mocks the poor reproaches his Maker. He who is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished". Yet Solomon's teachings about poverty do very often mock them and draw caricatures about them (e.g. Prov. 20:4), for he implies at several points that poverty is due to unwisdom and laziness, and the blessing of wisdom is wealth (:6 LXX). Yet again we see Solomon failing to personalize his wisdom; he disobeyed it because he seems to have reasoned that mere possession of Divine truth was all that was required for acceptability with God. And the same mistake is seen in so many.

Pro 20:5 Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out-
The thought is as in Prov. 18:4 LXX "A word in the heart of a man is a deep water, and a river and fountain of life spring forth". The sense may be that if a word of wisdom is placed within a man's heart, it becomes a fountain of life for others. The Lord uses a similar figure in Jn. 7:38,39 for the water of life which can pour from a man's innermost being, once he truly accepts the word of the Gospel. When He says that this was "as the scripture has said", this may be one of the passages He had in mind. Our witness to others is therefore from our innermost being, from the word of the Gospel believed and firmly lodged in the deepest heart. The person of understanding who draws out this water from another sounds like the Queen of Sheba drawing wisdom from Solomon; so again, he sees himself as the man with true counsel in his heart.

Pro 20:6 Many men claim to be men of unfailing love, but who can find a faithful man?-
LXX "a merciful man precious: but it is hard to find a faithful man". "Unfailing love" is *chesed*, the word for "grace". It could be that Solomon in his utilitarian, secular way is saying that a man of grace is not as much use as a man who is faithful / trustworthy to Solomon's cause.

Pro 20:7 A righteous man walks in integrity; blessed are his children after him-
Solomon has as usual his own agenda of self justification in view here. The man who 'walked in integrity' is without doubt David (s.w. 1 Kings 9:4; Ps. 26:1,11; 101:2). Solomon assumed that because his father had walked in integrity, then he as his child would automatically be blessed. But he was choosing to misunderstand the conditional nature of the promises to him in 1 Kings 9:4; if he walked himself in integrity "as David your father walked", then he would be the prophetically blessed son of David.

Pro 20:8 A king who sits on the throne of judgment scatters away all evil with his eyes-
Clearly Solomon has himself in view. He had asked for wisdom in order to be able to judge Israel rightly; but he became lifted up in pride by the mere fact of possessing the Divine truths he is collecting together in the book of Proverbs. And he assumes that therefore he has correct judgment just by reason of who he is, rather than on account of putting into operation the wisdom given him. See on :11.

Pro 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart pure. I am clean and without sin?-
David claimed to have cleansed his heart (Ps. 26:2,6; 73:13). Solomon uses the same word in saying that nobody can say "I have cleansed my heart" (Prov. 20:9); as if disagreeing with his father David on this point. Solomon may be suggesting that all you can do is live an externally clean life, you can never cleanse your heart- and this refusal to allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse him inwardly is what led to his apostasy. For disregarding deep, core level spiritual mindedness and trusting on externalities… is a sure path to spiritual disaster. And Solomon took it.

Pro 20:10 Differing weights and differing measures, both of them alike are an abomination to Yahweh-
"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 20:11 Even a child makes himself known by his doings, whether his work is pure, or whether it is right-
This may continue the idea of :8, that Solomon thinks he can intuitively judge purity and impurity in human hearts; all people, even children, can be easily discerned by their deeds; so Solomon claims. They can indeed be known by God, but no amount of possession of Divine truths gives someone the power to judge each person rightly, let alone to claim that such judgment is simple and intuitively obvious to them. And so many have followed Solomon in this; their possession of some Divine truths has led them to assume that they can accurately judge others, and their intuitive gut feeling about people they therefore assume to be perfectly correct Divine judgment.

Pro 20:12 The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, Yahweh has made even both of them-

This is in the context of Solomon's claim that as a just judge endowed with Divine wisdom, he knows the truth about all the cases which come before him (see on :8,11). The God who has ultimate awareness, hearing and seeing all things, has given such awareness to Solomon the judge; so Solomon liked to think.

Pro 20:13 Don't love sleep, lest you come to poverty. Open your eyes, and you shall be satisfied with bread-
This continues Solomon's rhetoric against laziness and his insistence that poverty comes as a result of idleness. He argues that if lazy people even just opened their eyes, they would be satisfied with bread. Solomon on one hand teaches pity towards the poor (Prov. 14:21,31; 19:17; 28:8). But on the other, he mocks the poor as being poor because of their unwisdom, believing that wealth is given in response to wisdom. He is very conflicted in his attitude to the poor. The Divine revelation of truth to him was clearly that he should be generous to the poor. But he fences against this in other places by saying that the poor are being punished for their unwisdom. So like us when we encounter need that requires our generosity, he hedges his position very carefully; rather than accepting the simple force of the wisdom given to him, that pity to the poor as it were transfers our wealth from earth to heaven, and we will receive it back in due time (see on Prov. 19:17).

Solomon speaks often of how hard work will "satisfy with bread" (Prov. 12:11; 20:13; 28:19). David his father uses the phrase in the context of saying that being 'satisfied with bread' is part of God's gracious blessing (Ps. 132:15). We see here how Solomon became focused upon works, rather than faith in the blessings which come from Divine grace. And yet he uses the words his father had used; but he interprets them as justification of works rather than acceptance of grace.

Pro 20:14 It's no good, it's no good, says the buyer; but when he is gone his way, then he boasts-
The idea is that he boasts at what a wonderful deal he has got. The verse may simply be an observation upon how things are, but I suggest it be read along with :15. The gold and rubies are bought for a very low price, but all the same, lips of knowledge are worth even more than them. Perhaps the Lord quarried His parable of the treasure hid in a field from these verses. The man gives all that he has to by all means buy the field which contains the treasure, but that treasure is the knowledge of the Gospel.

Pro 20:15 There is gold and abundance of rubies; but the lips of knowledge are a rare jewel-
See on :14. The words of Job 28:18 are repeatedly quoted in Proverbs (Prov. 3:15; 8:11; 20:15). "Wisdom" in Proverbs refers not so much to nuggets of truth, but to a way of life

in relationship with God; for that is the context in the source passage in Job 28:18 cp. 28.

Pro 20:16 Take the garment of one who puts up collateral for a stranger-
The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis*)*. Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan; what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to this matter. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom.

And hold him in pledge for a wayward woman-
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" (AV) woman (2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon.

Pro 20:17 Fraudulent food is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth is filled with gravel-
"Fraudulent" is 'deceit'. The allusion is to Ahithophel, who had betrayed Solomon's father David, when once they had eaten bread together, although in deceit (Ps. 41:9). And he then committed suicide, to which the mouth of a corpse being filled with gravel may allude. Always Solomon seems to have in view the justification of David and condemnation of his opposition.

Pro 20:18 Plans are established by advice; by wise guidance you wage war!-
Solomon's advice to his son sounds all well and good; but Rehoboam was given two different paths of advice by his advisors. Again, Solomon's words are true, but simplistic. Because as Rehoboam's case shows, the issue is not so much having advisors *per se*, but deciding which advisors to listen to. Solomon too had advisors (1 Kings 12:6), but did what he wanted, making this Proverb somewhat hollow when applied to himself.

Pro 20:19 He who goes about as a tale-bearer reveals secrets; therefore don't keep company with him who opens wide his lips-
"Opens wide" is the word for "enticed". Solomon's idea of avoiding sin was in resisting the enticement of very sinful people (s.w. Prov. 1:10; 16:29). He pays no attention to the heart, whereas the Biblical message is always that sin is to be avoided in the heart. Spiritual mindedness, rather than mere disassociation from sinners, is of the essence. Dt. 11:16 warns that our heart should not be enticed (s.w.); but Solomon sees enticement as merely from very sinful individuals.

Solomon rightly condemns gossip and the stirring up of divisions. But he is writing up his Divinely given wisdom at the start of his reign, where there were various groups of opposition to him. These groupings had all arisen from the divisions which arose after his parents' sin with each other; they were a consequence for David's sin, which Nathan had prophesied. Inevitably, David's behaviour had invited all manner of gossip and strife. But Solomon seems to blame this on the gossipers, and carefully considers they alone are guilty; for he is ever glorifying and whitewashing his father David.

Pro 20:20 Whoever curses his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in blackness of darkness-
A "lamp" was understood as the inheritance and continuation as king (1 Kings 15:4). Solomon here has in view how his half brother Absalom, and indeed his other half brothers, had contended with him for the throne; but their "lamp" in this sense had been

extinguished. And he likes to imply that this was because they had cursed their father David, whereas Solomon revered him.

Pro 20:21 An inheritance quickly gained at the beginning won't be blessed in the end-
If indeed :20 is referring to Absalom, this may also allude to him; implying Absalom and Solomon's other competitors for the throne had sought to grab the inheritance of their father David, but had not retained it in the end.

Pro 20:22 Don't say, I will pay back evil. Wait for Yahweh, and He will save you-
Solomon considered that much evil had been done to him and his father David by the various contenders for the throne. Solomon had been careful to cut down all such opposition when he became king, not following the example of David when he became king, in being so gracious to the house of Saul his contenders. But here he rather hypocritically claims he had not repaid evil, alluding to how David had not repaid evil by killing Saul when he could have done, but had waited for Yahweh to remove Saul and establish his kingdom.

Pro 20:23 Yahweh detests differing weights, and dishonest scales are not pleasing-
AV "are an abomination". This repeats Prov. 11:1. "Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like dishonest scales and a quiet desire to repay evil (:22). These internal things are the essence of idolatry. Solomon often uses the word "abomination" for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

But the context here is of Solomon claiming that his wisdom makes him a correct judge of men (:26). This is likewise the context of Prov. 16:11: "Honest balances and scales are Yahweh's; all the weights in the bag are His work". The stress may be on the fact that Yahweh is the ultimate judge, weighing all things in perfectly accurate balances and with ultimately true weighting. This then leads on to the implication in :26 and Prov. 16:12 that a true king, and Solomon refers to himself, cannot judge wrongly because he is king on God's behalf. His judgment must therefore be accepted as correct, because he is king on behalf of Yahweh, the ultimately true and fair judge. Hence Prov. 16:11 LXX "or the throne of rule is established by righteousness". But this is reasoning which is biased towards Solomon's self justification, and desire to cement himself as the unquestioned moral judge and teacher of Israel- although personally he was so far from it.

Pro 20:24 A man's steps are from Yahweh; how then can man understand his way?-
David here quotes his father's words in Ps. 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh". Man without God's help cannot therefore understand his "way". But God understands man's way because He alone understands the way of wisdom (Job 28:23 s.w.), and therefore David prays to be "made to understand the way" (s.w. Ps. 119:27). And Solomon has used this phrase about wisdom empowers man to understand his way (Prov. 14:8). The only way to understand life's way is therefore from the God who is ordering it; unaided, without His gift of wisdom, we cannot understand it. See on :27; Prov. 21:29.

Pro 20:25 It is a snare to a man to make a rash dedication, then later to consider his vows-
The reference is to the way that it was common in those days, as it still is in Semitic languages and cultures, to make very extreme promises of dedication which could not then be kept. Clearly Solomon has in view Jephthah's rash vow. But he also surely alludes to his half brother Absalom's attempted putsch to wrest the throne from David and Solomon, which used the guise of having made a vow he needed to perform (s.w. 2 Sam. 15:7,8). So again and again we see Solomon saying what is true and wise enough, but always with some underlying narrative justifying himself and his father.

Pro 20:26 A wise king winnows out the wicked, and drives the threshing wheel over them-
Solomon uses language elsewhere used about Messiah's final judgment when he says this. He felt that his judgment must be that of God, therefore he had to be right, because he 'had wisdom', he 'had the truth'; he assumed that because he was the king, therefore his heart would inevitably be guided by the Lord (Prov. 21:1), and he could judge and condemn others. This is where abusing the knowledge or possession of Divine truths can lead. See on :23.

Pro 20:27 The spirit of man is Yahweh's lamp, searching all his innermost parts-
This must be understood in the context of :24. There is as it were cooperation between God and man in order to understand our ways. Without the lamp of His word and involvement in our spirit, the unaided spirit of man cannot search out himself with any real meaning. Our self examination is in this sense God's, although we may not be conscious of it.

Pro 20:28 Love and faithfulness keep the king safe; his throne is sustained by love-
"Mercy and truth" ("love and faithfulness") were to be the basis of David's throne

because that is what upheld God's throne. And David was to reign on God's behalf, his throne was to be as God's throne (Is. 16:5; Ps. 89:14; 101:1). Solomon liked to imagine that his throne was likewise upheld by God as His throne, also on the basis of "mercy and truth" ("grace and justice"). But he assumed that would happen automatically, whereas David's response to this is given in Ps. 101- he vows that he will personally reign in "grace and justice", whereas Solomon assumes that God will provide the "grace and justice" ("mercy and truth") as it were automatically. “Mercy and truth preserve the king, and he upholdeth his throne by mercy” (Prov. 20:28 RVmg.) says as much- the promises (“mercy and truth” usually refer to God’s promises) had been given to David and just because of that, Solomon was sure that *his* throne and kingdom would thereby be upheld. He forgot the crucial need for personal, obedient relationship with God.

Pro 20:29 The glory of young men is their strength. The splendour of old men is their gray hair-
This is true in an outline, broad brush sense. But Solomon is not merely describing things how they are for the sake of it. He seems to be painting a word picture of how he saw himself, the strong, glorious young man, along with his splendid father David.

Pro 20:30 Wounding blows cleanse away evil, and beatings purge the innermost parts-
Again this is true, but Solomon by the end of his reign was beating his people (1 Kings 12:11); he came to consider that most of God's people were fools, needing to be cleansed by his punishment of them. Because they had refused the rebuke of his wisdom, he thought that therefore he could lash them. Those who are lifted up with pride at their possession of "truth" often come to despise and abuse others.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 21

Pro 21:1 The king's heart is in Yahweh's hand like the watercourses; He turns it wherever He desires-
"Turns" is the word for "incline", used by David of how he himself inclined his heart to God's word (Ps. 119:51,112,157). But David prayed that God would incline his heart towards His word (Ps. 119:36) and away from sin (Ps. 141:4). This is how the Holy Spirit works to this day- we are confirmed in the psychological attitudes we ourselves choose to have. The word is used of God's mighty "stretched out" arm and "strong hand" in human affairs (Ps. 136:12 and often in Isaiah). This powerful hand of God is at work in human hearts, confirming us in the psychological way in which we ourselves wish to go. In this sense God turns or inclines the heart where He wishes (Prov. 21:1). Solomon in the Proverbs places all the emphasis upon a person themselves in their own strength inclining their heart toward his teaching (Prov. 2:2; 4:5,20; 5:1). He fails to appreciate what David his father did; that God's word is His word and not that of the human channel through which it comes. And he totally puts the emphasis upon human strength of will, self inclination towards God's word, rather than perceiving as David did that without God's psychological help in this, we shall ultimately fail. As Solomon himself did.

When Solomon, as the current King, wrote this, it's possible to understand this as a claim that whatever he thought in his heart was in fact from God. He played God, having convinced himself that he was somehow automatically thinking on God's behalf. This is one of the dangers of mishandling the Divine truth and wisdom which is granted us to possess.

Solomon's heart was "turned away", or 'influenced' by his wives towards idols (1 Kings 11:3). Yet Solomon uses this very idea of the heart being turned or influenced in Prov. 2:2; 22:17 about the need to turn our hearts towards God's word. He taught, but did the very opposite. And perhaps Prov. 21:1 explains why he did this- he says there that Yahweh turns the heart of the King wherever He wishes- and so perhaps he thought that control of our thinking and inclinations is unnecessary, because somehow God will do it for us. And there's a lesson there for us, who may assume at times that God will somehow control our hearts for us, rather than our making a conscious effort towards mind control.

Pro 21:2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but Yahweh weighs the hearts-
Is he perhaps drawing a contrast between the infallibility of the King's thought, compared to the deceit of the human heart in the population? Thus Solomon came to see himself as somehow more than human.

We all know from our own experience with temptation that we can justify *anything*. Every way of man can seem right in his own eyes because of this feature of our nature (Prov. 14:12; 16:25; 21:2). The truth of this statement demonstrates the error of the

humanistic approach of 'follow your heart', 'do what feels good and right to you'. There must be the influence of God's word to put us on the path to life.

Pro 21:3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to Yahweh than sacrifice-
This was quite a paradigm breaking statement, seeing Solomon was living under the law of Moses. His father David came to a similar, but far more mature conclusion after his sin with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. He concluded that God wanted a broken, contrite, repentant heart rather than sacrifice (Ps. 51:17). Solomon instead speaks of *doing* righteous acts, rather than sacrifice. He had so whitewashed his father David that he closed his mind to learn the deep spiritual insights which David had come to as a result of recognizing his sin, rather than subconsciously denying it as Solomon did.

Pro 21:4 A high look and a proud heart are the lamp of the wicked, and are sin-
A "lamp" was understood as the inheritance and continuation as king (1 Kings 15:4). Solomon here has in view how his half brother Absalom, and indeed his other half brothers, had contended with him for the throne; but their "lamp" in this sense had been extinguished- because of their pride and the "high look" of Absalom. Again we see how Solomon constantly uses God's truth in order to justify himself and constantly have a dig at his competitors; just as many misuse "truth" today.

Pro 21:5 The plans of the diligent surely lead to profit; and everyone who is hasty surely rushes to poverty-
When he writes things like “the thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness” (Prov. 21:5 AV), he must inevitably be connecting his own fantastic wealth / blessing with his hard work. He was justifying himself by works rather than by faith; he assumed his righteousness and acceptance with God rather than struggling through the work of faith. Yet he could say “Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom” (Prov. 23:5 AV). He had all the right theory. Solomon was an active, industrious person by nature; and whilst all his many proverbs criticizing the lazy and glorifying the diligent are true as they stand, is there not in all this some element of self-justification, interpreting his own natural personality type as inherently righteous?

Here again we see Solomon's works based attitude. He sees poverty as the result of laziness, and profit / plenty coming from hard work (Prov. 14:23; 21:5). He fails to appreciate the wider narrative in spiritual life. The good news is for the poor, which group may include the lazy. And works will not save, and God's salvation is what is ultimately required by man. But Solomon had no eternal perspective, because he thought his kingdom was God's. And so as he got older and closer to death, he reasons that the reality of death means that man has no profit or preeminence (s.w. Ecc. 3:19). If he had accepted the Gospel of the future Kingdom of God, he would have focused more

upon salvation by grace through faith, and less upon the supremacy of hard work and profit / preeminence in this life.

Pro 21:6 Getting wealth by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour for those who seek death-
"A lying tongue" is the very phrase David uses about Saul's smear campaign against him (Ps. 27:12; 31:13 cp. 1 Sam. 26:19). This frequency of reference in itself indicates the weight with which this tragedy rested upon David's mind. It makes good homework to list all the lies Saul told David. But these words also apply to the lies told to David at the time of Absalom's rebellion, who for years prior to it had bad mouthed David to the men of Israel. Solomon repeatedly condemns "the mouth of the wicked" (Prov. 10:6,11,32; 11:11; 12:6; 15:28; 19:28). All he says is true enough, but he clearly enough has in view how his father David had condemned the supporters of Saul and Absalom as having "the mouth of the wicked" (Ps. 109:2). And these were the groups who were threatening his power and throne. Solomon presents himself by implication as having the mouth of the just / righteous. And yet we must note that David too had spoken multiple words of deceit in relation to the murder of Uriah. Indeed the phrase is used in Is. 53:9 as if the Lord Jesus was the only man who didn't have a "mouth of deceit". Solomon like David was in denial of the fact that we all sin with our mouths, as James makes clear in James 3:1-3.

Pro 21:7 The violence of the wicked will drive them away, because they refuse to do what is right-
GNB "The wicked are doomed by their own violence". This continues the Biblical theme that the wicked are essentially condemned by themselves more than by the Lord; they "make the answer now", their behaviour is of itself their own condemnation. 'Driven away' is the figure of condemnation in Ps. 35:5.

Pro 21:8 The way of the guilty is devious, but the conduct of the innocent is upright-
Or "crooked… straight". Whilst the way of life of itself is straight and direct, it is far too simplistic to imagine that the righteous are totally innocent, the sinners are totally guilty; and the righteous walk in a direct path to the Kingdom, marching ever upright. This is simply not true to spiritual reality and experience. David was of course an example of how things are in reality. But as with many today, Solomon's simplistic dualism led him to assume that he was in the "innocent" category; he therefore didn't examine himself, didn't seriously think he was capable of major sin, and considered others to be in that group of "the guilty". And this led him totally astray.

Pro 21:9 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than to share a house with a contentious woman-

A man on a housetop recalls the story of David's sin with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. I detected on Prov. 18:22 Solomon's justification of David's divorce with Michal. And here too there is a subtext, however unconscious even. Solomon appears to have totally whitewashed his parents, and any consequence of David's sins are blamed by Solomon upon his half brothers and foolish men, as if they were totally guilty and David totally innocent; for this was his worldview. See on :8,19; Prov. 25:24.

Pro 21:10 The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbour finds no mercy in his eyes-
LXX "The soul of the ungodly shall not be pitied by any man". Solomon's judgmentalism and lack of pity is notable in the Proverbs. Yet had God not shown grace and pity to his father David, Solomon would not have been born. David was rebuked for not showing pity regarding the sin with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Sam. 12:6). But Solomon shows no understanding of these things, no awareness of grace, and he acts as if David never sinned with his mother, and as if he too has never sinned.

Pro 21:11 When the mocker is punished, the simple gains wisdom. When the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge-
This seems to be justifying David's command for Solomon to punish the mocker Shimei, who had cursed him at the time of Absalom's rebellion. At the time, David had forgiven Shimei and forbidden his men to kill him. But at the end of his life, David didn't maintain that level of grace, and commanded Solomon to ensure that he brought Shimei's grey hairs down to the grave with blood (1 Kings 2:9). And Solomon justified this collapse of forgiveness and grace by saying that it would give wisdom to others and instruct the wise.

Pro 21:12 The Righteous One considers the house of the wicked, and brings the wicked to ruin-
To 'bring to ruin' is the word for 'subvert' or 'destroy' in Prov. 19:3: "The foolishness of man subverts his way". But God, "the righteous One", overthrows the wicked. Solomon thereby equates the foolish with the wicked. But he seems to classify as foolish anyone who doesn't accept his take on life, or is ignorant of the wisdom he teaches. Ignorance, and even intellectual failure, is not of itself wickedness. Solomon has such a dualistic view of things that he assumes anyone who is not wise and thereby wealthy to be foolish and thereby wicked. But amongst God's people, things are not so black and white. And we are not to judge, largely because we simply cannot judge.

LXX "A righteous man understands the hearts of the ungodly: and despises the ungodly for their wickedness". Solomon considered that his mere possession of Divine truth enabled him to infallibly judge people and to read their hearts. And thereby despise sinners. But Solomon wasn't infallible, knowledge of Divine truth doesn't empower us to

read and judge human heart. God doesn't despise sinners (Job 36:5), but sorrows for them and seeks to save them.

Pro 21:13 Whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he will also cry out, but shall not be heard-
Solomon speaks of the wicked within Israel as stopping their ears at the cry of the poor. He is alluding to how David his father had complained that the judges of Israel were like cobras who stopped their ear to the voice of charmers, refusing the voice of God's word (Ps. 58:4 s.w.). Connecting the ideas, the cry of the poor is the cry of God's word to us; our response to them is our response to them.

Pro 21:14 A gift in secret pacifies anger; and a bribe in the cloak, strong wrath-
LXX and GNB are rather different, and do not justify bribery: "If someone is angry with you, a gift given secretly will calm him down". But if NEV and MT are followed, this may connect with :15, which speak of how the righteous "do justice", and don't take bribes, therefore. Solomon's continual theme of justice and a just judiciary would be a swipe at his half brother Absalom, who had tried to become the judge of Israel and offered biased judgments towards whoever supported his attempt to take Solomon's throne (2 Sam. 15:1-6).

Pro 21:15 It is joy to the righteous to do justice; but it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity-
"The workers of iniquity" is a phrase repeatedly used by Solomon's father David concerning the supporters of Saul, and also those supporting David's half brothers- all of which were groups who were potential contenders for Solomon's throne. See notes on Ps. 5:5; 6:8; 14:4; 28:3; 36:12; 53:4; 59:2; 64:2; 92:7,9; 94:4,16; 101:8; 125:5; 141:4,9. So whilst Solomon speaks truly, so far as it goes, he uses language which subtly condemns his political opponents. Thus he harnessed God's truth towards his own self justification, as many do today.

Pro 21:16 The man who wanders out of the way of understanding shall remain in the assembly of the dead-
GNB "Death is waiting for anyone who wanders away from good sense". I suspect this is the correct sense, because Solomon constantly speaks as if this life is the time for the reward for wisdom, and the punishment for unwisdom.

Pro 21:17 He who loves pleasure shall be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil shall not be rich-

"Pleasure" is s.w. "mirth" in Ecc. 2:1,2;8:15. Solomon had to re-learn this for himself rather than accept the direct Divine teaching about it which he knew and taught. But again Solomon appears set on seeing the outcomes as all in this life. For many who love oil and wine are rich, and the poor are not always pleasure lovers. But Solomon sees things within the terms of his simplistic dichotomy, where the wise are generally rich and the foolish and lazy are generally poor.

Pro 21:18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous; the treacherous for the upright-
"Treacherous" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Pro 21:19 It is better to dwell in a desert land, than with a contentious and fretful woman-
See on :9. I detected on Prov. 18:22 Solomon's justification of David's divorce with Michal. And here too there is a subtext, however unconscious even; however true Solomon's observation may be in more general terms. For David divorced Michael whilst he was still in the desert, on the run from her father Saul.

Pro 21:20 There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man swallows it up-
Again, Solomon teaches that generally, the wise are wealthy. This simply doesn't accord with observed reality, neither with Biblical history and lament that the wicked prosper in this life. Solomon comes to this simplistic dichotomy in order to justify himself, the one made rich by God's gift rather than his own hard work or wisdom. For he abused that grace by assuming that his wealth was because of his wisdom. Whereas that doesn't accord with the chronology of his life; he inherited riches from David, chose wisdom, and God then gave him great wealth as a young man. The idea seems to be that the wise hoard their treasure, whereas a fool "spendeth it up" (AV) if wealth comes to him. The Lord's parable of the rich fool who hoarded his wealth is therefore again seen to be correcting Solomon's perspective. That man was in the position of Solomon; his wealth was only for this life, and he had totally ignored the factor of human mortality, as many do today.

Pro 21:21 He who follows after righteousness and kindness finds life, righteousness, and

honour-
The "life" which Solomon saw as the reward for wisdom was not therefore "eternal life"; because in this life, the wise "finds life". And "honour", good standing in the eyes of men, was so important to Solomon. He lacks any Kingdom perspective, nor an awareness of the future day of judgment. For he assumes that his kingdom is God's promised future Kingdom, and he is the Messianic ruler. As he got older and came nearer to death, he lost all faith- as seen in his musings in Ecclesiastes. His wives turned his heart to their idols. If he had more firmly accepted with all humility the gospel of the Kingdom to come, this could have all been avoided.

Pro 21:22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty, and brings down the strength of its confidence-
"Confidence" is literally 'fortress'. The secure fortress was Zion (Is. 32:18; Ps. 125:1 s.w.), "the stronghold of Zion, the same is the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). Whilst what Solomon says is true, and repeats the multiple cases of David in the Psalms professing trust in Yahweh as his strong fortress, Solomon as ever has his agenda of self justification; he saw his possession of Zion as a sign that he feared Yahweh acceptably, and that his children would continue the Davidic line of glory. But sacred space is not so ultimately important to God. Possession of the literal stronghold of Zion was nothing compared to trust in Yahweh.

The allusion is to how Joab scaled the city of Zion. But Joab turned against David, and his family and supporters became one of the groups of opposition to Solomon. Solomon here gives credit to his father David, the "wise man", as he sees him, for scaling the city of Zion; when in fact it was Joab who did it. Again we see his desire to exalt and glorify his father.

Pro 21:23 Whoever guards his mouth and his tongue keeps his soul from troubles-
As explained on :21, Solomon sees the advantage of controlling our tongue as simply being that we are thereby preserved from "troubles" in this life. And yet David suffered "troubles" from Saul, although innocent (s.w. 1 Sam. 26:24; 2 Sam. 4:9). David understood that Yahweh was a refuge from "troubles" (s.w. Ps. 9:9; 10:1; 22:11; 25:17; 34:6 and so often); rather than thinking, as did Solomon, that we are somehow preserved from them due to steel willed self control and wise speaking. Solomon glorified his father David, but totally failed to grasp his far more spiritual perspective.

Pro 21:24 The proud and haughty man, scoffer is his name; he works in the arrogance of pride-
David had spoken of the house of Saul as scoffing at him (s.w. Ps. 119:51). And the line of David had been chosen to replace Saul because he had refused Samuel's reproof.

David had accepted reproof and was open to it, notably from Nathan the prophet (Ps. 38:1; 141:5); and so again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father. But Solomon was only to remain the prophetic son of David if he accepted reproof (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:14); and he didn't. He refused to personalize his own wisdom, as we can.

Pro 21:25 The desire of the lazy kills him, for his hands refuse to labour-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 21:26 There are those who covet greedily all day long; but the righteous give and don't withhold-
This is the phrase only elsewhere used for Israel's coveting of meat in the wilderness (Num. 11:4; Ps. 106:14). The reason for their lust was because they were lazy (:25). They ought to have instead thought of what they could give, rather than lusting for what they could additionally get. This generous attitude is the antidote to lust.

Pro 21:27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination: how much more, when he brings it with a wicked mind!-
Solomon may have in view Saul's rejection from the kingship for his wrong attitude to sacrifice (1 Sam. 15:21,22). Likewise the attempts of Absalom and Adonijah to take the throne from David and Solomon involved the offering of sacrifices (2 Sam. 15:12; 1 Kings 1:9). What Solomon says in the Proverbs is true on one level, but he harnesses Divine truth to justify himself and his own agendas; just as we can.

Pro 21:28 A false witness will perish, but a man who listens speaks consistently-
The Hebrew implies that the man who has heard truth will constantly speak about it. Solomon has much to say about true and false witnesses (Prov. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18). Whilst his warnings are true enough, he surely has an element of self justification in what he writes. Because he was aware that his parents, David and Bathsheba, had been accused of many things which had led to all the opposition against David at the end of his reign, and which opposition Solomon had to

contend with in order to retain the throne for himself. David laments the false witness of the house of Saul and his own sons, Solomon's half brothers (Ps. 27:12; 35:11). The continual condemnation of false witnesses must be understood in this context. Whilst it is all true so far as it goes, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 21:29 A wicked man hardens his face; but as for the upright, he establishes his ways-
"Establishes" is "understands". The same phrase is used in Prov. 20:24: "A man's steps are from Yahweh; how then can man understand his way?". David here quotes his father's words in Ps. 37:23: "The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh". Man without God's help cannot therefore understand his "way". But God understands man's way because He alone understands the way of wisdom (Job 28:23 s.w.), and therefore David prays to be "made to understand the way" (s.w. Ps. 119:27). And Solomon has used this phrase about wisdom empowers man to understand his way (Prov. 14:8). The only way to understand life's way is therefore from the God who is ordering it; unaided, without His gift of wisdom, we cannot understand it.

Pro 21:30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Yahweh-
This appears to be stating an obvious truth, until we discern the allusion to Ahithophel's counsel to destroy David and take the throne away from him and Solomon. See on :27,28.

Pro 21:31 The horse is prepared for the day of battle; but victory is with Yahweh-
"Prepared" is the word translated "established" in the promises of the eternal establishment of David's throne (2 Sam. 7:12,13,16 etc.), and Solomon wrongly assumed that the conditional nature of the promises concerning the seed were just irrelevant to him as he had wisdom. Therefore he uses the word of how his kingdom has been "established" (1 Kings 2:24 s.w.). The previous verses have all featured allusions to Solomon's contenders for the throne being stopped by God, they tried to prepare or establish themselves but it never worked out (2 Sam. 15:1; 1 Kings 1:5); and so surely Solomon has the idea in mind that he has been established as the promised Messianic seed of David with an eternally "established" throne and kingdom. This leads him to the conclusion that the outcome of wisdom and folly is in this life, and he has no perspective of a final day of judgment and eternal establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. This is why the simplistic dichotomies he presents between the blessed and wise, and the cursed and foolish, are not always true to observed experiences in this life. For it is the future Kingdom which puts them in ultimate perspective.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 22

Pro 22:1 A good name is more desirable than great riches, and loving favour is better than silver and gold-

The dating of Proverbs becomes crucial in interpreting the book. It can too easily be assumed that the Proverbs were part of the wisdom given to Solomon in his youth, and his subsequent life was a tragic example of saying 'Do as I say but not as I do', going directly against the principles taught in the theoretical wisdom he had been given. And that may well be so. But we need to consider the possibility that the Proverbs were written throughout the life of Solomon, at least, up until his final, public turning away from Yahweh to other gods in his old age, which probably gave rise to the book of Ecclesiastes. The comments here in 22:1 about a name, a lasting legacy, being better than wealth may well have arisen from his own reflection upon what little his wealth had done for him. It is who we are, our name before God and our lasting legacy, which is important- bank balances are utterly irrelevant to it. It was David who 'got him a name' through his work for the Lord (2 Sam. 8:13); David had the name, and Solomon the wealth. Solomon was obsessed with his father- so many times he refers to "David my father". His proverbs are shot through with allusion to David. And now perhaps he reflects that his father had done better than he. David had the name, Solomon the riches. But the riches were nothing compared to the name. A case can be made that the wise, righteous one portrayed in Proverbs is based around David, and Solomon's message was to be like David his father, whom he saw as the embodiment of the theoretical wisdom which he had received. Or we could read Solomon here as saying that his father had wealth, but it was his name / legacy / record which was far more significant.

Pro 22:2 The rich and the poor have this in common-

Or, "the rich and poor meet together". Perhaps Solomon had in view Nathan's parable to David after his sin with Bathsheba (Solomon's mother). David was likened to the rich man, and Uriah to the poor man (2 Sam. 12:1). The same Hebrew words are used. The parable would have been well known to Solomon, because Bathsheba was his mother. He was perhaps reflecting that David and Uriah met together in that they were only human, each made equal to the other by reason of having a common creator. It may be that the subtext here [once again] is Solomon seeking to minimize the failures of his father and his dynasty, as if to say 'Dad was of course only human, as human as Uriah, they were both the same...'.

Yahweh is the maker of them all-

One implication of believing that God is our personal creator is that we will not be envious of the rich; we will not see them as so fundamentally different from ourselves.

Pro 22:3 A prudent man sees danger, and hides himself-
The Hebrew word for "prudent" is twice used about David whilst under persecution from Saul (1 Sam. 23:22). The context is that David was hiding himself in the forests of Ziph (1 Sam. 23:19). And so Solomon says that the prudent man hides himself. The "danger" [Heb. 'evil'] naturally refers to the 'evil' foreseen by David which was determined against him by Saul; the same word for "evil" / "danger" is found in 1 Sam. 20:7,9. Without doubt, Solomon is setting up his father David as the parade example and embodiment of his teaching. So whilst all he says is true, there is also a subtext of justifying his father and his father's choice of himself as king. Our witness to others, our use of God's Truth, can likewise have mixed motives and very human, self-justifying subtexts to it. We can also see Solomon moving towards a position whereby he personally distances himself from the great truths he is preaching; his idea is 'Look at my father, follow his example, he was a truly good man'; rather than rejoicing in God's truths for himself, and unconsciously radiating them to others in his own life.

But the simple pass on, and suffer for it-
The Hebrew translated "pass on" is used of how Saul 'passed on' to sin at Gilgal (1 Sam. 15:12,24), and was condemned for doing so, resulting in his replacement by David. On David's death, there were multiple interest groups within Israel, reflected in the various rebellions against David in his final years. One of those groups was the family of Saul and those loyal to the memory of Saul; and all these groups had to be repressed by Solomon. Thus Solomon in Proverbs so often paints the foolish one, the simple one, the disobedient, in terms of Saul. Again, there is a subtext of self-justification and fortification of ones' own position, despite the words spoken being true enough of themselves. Our motivation for witness needs to be pure, to simply proclaim God's grace, to make known His Son, to see their glory... and all human agendas must be left behind. But we have to search our own psychology very deeply to come to this level of self-understanding.

LXX "An intelligent man seeing a bad man severely punished is himself instructed, but fools pass by and are punished".

Pro 22:4 The result of humility and the fear of Yahweh is wealth, honour, and life-
David himself said that it was humility which had 'made him great or 'increased' him (2 Sam. 22:36 Heb.; the common translations suggest that it was God's humility which increased David, but there is no pronoun in the Hebrew text. The statement is simply that humility had increased David). And David had reigned in "the fear of Yahweh" (2 Sam. 23:3). David was given "wealth" [s.w.] as a result of this (1 Chron. 29:12,28), as well as "honour" (s.w. 1 Chron. 17:18). Again, Solomon is presenting his own father as the parade example. The three blessings of wealth, honour and [long] life were the very

things which God gave to Solomon in reward for having chosen wisdom (1 Kings 3:13,14). So Solomon could be arguing that he had been given those things because of his humility. Solomon had more "wealth" than any other person on earth at the time (the same Hebrew word is used as here for "wealth"; 1 Kings 10:23). So surely Solomon is speaking with some reference to himself. Actually, he was given the wealth because of his love of wisdom, not because of his humility. And yet Solomon here may be claiming to be humble, and citing his blessings as evidence. This of course is revolting- to parade ones' own supposed humility.

Solomon is here alluding to the way that he did not ask for riches, but wisdom; and was rewarded with the gift of riches. But this is but false humility. For he boasts about his riches in Prov. 14:24 "The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools crowns them with folly". It was Solomon who was the king and wore the ultimate crown in his society. And he implies that his fantastic riches were a result of his wisdom, and that his pattern should be followed by others. But he fails to remember that his desire for wisdom was recognized by God in that He gave Solomon riches. Those riches were a gift from God, by grace, and not acquired or generated by his own application of wisdom (1 Kings 3:13). He therefore misused his possession of wisdom and experience of grace to justify himself, and present himself as a self made man; when he was not that at all.

Pro 22:5

Thorns and snares are in the path of the wicked-
The Proverbs often allude to the Law of Moses or earlier Israelite history. Here the reference is to the only other time that “thorns and snares” occur together in the Bible, in Josh. 23:13, where Israel are warned that association and intermarriage with the pagan world around them will be as thorns and snares to them. The wicked therefore put these things in their own path; and again, Solomon makes this warning whilst failing spectacularly himself in this very thing. And yet the language of "thorns and snares" is very much what Solomon's father David used about the fate of those who persecuted him (Ps. 11:6; 69:22; 119:110; 140:5)- the likes of Saul and Absalom, whose supporters were the very ones who had been in competition with Solomon for the throne. The same Hebrew word translated "wicked" is used by David about all his enemies and opponents (2 Sam. 22:27; Ps. 101:4).

The language of snares alludes to Solomon's father David, asking to be saved from such snares (Ps. 141:9) and rejoicing that he and God's people had been (Ps. 124:7). The initial reference may have been to Saul laying snares for David through getting him to marry his daughters and thereby seeking to kill him; and in Ps. 119:110 David is proud he has not fallen into those snares. Solomon likewise is hinting that the family of Saul, who were still his political opponents, were not better than gentile whores, and he didn't want his own family to intermarry with them. But Psalm 119 finishes with David saying

bluntly that he has "gone astray" (Ps. 119:176), as if to say that earlier he had far overrated his own obedience to God's law.

In Proverbs, Solomon is continually alluding positively to his father's words. But in Ecc. 9:12 he alludes to those words cynically. Solomon seems to be cynically commenting that all men are finally snared in death. Earlier Solomon had warned about avoiding spiritual snares (Prov. 7:23; 22:5), but finally in Ecc. 9:12 he concludes that death is the unavoidable snare; and therefore all attempts to avoid being morally snared into sin are ultimately vain. He came to this perspective because he failed to fully grasp the hope of the resurrection of the body at the last day. He thought he would have the Kingdom now, and this led to his rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom and its moral implications.

Whoever guards his soul stays away from them-
The very same Hebrew words used of how the son of David could be the Messiah figure if he took heed to, or 'guarded', his soul (1 Kings 2:4). Solomon is of course assuming that he had fulfilled the conditions for being the true 'Son of David'; when in fact he did not. We can make the same fatal assumption. Whilst on one hand rejoicing in God's grace, we need to ever bear in mind a sense of the future we might miss, and our extreme frailty before God's ultimate judgment. Significantly, David repeatedly uses these same words to beg *God* to 'guard his soul' (Ps. 25:20; 86:2; 97:10; 121:7); whereas Solomon speaks as if the righteous do this in their own strength, guarding their own soul; and he seems to assume that he is amongst the category who guarded their own soul. In our days this may translate in terms of those who think by their own Bible study and steel-willed obedience they can guard their souls, keeping themselves in the way; instead of throwing themselves upon the spiritual action of God. Comparing David's Psalms with Solomon's Proverbs, we often see David asking *God* to do the same things which Solomon says the righteous man must do himself. This matter of guarding our soul is one of a number of such examples.

Pro 22:6

Train up-
The Hebrew word is only elsewhere translated 'to dedicate', and is used of Solomon's dedication of the temple (2 Chron. 7:5). So in view of the above comments, it could even be that Solomon here is wrongly assuming that a mere dedication ceremony alone will ensure a child will not depart from the way of his or her dedicators. Rabbinic commentary sees here a reference to circumcision, from which there can be no departing; at very least, the Rabbis recognize that the Hebrew refers to a one off dedication ceremony, rather than to a process of 'training up'.

A child in the way he should go-
God works with individuals and we are each independently judged regardless of

whether we had believing or unbelieving parents, and so it cannot be that someone comes to the Kingdom simply because of faithful parents. And yet none of us will reach salvation purely by our own effort; there are other elements over and above that, and faithful parenting is one such element in the final algorithm which determines who is saved and who isn't. It's an endless motivation for parents, therefore, to raise their children in God's way. The verse as it stands presents various problems. For one, it's not true to experience- children are raised one way and yet they depart from it. And is it really so that the final destiny of a believer's child simply must be salvation, because they cannot depart from the way in which they were raised? Or is the verse not talking about spiritual matters at all? Could it be so that any individual cannot depart from the way, just because they had good parents? I suggest that the notes on :1 be reviewed at this point. Because the verse makes sense in the context of Solomon seeking to justify himself as the only legitimate 'son of David', the only rightful King, who automatically fulfilled the conditions which God had given regarding how the Son of David must be obedient to Him if he is going to continue as the Messianic King. So Solomon would be claiming that because his father David was righteous, and he had been raised by his father, therefore he was bound to never depart from the right way.

The Biblical comment is that when Solomon was old, he *did* depart from the way of his father David and did *not* have the heart of "David his father" (1 Kings 11:4). Surely there is an intended connection with this Proverb; Solomon was wrong to assume that because of his pedigree, he simply had to be a Kingdom person and could not possibly depart from the way of his father. He did depart from it, for all his much repeated obsession with "David my father". And he stands as a warning for all time to those who consider that they will never depart from the faith of their fathers. I would go so far as to say that Prov. 22:6 is therefore presented by 1 Kings 11:4 as not being strictly true- this is simply part of Solomon's self-justification, and our notes on the rest of Proverbs 22 demonstrate that almost every verse here is alluding to David and an example of Solomon's self-justification.

Solomon here speaks of bringing up a child in the way he should go. Sadly by the time of Ecc. 2:19 and his experience with his own children, he comments about his heir: "Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?". He simply didn't see the relevance of his wisdom to his own personal family life. Yet he proudly insisted: "Who is as the wise man?", as if the possession of theoretical truth and wisdom was the ultimate possession; and he then goes on to say that this made him beyond criticism (Ecc. 8:2-4). This surely *must* be a danger for any community or individual who considers they have "the truth" and who considers the possession of it to be of the utmost importance.

And when he is old he will not depart from it-
Again, Solomon is justifying his father David and presenting him as the parade example

of all Solomon's wisdom; for the same word is used by David in claiming that he had never 'departed' from God's ways (2 Sam. 22:23; Ps. 119:102).

Pro 22:7

The rich rule over the poor-
This may appear totally out of context, unless we follow the exposition of :6 offered above, which suggests that here we have Solomon deep in personal self-justification. The Hebrew for "rules" is so often used about Solomon's 'ruling'; and likewise he is described as rich / wealthy in the same contexts. He is observing that he has become the richest man on earth, and is ruling the poor, with others in servitude to him. He considered this to be his spiritual self-justification; just as weak believers can wrongly consider their material prosperity to automatically reflect their justification before God. What is stated in this verse would appear an almost pointless truism, a stating of the obvious- until we realize that Solomon is referring to himself, and [mistakenly] citing his wealth and power as evidence of his rightness before God.

And the borrower is servant to the lender-
When experiencing blessings for obedience, Israel would lend to many nations (Dt. 28:12). Solomon may well have lent to the nations who came to him; in any case, he is alluding to the blessings for spiritual obedience, and considering (wrongly) that his material wealth thereby declares him to be a spiritual person.

Pro 22:8

He who sows wickedness reaps trouble- The same word for "wickedness" is used by David about Saul (the "wicked man" of Ps. 43:1); about Nabal "the fool" (Ps. 53:1), and about Joab and Joab's family (2 Sam. 3:29,34). All these were interest groups with whom Solomon had been in competition for the throne. Solomon's words are true enough, but he seems to be teaching them with a strong hint that they refer to his opponents and thereby justifying himself.

And the rod of his fury will be destroyed- The idea of "the rod" is commonly used regarding a scion / descendant. In the context of Prov. 22, Solomon is saying that David's "rod", i.e. himself, will be blessed; but the attempts of others to have their 'rod' take the throne will not work out because they are wicked. Solomon overlooked the fact that God had set him on His throne. He took this as meaning that he was thereby justified spiritually, and that all other pretenders to the throne were therefore wicked. The Hebrew for "fury" is used by David in the Psalms about the rage of Saul's supporters against him.

But note GNB "If you plant the seeds of injustice, disaster will spring up, and your oppression of others will end". Solomon did oppress others. Discipline and punishment of the unwise is a big theme in Solomon's Proverbs. He took it to the extent of whipping his own people (1 Kings 12:11). This abusive attitude to people arose from his obsession with the idea that he had wisdom, and people generally are fools, idiots, unwise- and therefore he could abuse them. This attitude is another outcome of believing that mere possession of truths about God justifies us, and declares all other people foolish, unwise and able to be legitimately abused by us. In contrast, the heart of God (as of David) bleeds for such people and wants to save them rather than gloat in their unwisdom and punish them for it.

Pro 22:9 He who has a generous eye will be blessed; for he shares his food with the poor-
Heb. 'a good eye'. The Hebrew of 1 Sam. 25:8 uses these two words in appealing for Nabal to be generous to David and his men in their poverty. And the second half of the verse makes that allusion explicit: "for he shares his food with the poor". The same Hebrew words for 'sharing' and 'food' are found in 1 Sam. 25:11 concerning Nabal's refusal to 'give' his 'bread' to the poor David. Yet again we find Solomon justifying his father David, and implicitly criticizing his father's enemies. And here he is of course directly repeating David's own words in Ps. 41:1: "Blessed is he who considers the poor". The Hebrew translated "food" is literally "bread", and we recall the incident where David's supporters at Nob gave bread to him and his men (1 Sam. 21:3,6; 22:13); the same two Hebrew words are used as here in Prov. 22:8 'to share [give] food [bread]'. Solomon is going over his father's life and pronouncing blessing on those who supported David, and judgment upon those who did not. The huge number of times that Solomon uses the phrase 'my father David' reflects this psychological obsession with his father. It resulted in his living out parental expectation, whilst having a terrifying emptiness within himself when it came to real personal spirituality. The same words for 'giving bread' are used by Hiram, when he says that Solomon 'gave him bread / food' in return for his assistance with building the temple (1 Kings 5:9). This was purely a commercial transaction, but it may be that Solomon is here justifying it as some act of grace and kindness on his part.

Pro 22:10

Drive out-
"Drive out" is the same Hebrew word is used for how Solomon "thrust out Abiathar from being priest" (1 Kings 2:27) because he had supported those who had rebelled against his father David. Solomon felt that Abiathar had thus 'mocked' David, and felt that the idea of 'unity' and lack of strife / dissension justified his purges.

The mocker-
The word used by David to describe his enemies (Ps. 1:1; 119:51), whose descendants in turn became Solomon's threats to the throne.

And strife will go out-
The same root word used regarding how at the end of David's reign, the people of Israel "were at strife throughout all the tribes of Israel" (2 Sam. 19:9). Solomon inherited that situation when he came to the throne. Solomon is using the argument used by so many in history and to this day- in order to achieve peace in a community, it's necessary to assign historical precedents to the opposition, slander them, appeal to some kind of Divine judgment of them, and exclude them in order to reduce strife and enable unity within the group. But this is not to say that the Proverbs are not inspired truth; it's the way Solomon uses the principles which is such a dangerous mixture of flesh and spirit, and which is our warning and lesson.

Yes, quarrels and insults will stop- The idea is of reproach, and the same word is used by David to describe what the house of Saul had done to him (1 Sam. 18:23). Solomon is arguing that the only way to end this situation is to drive out any opposition.

22:11 *He who loves purity of heart and speaks gracefully is the king's friend-* Having in :10 spoken of his plan to purge Israel of opposition, Solomon now gives the other side of the coin. Anyone who is supportive of him and speaks nicely to him will be "the king's friend" and he considers loyalty to him an evidence of "purity of heart". One sees this today in church life- anyone who takes the side of a certain leader is pronounced to be 'most spiritually minded' and so forth. But "the king's friend" was a technical term for a senior Government minister, and the term is used only once elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, with reference to one of Solomon's chief officers: "Zabud the son of Nathan was chief officer, the king's friend" (1 Kings 4:5). Nathan was one of David's hawks, one of his hardest core loyalists, and Solomon appointed his son as his chief advisor; and justifies it by pronouncing this man as pure of heart just because he was "king's friend". There is no particular *ipse facto* reason for thinking that a king's friend is automatically pure of heart; but this Proverb declares that to be the case. Again, Solomon appears to be using Divine wisdom to justify his own politics, and this is a lesson that needs to be learnt in church life today.

Pro 22:12 The eyes of Yahweh-
"The eyes of the Lord" is a phrase commonly found in the historical records of David. And so Solomon surely also had in mind Saul, who did evil in the eyes of the Lord and was therefore rejected and replaced by David (1 Sam. 15:19), because the eyes of the Lord looked upon David's heart and therefore chose him and not Saul (1 Sam. 16:7). David himself had claimed that the eyes of the Lord preserved him against all

opposition from Saul and his supporters (1 Sam. 26:24), and that even when his throne was under threat from Absalom's rebellion, "the eyes of the Lord" would restore him his throne (2 Sam. 15:25). When this happened, David exalted that he was seen as pure in the Lord's eyes (2 Sam. 22:25), and God's comment in 1 Kings 15:5,11 confirms this. All this was highly relevant to Solomon at the start of his reign, when he was given his wisdom, and when perhaps he wrote it down in the form of the book of Proverbs. So a statement that is true enough in itself is being given a subtext of justifying David's dynasty through Solomon. God's comment on all this subtexting and self-justification is in 1 Kings 11:6: "Solomon did that which was evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and didn't go fully after Yahweh, as did David his father".

Another reading is possible. Angels have a special role in performing the miracle of preserving God's word intact. This work of the Angels is maybe referred to here in Prov. 22:12 "The eyes (Angels) of the Lord preserve knowledge", which is now concentrated in the form of the written word.

Watch over knowledge-
The idea of being 'preserved' or watched over is commonly used by David in the Psalms he wrote whilst under persecution from Saul or opposition from pretenders to his throne at the end of his life (Ps. 12:7; 25:21; 31:23; 32:7; 40:11; 61:7; 64:1; 140:1 all use the same Hebrew word as found here in Prov. 22:12 for "preserve"). Yet again, Solomon is upholding his father David as the parade example of a man preserved by God, and he is using that to proclaim his own preservation by God. But David also very often uses this word to speak of how he in turn had 'preserved' or 'kept' God's way and commandments. And Solomon didn't want to notice that conditional element.

Solomon surely by metonymy is putting 'discretion' or 'wisdom' for the discreet / wise person, who was preeminently himself. In contrast to the apostates alluded to in the previous verses, whose destiny and claims to the throne had ended in failure, he hints that *his* preservation to be king was because "the eyes of the Lord" had preserved him because he was wise / discreet. But he overlooks the fact that his wisdom was a gift from God and was not intrinsic to himself. The "eyes of the Lord" perhaps allude to Angels, and Solomon may have in view how the cherubim preserved / guarded the way to the tree of life; and he obviously felt that he and his kingdom were in the way to the tree of life, to the Kingdom of God on earth.

But He frustrates the words of the unfaithful-
A reference to how Solomon perceived that all opposition to him had come to nothing. "The unfaithful" is a term David uses about Saul and his other opponents (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). But Biblical history demonstrates that in fact his dynasty was not preserved in the absolute terms he envisaged, because upon his death, the majority of Israel divided from his dynasty and made Jeroboam their king and rejected the dynasty of David:

"What portion have we in David? Neither do we have an inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, Israel! Now see to your own house, David" (1 Kings 12:16).

"Unfaithful" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Pro 22:13 The lazy one says, There is a lion outside! I will be killed in the streets!-
"The lazy one" is a term only found in Proverbs, and 14 times at that. Solomon was active, for all his sins, he was not lazy. That wasn't his personality type. And he rather glorifies that, as if works can justify a person, and as if more passive personality types are thereby found to be condemned and rejected by God. That isn't the case; personality type is not the basis upon which we are justified before God. Rather is it by grace through faith, and Solomon just didn't get that at all. David was the man characterized by being fearless of lions (1 Sam. 17:34). So again, we see a subtext of justifying his father David. Solomon's implication is surely that a lion may indeed be outside, but it is laziness which stops a man going outside. And again, that seems rather a strange thing to say. Surely fear is the reason a man won't go outside in this case, not laziness. But Solomon calls the man lazy, because he himself was well known as *not* a lazy person.

It's also worth noting that Saul and also Absalom's supporters are described as lions (2 Sam. 1:23; 17:10; Ps. 10:9; 22:13,21). David was given victory against them all, by grace, as he often celebrated in the Psalms. But Solomon considered that such victory was because he and his father were not lazy, and had gone out against the lions. There's a significant difference in approach, and again, Solomon is justifying himself by framing Divine wisdom in a way which alludes to himself and his father.

Pro 22:14 The mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit: he who is under Yahweh's wrath will fall into it-
The Hebrew *zur* is translated "strange women" in the AV, but it can mean simply one who turns aside (LXX "a transgressor"). It doesn't have to refer to a woman who tempts. Solomon may be saying that by listening to wrong advisers, "he who is under Yahweh's wrath will fall". The Hebrew for "fall" is repeatedly used about the 'fall' of Saul and his family (1 Sam. 31:1,4,8; 2 Sam. 1:4,10,12,19,25,27; Ps. 5:10; 7:15; 20:8; 35:8; 36:12; 57:6), whereas David did not "fall" due to Saul's machinations (1 Sam. 18:25; 26:20 s.w.). "He who is under Yahweh's wrath" would be how Solomon saw Saul and his family. There might even be reference to the way in which Saul 'fell' to the earth as a result of

the words of the witch woman at Endor (1 Sam. 28:20 s.w.), and to how the family of Joab [who tried to usurp David's throne in opposition to Solomon] were cursed to 'fall' (2 Sam. 3:29).

Solomon rejected this wisdom and only came to agree with it through doing just what he here condemns (Ecc. 7:26).

Pro 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child-
This doesn't serve as any evidence that human beings are born intrinsically evil, because the next half of the verse says that this 'folly' can depart from a person as they pass through the process of discipline. The majority of the 25 usages of the word translated "folly" are found in Solomon's Proverbs; perhaps he had in view Nabal, 'folly', whose wife Abigail was one of his father's wives, and whose children were surely in competition with him for the throne. He therefore appears to rather belabour the folly of 'folly', and here makes the point that whatever 'folly' had been in him as a child, had been driven from him by the discipline of his wonderful father David. "Bound up" is the same Hebrew word used about those who 'conspired' against David (2 Sam. 15:31). Solomon may be implying: 'But if these people had been properly brought up, like I was, as the true scion of David, then such conspiracy would have been driven out of them in youth as it was with me'. "Child" can just as well be translated "young man". Prov. 7:7 singles out a particular "young man" [s.w. "child"] who was lacking in "heart", whose folly stood out from that of the other "simple ones". These may well refer to the 200 'simple ones' who went with Absalom in his rebellion against David (2 Sam. 15:11). One of them was particularly singled out here by Solomon as being foolish. And it's no accident that David calls Absalom "the young man [s.w. "child"] Absalom" (2 Sam. 14:21; 18:5,12,29,32). "Young man" was perhaps David's term of endearment for Absalom. The same "young man" [s.w. "child"] may be in view here in 22:15. The context of the chapter is Solomon arguing that *he* and not anyone else like Absalom was the rightful successor to David. He may be suggesting that Absalom had not been properly raised from childhood, his foolishness had not been driven from him by a good upbringing, and therefore he was not the proper candidate for their father's throne. Seeing it was women who raised the children, it's significant that Absalom's mother appears to have been a Gentile, daughter of a Syrian king (2 Sam. 3:3), whereas Solomon was the son of Bathsheba, from a Jerusalem family right at the center of David's Government.

The rod of discipline drives it far from him-
This is the same word as found in the promises to David in 2 Sam. 7:14 about David's Messianic son: "I will chasten him with the rod of men". Solomon felt he was the fulfilment of those promises, and that the warning of conditionality, that the Messianic Son must beware not to sin, simply meant that he as a child had naturally been foolish,

but "the rod" had driven this from him. In this way Solomon minimized the sense of possible failure and the conditionality of the promises made to him. A related word translated "discipline" is found in 1 Kings 12:11,14, where Solomon's son Rehoboam recognizes that Solomon had 'chastised' or 'disciplined' his people severely. And it was this which led to the diminishing of Solomon's dynasty, rather than its establishment. Again we see evidence that Solomon's justification of his dynasty and claim to the throne didn't hold up for long. Subsequent Biblical history always seems to disprove and invalidate his claims.

Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 22:16 Whoever oppresses the poor for his own increase and whoever gives to the rich-

David's Psalm 119 seems written when he was on the run from Saul. He speaks of how he was 'oppressed' by Saul (Ps. 119:121,122); and he saw himself as "the poor". Samuel had predicted that Saul would oppress the poor for his own gain, and so it happened. So we have here another sideward swipe at the house of Saul. And yet as noted on other verses in this chapter, Solomon was ultimately guilty of what he accuses his opponents of; for it was he who oppressed the poor in Israel, and this led to the decline of his dynasty.

Oppression seems to have been a characteristic of the reigns of Saul and Absalom. See on Ps. 62:10. This was the equivalent of how Saul oppressed David. Samuel's insistence that *he* has not oppressed the people is in the context of his warning that Saul would do this (1 Sam. 12:3,4). When Solomon later condemns the 'oppressors' (s.w. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3,24), he has in view a wishing of judgment upon the house of Saul. "The poor" whom they had oppressed would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6).

Both come to poverty-
Considering that the wicked often prosper materially in this life, “poverty” must refer to poverty of spirit.

Pro 22:17 Turn your ear, and listen to the words of the wise; apply your heart to my teaching-
Now begins the "thirty pieces of advice". "The wise" is a title of both David (2 Sam. 14:20) and Solomon (1 Kings 2:9; 5:7). Solomon makes the connection with himself obvious in the second half of the verse: "apply your heart to *my* teaching". Wisdom was listening to him and obeying him; and of course he had been given Divine wisdom, so he was partially right. It's just unfortunate that the rest of the chapter is his own self-justification. "My teaching" is literally "my knowledge" (see AV). But Solomon also taught that knowledge comes from God (Prov. 2:6 s.w.). David had urged people to turn to God's word directly (especially throughout Psalm 119), whereas Solomon 'plays God' and urges people to get there Divine knowledge from *him*. By doing so, he associates respect of himself with respect towards God.

As noted on Ps. 119:36; 141:4, David believed that God could act deep within the psychology or heart of man, to incline us toward righteousness and away from evil. This is how the Holy Spirit works today. Solomon believed the same (s.w. 1 Kings 8:58), but only in theory; for his Gentile wives inclined or turned away his heart from God (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). God will not turn our hearts anywhere we ourselves don't want to go. Solomon often appeals for us to incline our hearts to wisdom (s.w. Prov. 2:2; 4:20; 5:1; 22:17), but he himself was inclined to apostasy (s.w. 1 Kings 11:3,9). All his emphasis is upon the need to incline ourselves, whereas his father David trusted in the work of the Spirit to incline his heart to good and away from evil (Ps. 141:4; 119:36 etc.).

Pro 22:18 For it is a pleasant thing if you keep them within you-
David had written of the blessedness of keeping God's word within us, but Solomon speaks of keeping *his* teaching within the heart. Whilst admittedly he was teaching Divine wisdom, we can see how he was misusing his position in order to get a personal following. Every true teacher is not standing between God and man, but merely directing attention to God's word, rather than his or her own words.

*If all of them are ready on your lip*s-
The sense of the Hebrew is unclear. "If you remember them and can quote them" (GNB), "if all of them are ready on your lips" (ESV), "they shall also gladden thee on thy lips" (LXX). Perhaps the idea is that they would be recited as songs- in other words, Solomon wished for his Proverbs to be recited and perhaps sung just as the Psalms of his father David had been. In this case we can yet again sense an overpowering pressure he felt to

live out parental expectation. See on 22:20 *Haven't I written to you thirty excellent things*.

Pro 22:19 That your trust may be in Yahweh- Again, David is the one who is so often presented as 'trusting in Yahweh' (the same Hebrew word is found in Ps. 13:5; 21:7; 22:9; 25:2; 26:1; 27:3; 28:7; 40:4; 52:8; 65:5; 71:5 etc.); thus Solomon presents his father David as the epitome of the idealized believer. Solomon considers that listening to his Proverbs will lead the listener to such trust; David uses the word to describe how he had to throw himself upon the Lord due to his own sins (Ps. 52:8) or extremity of situation. Solomon, by contrast, seemed to consider 'trust' as something attainable by mere theory.

"Trust" is literally 'a fortress'. The secure fortress was Zion (Is. 32:18; Ps. 125:1 s.w.), "the stronghold of Zion, the same is the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). Whilst what Solomon says is true, and repeats the multiple cases of David in the Psalms professing trust in Yahweh as his strong fortress, Solomon as ever has his agenda of self justification; he saw his possession of Zion as a sign that he feared Yahweh acceptably, and that his children would continue the Davidic line of glory. But sacred space is not so ultimately important to God. Possession of the literal stronghold of Zion was nothing compared to trust in Yahweh.

I teach you today, even you- Does Solomon have one specific individual in view? Is this the same person to whom he refers as "my son"? If we are to take this literally, then we are left with the impression that Solomon wished his own son Rehoboam to be as fixated upon him as Solomon had been upon his own father David. The relative failure of Rehoboam would therefore be another demonstration that Solomon's theories about his own dynasty were wrong.

Pro 22:20 Haven't I written to you thirty excellent things of counsel and knowledge- The Hebrew is capable of various translation; another option is to read this as meaning 'I have written to you things which you are to copy out and memorize'. In this case, we would again see Solomon seeking to have his Proverbs memorized and recited just as his father's Psalms were. We must remember that David was the greatest composer / musician of the day; everyone was going around humming his songs and muttering his words as they worked. And Solomon wanted his Proverbs to be treated likewise. See on 22:18 *If all of them are ready on your lip*s. There are many repeated verses in Proverbs- it seems over 20% of the material is repeated. One reason for that could be that the material was designed to be memorized and / or publically performed.

Pro 22:21 to teach you truth, reliable words, to give sound answers to the ones who sent you?-

People came to hear Solomon's wisdom from many nations (1 Kings 4:34), so the book of Proverbs was maybe first compiled as an answer to be sent back to them. But many versions translate the Hebrew the opposite way around: "When you are sent to find it out, you will bring back the right answer" (GNB).

Pro 22:22

Don't exploit the poor, because he is poor- AV "rob". The word is used of what Saul did to "the poor" David (Ps. 35:10).

And don't crush the needy in court- Again, we find the Hebrew used for how Saul tried to "crush" David (Ps. 143:3). "In court" is literally 'the gate', and perhaps Solomon had in view how his competitor Absalom stood in the gate promising all kinds of advantage over the poor to the rich.

Pro 22:23 for Yahweh will plead their case, and plunder the life of those who plunder them-
The same phrase used of how God pleaded David's case against Saul and Nabal (1 Sam. 24:15; 25:39; Ps. 35:1; 119:154) and Absalom (Ps. 43:1). Yet again, David is presented as the parade example of the righteous, and David's enemies are presented as the unwise and rejected.

Pro 22:24 Don't befriend a hot-tempered man-
The same word is used about David's brother Eliab, another opponent of David (1 Sam. 17:28); Saul (1 Sam. 20:30; Ps. 55:3) and all David's enemies (Ps. 138:7). Whilst all Solomon says in the Proverb is indeed true, he clearly had an agenda- to justify his purging of the party of all historical opponents to his father.

And don't associate with one who harbours anger-
Solomon is justifying his purging of those associated with his father's opponents. But the Hebrew words used here are used of Solomon's association with Gentile women, who led him away from the faith of his father (1 Kings 11:2). And we have seen this so often in church life. Those who shout the loudest against association with others within the community of God's people are often the very ones who are deeply associated with unbelievers through various forms of unspiritual relationships.

Pro 22:25 lest you learn his ways, and ensnare your soul-
Bad company, even amongst the people of God, rubs off on us; we are more vulnerable to negative spiritual influences than we think. Solomon's idea was that friendship with unspiritual people will eventually result in us learning their ways and acting like them,

even if that is not the case at the point of initial friendship. This was precisely what Solomon himself did in marrying Gentile women, who in time did indeed make him learn their idolatrous ways. David was the one who repeatedly avoided the snares set for him by Saul (s.w. 1 Sam. 18:21; Ps. 64:5; 140:5; 141:9). So again, the wise man is being set up as Solomon's father David.

Pro 22:26 Don't you be one of those who strike hands, of those who are collateral for debts-

The prohibition was in the case of a person standing surety when they did not actually have the money to do so (:27), in fact they only had their 'bed', which may be a reference to the outer garment in which a poor person slept (Ex. 22:26,27). The warning would appear to be not to boast of wealth which you don't have, standing surety for someone else's debt when actually if they default, you all the same could not pay the debt. All the rest of this chapter has been making allusion to historical figures and incidents in the lives of David and Solomon. It would be surprising if there is no such allusion here in :26,27, but admittedly it is hard to perceive. But it may well have been an allusion to a situation well known at the time.

The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis*)*. Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan; what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to this matter. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom.

Pro 22:27 If you don't have means to pay, why should he take away your bed from under you?-

See on :26. This is a somewhat exaggerated statement, because the spirit of the Mosaic law in Dt. 24:13 effectively forbad this. But as noted on :26, Solomon is so obsessed by this particular issue of collateral that he exaggerates his case.

Pro 22:28 Don't move the ancient boundary stone, which your fathers have set up-
This is cited as one of the clearest quotations in Proverbs from the Egyptian 'Wisdom of Amenemopet'. Here we may see evidence of Solomon wishing to appease his Egyptian wife; or, if in fact the Egyptian document was quoting from Proverbs, we would have evidence that Solomon's Egyptian wife shared some of the Proverbs with her people. However, Solomon is here only repeating the spirit of the Mosaic command about this (Dt. 19:14; 27:17); so my sense is that it was the Egyptians who copied from the Biblical source rather than the other way around. The preceding verses are about pretending to have more cash wealth than one does; and this verse is similar, in warning against appearing to have more land than one does. In the spirit of Solomon's self-justification which has been seen earlier in this chapter, it could be that Solomon, as the world's richest man, is saying that he has real wealth, and doesn't have to pretend. In this case we again can perceive an element of self-justification and criticism of anyone less than him.

Pro 22:29 Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve kings. He won't serve obscure men-
For Solomon as a king to teach that only smart people serve kings is again merely a truism- until we realize the manipulative game he is playing. The message really is: 'If you submit to me as king, then you're smart. You must be- because my proverb says you will be!'. But we must remember that there were many pretenders to the throne at Solomon's time, and so by reasoning like this he is seeking to justify himself and those who take his side. As noted before several times in this chapter, Solomon's attempts to inject self-justification into the Proverbs so often ended up going wrong. Jeroboam was a zealous, industrious servant of Solomon, who fitted the language of this verse exactly (1 Kings 11:28); but he later turned against Solomon and divided Solomon's kingdom in the next generation. We can also see in "a man skilled in his work" a reference to the skilled men of Hiram, king of Tyre, who worked for Solomon in building the temple. But again, Solomon and Hiram fell out and again, Solomon's kingdom suffered because of this (1 Kings 9:13). Solomon's flattery of his servants through this Proverb just didn't come to anything- indeed, it ended up in grief.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 23

Pro 23:1 When you sit to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before you-
Solomon was the "ruler" (s.w. 1 Kings 4:21; 2 Chron. 7:18), but he may have in view any person of authority, as he uses the term in Prov. 22:7 "the rich rules over the poor". The book of Proverbs has in view a bad ruler (s.w. Prov. 28:15; 29:2,12,26; Ecc. 9:17). And this bad ruler offers deceitful food (Prov. 23:3), which Solomon in Prov. 23 advises against eating. We need to recall that eating together was seen as a sign of fellowship and acceptance of each other within the same cause. Solomon may have in view Jeroboam, who clearly sought to usurp Solomon as king. Or he may be alluding back to the various people like Absalom and Adonijah who had feasted to celebrate their apparent usurping of David's throne. The LXX in Prov. 23:1-8 reads rather differently to the Masoretic Text, and speaks much of the evil of the ruler in view.

Pro 23:2 put a knife to your throat, if you are a man given to appetite-
The idea may be that through eating heartily with this bad ruler, you are sucked deeper into fellowship with him.

Pro 23:3 Don't be desirous of his dainties, since they are deceitful food-
Heb. "don't desire huge meals". But Solomon did the very opposite in his own life (1 Kings 4:22,23). But see on :2. "Deceitful" is a word associated with idols (s.w. Am. 2:4). There may be an allusion to participating in idol feasts which this wicked ruler presided over.

Pro 23:4 Don't weary yourself to be rich; in your wisdom, show restraint-
But Solomon did desire wealth in the end (Ecc. 2:8,11). When he writes things like "the thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness" (Prov. 21:5 AV), he must inevitably be connecting his own fantastic wealth / blessing with his hard work. He was justifying himself by works rather than by faith; he assumed his righteousness and acceptance with God rather than struggling through the work of faith. Yet he could say "Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own wisdom" (Prov. 23:4 AV). He had all the right theory. Solomon was an active, industrious person by nature; and whilst all his many proverbs criticizing the lazy and glorifying the diligent are true as they stand, is there not in all this some element of self-justification, interpreting his own natural personality type as inherently righteous?

LXX "If thou art poor, measure not thyself with a rich man; but refrain thyself in thy wisdom" could be read as Solomon saying that he, the ultimate rich man, was not to be questioned, but his authority accepted without question.

Pro 23:5 Why do you set your eyes on that which is not? For it certainly sprouts wings

like an eagle and flies in the sky-
If the reference is to wealth (:4), then Solomon appears very hypocritical in that for him, wealth was clearly something he set his eyes upon. And he often says that riches are given as a reward for wisdom. And yet on the other hand, he theoretically recognizes that wealth can disappear and has no ultimate reality. But so many will say the same, theoretically accepting how ephemeral are riches; and yet focus their lives and thinking upon them.

The LXX reads this as applying to the ruler and not the food: "If thou shouldest fix thine eye upon him, he will disappear; for wings like an eagle's are prepared for him, and he returns to the house of his master".

Pro 23:6 Don't eat the food of him who has a stingy eye, and don't crave his delicacies-
To eat together, or to decline to do so, was understood as a religious act, a sign of acceptance of a person. Hence the radical nature of the open table policy of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. The man with the stingy eye is presumably the wicked ruler of :1. If a more wealthy or powerful person invited you to their table, it would be hard for the weaker person to decline it. But this is what Solomon urges.

Pro 23:7 for as he thinks about the cost, so he is. Eat and drink! he says to you, but his heart is not with you-
AV "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he". The Israelites were seen as grasshoppers by their enemies- and so this is how they came to perceive themselves (Num. 13:33). Prov. 23:7 RV observes: "As he reckoneth within himself, so is he". We are defined by our own self-perception. We must come in the end to perceive ourselves from God's perspective and not according to how men perceive us. We must see ourselves from outside ourselves, and thereby "guide thine own heart in the way" (Prov. 23:19).

It is a common Bible teaching that how a man thinks is expressed in his actions (Prov. 23:7; Mt. 12:34); a little reflection upon our own actions will confirm this. We think of something and then we do it. Our 'spirit' or mind may reflect upon the fact that we are hungry and desire food. We see a banana going spare in the kitchen; that desire of the 'spirit' is then translated into action - we reach out for the banana, peel it and eat. This simple example shows why the Hebrew word for 'spirit' means both the breath or mind, and also power. Our spirit, the essential us, refers to our thoughts and therefore also to the actions which we take to express those thoughts or disposition within us. On a far more glorious scale, God's spirit is the same; it is the power by which He displays His essential being, His disposition and purpose. God thinks and therefore does things. "As I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Is. 14:24).

Pro 23:8 The morsel which you have eaten you shall vomit up, and lose your good words-
The allusion may be to Job 20:15, where the man who has gained riches wrongfully vomits them up (s.w.). The same word is used of eating too much honey, and vomiting it up (Prov. 25:16). All this is true, but Prov. 23:8 says that eating the tasty food of the wicked ruler will also lead to vomiting it up. Again Solomon may be cementing his own power, suggesting that any other wealthy ruler is somehow fake, and to sit at his table, in acceptance of him, would be like eating too much honey, partaking in riches wrongfully acquired. Perhaps he has Jeroboam in view.

Pro 23:9 Don't speak in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words-
Solomon has little patience with fools. He considers anyone who doesn't immediately accept his wisdom to be unworthy of any further effort. He has none of the spirit of patient evangelism which was in David, and which is supremely seen in God's tireless efforts to bring resistant fools to wisdom and His way.

This abusive attitude to people arose from Solomon's obsession with the idea that he had wisdom, and people generally are fools, idiots, unwise- and therefore he could abuse them. This attitude is another outcome of believing that mere possession of truths about God justifies us, and declares all other people foolish, unwise and able to be legitimately abused by us. In contrast, the heart of God (as of David) bleeds for such people and wants to save them rather than gloat in their unwisdom and punish them for it.

Pro 23:10 Don't move the ancient boundary stone; don't encroach on the fields of the fatherless-
This is cited as one of the clearest quotations in Proverbs from the Egyptian 'Wisdom of Amenemopet'. Here we may see evidence of Solomon wishing to appease his Egyptian wife; or, if in fact the Egyptian document was quoting from Proverbs, we would have evidence that Solomon's Egyptian wife shared some of the Proverbs with her people. However, Solomon is here only repeating the spirit of the Mosaic command about this (Dt. 19:14; 27:17); so my sense is that it was the Egyptians who copied from the Biblical source rather than the other way around.

But we also perceive here a spirit of conservatism, wishing everything to be set in stone, because all truth is with Solomon, his judgment is unquestionably correct, no other teacher is to be listened to, and all the boundary stones are to be kept in place in every way. This may be in order to cement the placing of Jerusalem in Solomon's tribal canton of Judah, rather than Benjamin. And he is using the need to protect the fields of the

fatherless as a cover for that. This kind of thing often happens in politics; defence of the defenceless is used as a cover for policies which have quite different agendas.

Pro 23:11 for their Defender is strong, He will plead their case against you-
See on :10. "Defender" is 'redeemer', used of Boaz being the kinsman redeemer for Ruth and Naomi. God has an especial interest in the weak, and loves to redeem them. This provides endless encouragement to us, the weak. If we will perceive our weakness. And those who are against the weak, in whatever way [including against the spiritually weak], will be judged. God enters a court of judgment against such people, and Solomon implies that happens in this life.

Pro 23:12 Apply your heart to instruction, and your ears to the words of knowledge-
Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 23:13 Don't withhold correction from a child. If you punish him with the rod, he will not die-
As explained on :12, this is true so far as it goes, and is a fair enough commentary upon the Mosaic instruction to stone to death a disobedient son. But Solomon took this idea of physical chastisement too far, to the point of not giving due weight to the power of God Himself through His wisdom to discipline or chastise a person.

Pro 23:14 Punish him with the rod, and save his soul from Sheol-
Quite clearly, the efforts of parents on behalf of their children can affect the eternal destiny of a third party. Prov. 23:13,14 speaks of how we can save a child from the [eternal] grave by correctly disciplining and teaching him. Indeed, the Proverbs have so

much to say about how parental influence can affect a child's eternal destiny. But see on :12.

Discipline and punishment of the unwise is a big theme in Solomon's Proverbs. He took it to the extent of whipping his own people (1 Kings 12:11). This abusive attitude to people arose from his obsession with the idea that he had wisdom, and people generally are fools, idiots, unwise- and therefore he could abuse them. This abusive attitude to people is another outcome of believing that mere possession of truths about God justifies us, and declares all other people foolish, unwise and able to be legitimately abused by us. In contrast, the heart of God (as of David) bleeds for such people and wants to save them rather than gloat in their unwisdom and punish them for it.

Pro 23:15 My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad, even mine-
Solomon here envisages a meeting of hearts between father and son (:16). And indeed family relationships are enhanced beyond any description if hearts are connected spiritually. He parallels the son's wise heart with the son's lips speaking rightly (:16), correctly understanding that thoughts lead to words (Mt. 12:34).

Pro 23:16 yes, my heart will rejoice, when your lips speak what is right-
See on :15. But Solomon is repeating to his son what David had said to him, in commanding him to have lips which spoke truth and not falsehood (s.w. Ps. 34:13). Solomon's heart departed from Yahweh and was turned aside to idols, even if his lips continued to teach Divine truth (Ecc. 2:9). But families can still go through the motions of spirituality.

Pro 23:17 Don't let your heart envy sinners; but rather fear Yahweh all the day long-
David had calmly urged not to be envious of the wicked (s.w. Ps. 37:1), but he himself almost failed in this (Ps. 73:3 s.w.). We can profess clearly how much we are not envious of others; and then find ourselves like David, caught in a pang of crisis when we wonder why our lives cannot be like those of the world around us. Solomon simplistically commanded not to be envious of the wicked, drawing a simple contrast between the wicked, and the righteous who are not envious of them (Prov. 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19 s.w.). But this is not how it was in reality with his father David, who admits to almost having given in to envy of the wicked (Ps. 73:3) despite his earlier simplistic condemnation of such envy (Ps. 37:1), and was only saved from that by God's gracious action on his heart (Ps. 73:2). Solomon's proverbs seem to fail to address this complexity of situations because of his own self-righteousness; and yet all he says is inspired and true so far as it goes.

Pro 23:18 Indeed surely there is a future hope, and your hope will not be cut off-
David's "expectation" in the context of Ps. 62:5 was the continuation of his own kingdom, despite all the threats against it from the likes of Saul, Absalom and others who would usurp his Davidic kingship and kingdom. Solomon likely uses the word for "expectation" with the same subtext; that all opposition to him was based upon a false expectation which would be dashed by God (s.w. Prov. 10:28; 11:7,23; 23:18; 24:14). LXX "For if thou shouldest keep these things, thou shalt have posterity; and thine hope shall not be removed" would imply that Solomon thought that the promises concerning his kingly line continuing depended upon accepting his wisdom.

Pro 23:19 Listen, My son, and be wise, and keep your heart on the right path!-
AV "Guide thine heart in the way". This is true insofar as there must be an element of self control and self direction of our thoughts. But it is hard to consciously direct our heart. David by contrasted invited God to keep his heart in the way / right path (s.w. Ps. 119:32). And the Holy Spirit is available to all who make the same request today. Those who trust in their own steel will and self direction often utterly fail, as Solomon did.

Pro 23:20 Don't keep company with those who drink too much wine, or those who gorge themselves on meat-
This again is true, but the Lord Jesus was known and mocked for keeping company with gluttons and drunkards. He had no fear of guilt by association nor contamination by communion. Mere physical separation from wicked people, of the type so often advised by Solomon, will not lead to our own spiritual growth nor their salvation.

Pro 23:21 for the drunkard and the glutton shall become poor; and drowsiness clothes them in rags-
LXX "for every drunkard and whoremonger shall be poor; and every sluggard shall clothe himself with tatters and ragged garments". This sounds exactly the picture of the prodigal son presented by the Lord Jesus in His parable. But again, His parable appears designed to engage with Solomon's views and modify or qualify them. For the Father, God, eagerly wants the repentance of such a person and is ever waiting and looking out for their repentance. But Solomon simply writes off such persons as lacking wisdom, and as it were forgets them.

Pro 23:22 Listen to your father who gave you life, and don't despise your mother when she is old-
But Solomon disregarded Bathsheba's warning not to drink and marry Gentiles (Prov. 31) - he did just this when she was old. Solomon also fails to give due weight to the fact

that the mothers of his sons were unbelieving Gentiles. He is coming out with wise words when his own family life was totally out of step with them.

Pro 23:23 Buy the truth, and don't sell it. Get wisdom, discipline, and understanding-
"The truth" is a term associated with God's covenant with David and Abraham. The Hebrew for "buy" carries the idea of establishing. The idea is that knowledge and understanding would establish the promises to David and the line through Solomon. But Biblically, "the truth" is God's truth to man, His faithfulness to His covenant. But as often, Solomon sees it the other way around; truth must be bought by man from God, insofar as man gets the right knowledge about Him. This basic denial of grace is seen in so many Christian groups.

Pro 23:24 The father of the righteous has great joy. Whoever fathers a wise child delights in him-
Solomon considers himself as the ultimately wise child. Clearly from Ps. 45,72, David delighted in Solomon. So again, he is using Divine truth to justify himself.

Pro 23:25 Let your father and your mother be glad! Let her who bore you rejoice!-
The wicked woman lying in wait to kill the simple man (Prov. 23:25-27) is a clear enough reference to Delilah and her henchmen lying in wait in the bedroom. And yet, for all this reflection upon Samson, Solomon went and did *par excellence* according to Samson's well-studied folly. And we can do the same, in principle. There is this vast distance between knowledge and belief.

Pro 23:26 My son, give me your heart; and let your eyes observe my ways-
Even when married to Gentile women, Solomon could charge his son to "observe my ways. For... a strange [Gentile] woman is a narrow pit" (Prov. 23:26,27). The fact he himself had fallen into the pit of marriage to unbelievers just didn't seem to occur to him; he was sure that he was in fact an upright example. This passage reflects more than many the extent to which Solomon's conscience was so deeply damaged. For he wasn't saying 'Do as I say but not as I do'. He was beyond that- doing the very wrong that he warned others not to do, and confidently presenting himself to them as a good example whose ways were to be observed.

Solomon was so sure of his own rightness that he just couldn't conceive that in reality he might sin or break the principles he preached. He warns his son to "observe my ways. For... a gentile woman is a narrow pit" (Prov. 23:26,27). He held himself up in this matter as an example to his son even at the very time when he had married Gentile women! He describes in Ecclesiastes how he indulged every possible desire, and took

each of his lusts to its ultimate term. Yet he warned his son to only eat honey in moderation, i.e. don't gorge your natural desires (Prov. 25:16). This sense of the impossibility of spiritual failure is stamped all over Solomon; and it has been the downfall of so many others too.

David by contrast felt he was kept or guarded in the way of integrity by God constantly pointing out that way to him (s.w. Ps. 119:33). Solomon seems to think that mere possession of Divine truth made him "righteous", and this of itself kept him in the way; and the way to follow was *his* way rather than God's. He has none of the constant desire to be taught which David had, because he assumed he had received total truth. Those who consider they hold "the truth" as a package of doctrinally correct propositions can make the same mistake as Solomon.

Pro 23:27 For a prostitute is a deep pit; and a Gentile woman is a narrow well-
Often the Proverbs allude to characters in Israel's history. The references to a wise son rejoicing his father and mother (Prov. 23:25) and saddening them by his folly shout for application to Samson. The warnings about not *looking* at a strange woman recall how Samson *saw* the Philistine girl in Timnath and the prostitute in Gaza (14:1; 16:1). The wicked woman lying in wait to kill the simple man (Prov. 23:25-27) is a clear enough reference to Delilah and her henchmen lying in wait in the bedroom. And yet, for all this reflection upon Samson, Solomon went and did *par excellence* according to Samson's well-studied folly. And we can do the same, in principle. There is this vast distance between knowledge and belief.

The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the Gentile / "strange" (AV) woman (2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon.

Pro 23:28 Yes, she lies in wait like a robber, and increases the unfaithful among men-
"Lie in wait" is the word for ambush. Solomon often uses the word, as if it is for him a major characteristic of sinners (Prov. 1:11,18; 7:12; 12:6; 23:28; 24:15). But it's a rather specific word to use so often. It's as if Solomon is consciously alluding to his father's experiences at the hands of the house of Saul (s.w. Ps. 10:9; 59:3), whom Solomon considered a threat to his own kingship. And so he seems to rather like using the term about sinners, as if using his wisdom to have a dig at his immediate opposition.

"Transgressors" or "traitors" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Pro 23:29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot eyes?-
Solomon here in Prov. 23:29-31 strongly condemns wine, but later gave himself to wine (Ecc. 2:3). And so he again demonstrated how although his wisdom remained with him and he continued to teach it (Ecc. 2:9), he had failed to personalize that wisdom. It flowed through his mind and his mouth, but took no personal lodgment in his heart.

Pro 23:30 Those who stay long at the wine; those who go to seek out mixed wine-
"Seek" is the word used for seeking wisdom (Job 28:27; Ps. 139:1). The fact the supposedly wise man Solomon sought to wine in later life (Ecc. 2:3) shows that he had not personally sought for wisdom. He had been given a mass of Divine truth in one shot, as it were; but had never personally sought for God or His truth. And this can be true of many 'raise in the Truth', as they think, who in later life find themselves searching everywhere for the truth they had supposedly found in youth.

Pro 23:31 Don't look at the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly-
Compare this with "...the roof of thy mouth like the best wine, that goeth down smoothly for my beloved" (Song 7:9 RV)- how did Solomon know unless even at a relatively young age, he knew about the sensation of wine from personal experience? Again we see Solomon's failure to be personally touched by the wisdom he knew.

Pro 23:32 In the end, it bites like a snake, and poisons like a viper-
The effect of wine is presented in terms of the serpent, the symbol of all sin and evil. That Solomon would freely explore wine and alcoholism as a possible source for enjoyment in later life (Ecc. 2:3) is again indication enough that he utterly failed to grasp the truths he held and taught on any personal level.

Pro 23:33 Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind will imagine confusing things-
AV "strange women". The idea is that the drunkard will get involved with strange or Gentile women. But this is precisely what Solomon did, before he turned to alcohol (Ecc. 2:3). He was involved with strange women, but condemns alcohol. But he links the two here, and so it is unsurprising that he turns to alcohol later in life. Again, his "wisdom" remained as technical knowledge, so many smart ideas, and was not personalized by him.

Pro 23:34 Yes, you will be as he who lies down in the midst of the sea, or as he who lies on top of the rigging-
The implication may be that the drunk sailor in view was intended to be the captain or pilot of the boat, on top of the rigging, watching astutely as to the direction of the vessel; thus it would be a specific warning to Solomon's son, as the next king. Hence LXX "as a pilot in a great storm".

Pro 23:35 They hit me, and I was not hurt! They beat me, and I don't feel it! When will I wake up so that I can do it again?-
Solomon sees the folly of alcoholism in that the drunkard never learns, and the addiction leads him to seek it again, somehow closing off his mind to the damage he is doing himself and the consequences of his actions. But Solomon married Gentile women (see on :34), and then takes to alcohol (Ecc. 2:3), with no sense of the personal implications of his actions. And this was his problem all along; he refused to personalize the truths he held and taught, and insisted others accepted. This is a basic feature of human nature, which we see in others and of course in our own temptations.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 24

Pro 24:1 Don't be envious of evil men; neither desire to be with them-
See on :19. Solomon has much to say about the evil of envy (e.g. Prov. 14:30; 23:17; 24:1,19; 27:4). But true as his condemnations of envy are, he surely has in mind the way that Ephraim envied Judah, and envied his throne (s.w. Is. 11:13). This all came to full term after his death, when Ephraim departed from Judah under Jeroboam. Again, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning. But as he faced death, he came to realize that all such envy is as nothing before the reality of death, which he understood as the end of life, as he had assumed this life was the time for reward and expresses no personal hope in a resurrection of the body (Ecc. 4:4; 9:6).

Pro 24:2 for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about mischief-
Ps. 7:14,16 twice refers to the "mischief" [s.w.] done to David by Cush [Ps. 7:1 states the Psalm is about the words and plans of Cush]. Solomon is again referring to how the enemies of his father, whose descendants and supporters were likely still threats to Solomon, were condemned by God.

Pro 24:3 Through wisdom a house is built; by understanding it is established-
The "house" here refers to David's house / family- but this was established through Solomon's line by God's gracious promise to David, not by Solomon's wisdom. Again, his wisdom and possession of academic truth led him to forget the power of grace. Solomon overlooked all the hard work that his father had done in preparing for the temple to be built- in that he claimed all glory for himself: "Through wisdom is an house builded; and by understanding it is established" (Prov. 24:3) he said- perfectly true, but with the self-justifying twist behind the words in his case, that he had built the temple thanks to his own wisdom. Wisdom is given, he said, to the man who is pleasing to God (Ecc. 2:26)- again referring to himself.

Pro 24:4 by knowledge the rooms are filled with all rare and beautiful treasure-
AV "chambers", an allusion to Solomon's store cities where he placed his wealth. But that wealth was a gift from God to him (1 Kings 3:13), it was not because of his wisdom in itself. Again he fails to perceive grace because of his possession of Divine truth.

Pro 24:5 A wise man has great power and a knowledgeable man increases strength-
David's house waxed stronger and stronger (2 Sam. 3:1)- but by grace, because God chose as a sovereign choice to work through Solomon and continue the Davidic line of rulership through him. LXX "A wise man is better than a strong man; and a man who has prudence than a large estate".

Pro 24:6 for by wise guidance you wage your war; and victory is in many advisors-
David had two men specifically noted as his advisors / counsellors (his uncle Jonathan

and Ahithophel- 1 Chron. 27:32,33) and likely he had others, e.g. Nathan the prophet. Again Solomon is justifying his father's Government.

Pro 24:7 Wisdom is too high for a fool: he doesn't open his mouth in the gate-
Solomon's simplistic division of people into wise and foolish meant that he despised the fools. He had no interest in evangelism, in trying to persuade them. If they refused wisdom initially, he put them in the 'hopeless' basket as fools who weren't worth bothering with. He had no patience with them, no attempt to patiently persuade or engage with them. God is so different. And this is exactly the condemnatory attitude in those who today have such simplistic worldviews.

Pro 24:8 One who plots to do evil will be called a schemer-
"Will be called" may suggest a name and shame policy by Solomon; for the wisdom given him was ostensibly to enable him to govern and judge Israel. Any who plotted against him (for that is surely the implication) would be pilloried. But Proverbs has much to say about judgment for unwisdom; there is no grace in Solomon. He had not reflected upon his father's salvation by grace alone. Or Solomon may intend this as a commentary upon how the history of his family should be read; for "schemer" is the word used by David for his enemies within the camps of Saul and Absalom (Ps. 10:2,4; 21:11; 31:13; 37:7).

Pro 24:9 The schemes of folly are sin. The mocker is detested by men-
"Is an abomination". "Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 24:10 If you falter in the time of trouble, your strength is small-
There are many references to the "day of trouble" in David's Psalms. Solomon appears to be boasting of his father's deliverance from various 'days of trouble'. But the phrase is used of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3). And some of the Proverbs were rewritten at the time by Hezekiah (Prov. 25:1).

Pro 24:11 Rescue those who are being led away to death! Indeed, hold back those who are staggering to the slaughter!-
AV "If thou forbear to deliver...". Sins of omission are perhaps our most besetting weakness; and to forbear to rescue others on the path to destruction is likely one of our

commonest sins of omission.

David may be alluding to the situation in 2 Sam. 18:16, where the followers of Absalom were held back [s.w.] from slaughter by David's army. And as always, Solomon wishes to give a positive spin on every historical event in the life of his father David.

Pro 24:12 If you say, Behold, we didn't know this; doesn't He who weighs the hearts consider it?-
This is a great example of where the Bible is absolutely piercing in its analysis of our human psychology. For from earliest childhood, this is indeed our excuse: 'I didn't know. I didn't notice. I didn't do anything wrong'. And indeed we may not 'do' wrong, in committing sins of commission. But this is exactly our childish excuse for the great sin of omission we commit when we fail to rescue those heading for eternal death (:11).

He who keeps your soul, doesn't He know it? -
God now weighs hearts, and only at the last day renders to every man according as his works shall be. The essence of judgment is therefore ongoing. It's not as if God is not paying attention, and will only review everything at the last day. If we believe that God keeps *our* soul, we should be thereby motivated to reach out and try to preserve others as He does to us.

Shall He not render to every man according to his work?-
Quoted about the last judgment in Rev. 22:12. The "work" in view would therefore be our attitude to others, whether we kidded ourselves we didn't notice their predicament or not.

Pro 24:13 My son, eat honey, for it is good; the droppings of the honeycomb, which are sweet to your taste-
An allusion to how Saul forbad his men to eat honey but Jonathan ate a honeycomb in defiance of this (1 Sam. 14:29). Another justification of his father David. But Solomon is unwittingly perhaps identifying himself with Samson, the only other Biblical character who found and ate a honeycomb- and he was well nigh destroyed by foreign women also.

Pro 24:14 so you shall feel wisdom to be to your soul; if you have found it, then there will be a reward, your hope will not be cut off-
David's "reward" or "expectation" in the context of Ps. 62:5 was the continuation of his own kingdom, despite all the threats against it from the likes of Saul, Absalom and others who would usurp his Davidic kingship and kingdom. Solomon likely uses the word for "expectation" with the same subtext; that all opposition to him was based upon a false expectation which would be dashed by God (s.w. Prov. 10:28; 11:7,23; 23:18;

24:14).

Pro 24:15 Don't lay in wait, wicked man, against the habitation of the righteous. Don't destroy his resting place-
An allusion to how Saul sent men to lay in wait around David's house (1 Sam. 19:11). "Lie in wait" is the word for ambush. Solomon often uses the word, as if it is for him a major characteristic of sinners (Prov. 1:11,18; 7:12; 12:6; 23:28; 24:15). But it's a rather specific word to use so often. It's as if Solomon is consciously alluding to his father's experiences at the hands of the house of Saul (s.w. Ps. 10:9; 59:3), whom Solomon considered a threat to his own kingship. And so he seems to rather like using the term about sinners, as if using his wisdom to have a dig at his immediate opposition.

Pro 24:16 for a righteous man falls seven times, and rises up again; but the wicked are overthrown by calamity-
An allusion to David's moral failures- glorifying David in that he rose up after them. *Seven* times may suggest complete failure. The wicked are overthrown because they will not rise up from their sin in repentance. However, I have noted elsewhere in Proverbs that Solomon appears to totally whitewash David's sin with Solomon's mother Bathsheba. So he may be using "falls" not in the sense of falling into sin, but in the sense of being overwhelmed by calamity. This would give more force to the opening word of the verse: "for...". The connection with :15 is that it is futile for the wicked to try to overthrow the righteous, because the righteous will arise from whatever temporary calamity is brought upon them. This is also how the idea of 'falling' is used in :17.

Pro 24:17 Don't rejoice when your enemy falls, don't let your heart be glad when he is overthrown-
Alluding to how David did not rejoice when Saul fell in battle. This section of the chapter has many references to David. Solomon is using the truths revealed to him as "wisdom" to justify and glorify his father, and thereby himself. And Divine truth can be abused in the same kind of way today.

Pro 24:18 lest Yahweh see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him-
I suggested on :17 that Solomon had in view how David didn't rejoice when Saul fell. But David was genuinely sad when Saul fell, and subsequently showed grace to Saul's family. But Solomon knew nothing of grace, and is ever eager to criticize all his potential competitors for his throne. And so he makes the point that David's lack of rejoicing over Saul actually meant for sure that the wrath of God was upon Saul and his family.

Pro 24:19 Don't fret yourself because of evildoers; neither be envious of the wicked-
David had calmly urged not to be envious of the wicked (s.w. Ps. 37:1), but he himself

almost failed in this (Ps. 73:3 s.w.). We can profess clearly how much we are not envious of others; and then find ourselves like David, caught in a pang of crisis when we wonder why our lives cannot be like those of the world around us. Solomon simplistically commanded not to be envious of the wicked, drawing a simple contrast between the wicked, and the righteous who are not envious of them (Prov. 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19 s.w.). But this is not how it was in reality with his father David, who admits to almost having given in to envy of the wicked (Ps. 73:3) despite his earlier simplistic condemnation of such envy (Ps. 37:1), and was only saved from that by God's gracious action on his heart (Ps. 73:2). Solomon's proverbs seem to fail to address this complexity of situations because of his own self-righteousness; and yet all he says is inspired and true so far as it goes.

Pro 24:20 for there will be no reward to the evil man; and the lamp of the wicked shall be snuffed out-
God promised to give David a light / candle in Jerusalem through the kingship continuing through Solomon (same word in 1 Kings 11:36 "that David may have a light [candle, s.w.] always before Me in Jerusalem"]. Solomon is justifying his own taking of the throne.

Pro 24:21 My son, fear Yahweh and the king. Don't join those who are rebellious-
Solomon [in the context of our note on :20] is suggesting that anyone who questions his right to the throne is not fearing God, and anyone involved in rebellion will be destroyed (:22). AV "With them that are given to change". Such ultra conservatism is common in Solomon's thought; he wanted to cement himself in power permanently, and so he clamped down on any change in any context.

Pro 24:22 for their calamity will rise suddenly; and who knows the destruction of them both?-
This is alluding to Dt. 32:35 about the sudden calamity of Israel as a nation if they turn to idolatry. But Solomon applies this language to any group of individuals within Israel who might be rebellious against his rule (:21). Again, he is using Divine truths to bolster his own personal position. But again Solomon is too simplistic in assuming that "calamity" is the judgment of the rebellious. For David his father experienced plenty of calamity (s.w. 2 Sam. 22:19). But this contradicts the simplistic worldview which Solomon wishes to present, whereby the wise have wonderful lives, and the foolish are sinners whose lives are full of calamity. It was this simplistic worldview, failing to perceive that bad things happen to good people, and good people also sin and are foolish at times, which led Solomon to the conceit which was his destruction.

Pro 24:23 These also are sayings of the wise- The rest of this chapter is a separate and third section, incorporated into the anthology which is the book of Proverbs. But it is effectively an appendix to the second section.

To show partiality in judgment is not good-
Solomon was famous for his wise judgment of the two prostitutes. He showed no partiality in that judgment. And so again, whilst what he says is true, he is using Divine truths to justify himself. And he is also having a swipe at his competitor Absalom, who set himself up as the judge of Israel and yet showed partiality towards his potential supporters (2 Sam. 15:5,6).

Pro 24:24 He who says to the wicked, You are righteous; peoples shall curse him, and nations shall abhor him-
An indirect criticism of Absalom's unjust giving of judgment being the basis upon which he garnered support for his rebellion against David (2 Sam. 15:6). The allusion is to Dt. 15:1. Solomon repeats this idea in 1 Kings 8:32, where he says that God condemns the wicked but justifies the righteous. And in Prov. 24:24 and other Proverbs, he teaches that this is how men should judge, lest they be cursed. But by having this position, he shows his total lack of appreciation of God's grace to his father David. For David was worthy of condemnation, but by grace, he the wicked was justified, counted righteous, when he was not (Ps. 32:2 cp. Rom. 4:4-6). This lack of appreciation of grace arose from how it seems Solomon totally whitewashed the sin of his father David with his mother Bathsheba. And it resulted in his lack of grace, and failure throughout Proverbs to appreciate that human behaviour is nuanced, and is not simply divided between spotlessly righteous behaviour and terrible sinfulness.

Pro 24:25 but it will go well with those who convict the guilty, and a rich blessing will come on them-
As noted on :24, Solomon fails to appreciate that God does not convict the guilty in every case, but imputed righteousness to the likes of his father David. God's blessing is in fact the imputation of righteousness to the guilty "without works" (Rom. 4:6). But the "blessing" can be read as the blessing and approbation of men; hence LXX "But they that reprove him shall appear more excellent, and blessing shall come upon them". What seems to matter to Solomon is how justice appears to men, rather than reflecting God's grace.

Pro 24:26 An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips-
AV "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer". This smacks of the self congratulatory attitude of Solomon throughout Proverbs. LXX likewise "Every man shall kiss his lips that giveth a right answer". The answer in view would be the legalistic, harsh judgment of :25. See on :25.

Pro 24:27 Prepare your work outside, and get your fields ready. Afterwards, build your house-

Justifying how David prepared for the building of the temple.

Pro 24:28 Don't be a witness against your neighbour without cause. Don't deceive with your lips-
David is called Saul's "neighbour" (1 Sam. 15:28; 28:17). And he persecuted David "without cause" (1 Sam. 19:5; Ps. 35:7,19 69:4; 109:3; 119:161 etc.). Solomon has much to say about true and false witnesses (Prov. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18). Whilst his warnings are true enough, he surely has an element of self justification in what he writes. Because he was aware that his parents, David and Bathsheba, had been accused of many things which had led to all the opposition against David at the end of his reign, and which opposition Solomon had to contend with in order to retain the throne for himself. David laments the false witness of the house of Saul and his own sons, Solomon's half brothers (Ps. 27:12; 35:11). The continual condemnation of false witnesses must be understood in this context. Whilst it is all true so far as it goes, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 24:29 Don't say, I will do to him as he has done to me; I will render to the man according to his work-
True enough, but a justification of his father David's refusal to kill Saul. See on :17.

Pro 24:30 I went by the field of the lazy, by the vineyard of the man void of understanding-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 24:31 behold, it was all grown over with thorns. Its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down-
I will suggest on :32,33 that this is not a mature attitude; see on :30. The broken down wall of Israel (Is. 5:5; Ez. 13:14) was not a result of Israel's lack of hard work or laziness. Walls are broken down and houses left desolate for many reasons, not least Divine judgment of men because they refused to *believe* in Him, rather than because they were lazy. For works cannot save.

Pro 24:32 Then I saw, and considered well. I saw, and received instruction-
On this point of the need for hard work, Solomon is at best immature; see on :33. It is therefore significant that he doesn't claim this to be part of the package of Divine wisdom given to him; rather he says he worked this out from his own observations of broken down houses and farmsteads, and in mock humility claims to have thereby "received instruction". See on Prov. 7:6; 16:19.

Pro 24:33 a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep-
This despising of sleep is in contrast to the spiritual maturity of David, who understood that true blessing comes from God alone and not from human works, and God gives His beloved sleep, in contrast to vainly rising early and working late to achieve blessing (Ps. 127:2). Time and again, we find Solomon glorifying "my father David", seeking to live out parental expectations; and yet quite out of step with David's spirituality.

Pro 24:34 so your poverty will come as a robber, and your want as an armed man-
Solomon repeatedly sees poverty as being the fault of the poor, and their refusal of his teaching of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 6:11; 10:4,15; 13:7,8,18,23; 24:34; 28:19; 31:7). Many of these passages are effectively mocking the poor, which Solomon condemns in Prov. 17:5. He fails to take his own wisdom, as we also see in his behaviour with foreign women. Again we see Solomon's works based approach to righteousness, and lack of grace; refusing to accept that we are all poor men before God, as David himself exemplified when he cried to God as a poor man (Ps. 34:6). But his much beloved father David was unashamed to say he was a materially "poor man" (1 Sam. 18:23); and Uriah, whom he wronged, is described also as a "poor man" (2 Sam. 12:1). The poor were to be defended and given to (Ps. 82:3), and the Bible is clear that poverty isn't necessarily a result of sin or unwisdom. But Solomon fails to appreciate this, so obsessed is he with works, and the idea that obedience to his anthology of Proverbs will make the poor prosperous, as if God's truth is a kind of wealth creation scheme.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 25

Pro 25:1
These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out-
This begins the fourth section of the anthology of wisdom sayings which Solomon put together in this book of Proverbs. It seems that just as Solomon used these Divine truths to justify himself, and it led to his spiritual undoing, so Hezekiah may have likewise used these Proverbs with an agenda of self justification. This doesn't make them untrue or not Divinely inspired; but Divine truth is being used at times with the subtext of self justification, just as it can be today. There are 130 proverbs following, matching the numerical value of "Hezekiah".

Pro 25:2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter-
This is not to be read as meaning that God plays hard to get, hiding Himself, leaving the Bible as a riddle to be solved, with relationship with God offered to those who crack it. God is in search of man, and is desperate to connect with us. The idea may be that it is His glory which conceals Him, but we can as it were see through that glory if we know Him. The reference to the glory of kings being to search out God would sound like Solomon implying he has the glory of having found God. And yet if so, he is totally missing the point that man cannot by searching find out God (Job 11:7); rather it is by grace that God reveals Himself to men. And God is in search of man, far more than we are searching for Him. We only love because He first loved us; and it is more a question of God knowing us than our knowing Him.

LXX "The glory of God conceals a matter: but the glory of a king honours business". This could be read as a justification of Hezekiah's wrongful handling of the business of the Babylonian ambassadors; see on :1,25.

Pro 25:3 As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the hearts of kings are unsearchable-
This appears to be Solomon implying that he as king was beyond analysis or criticism by others, because his heart was unsearchable. But David his father used the same word in saying that God is unsearchable (s.w. Ps. 145:3; Job 9:10; 11:7). But Solomon lacked this sense of wonder because he had no personal relationship with God, and so he comes to use terms only appropriate to God in his own self defence and aggrandizement.

Pro 25:4 Take away the dross from the silver, and material comes out for the refiner-
"Dross" is used by David to refer to the house of Saul (see on Ps. 119:119). It would seem that Solomon has this in view. But "take away" is LXX "beat out", and the Proverbs have much to say about beating. Solomon ended up beating his own people (1 Kings 12:11, and he justifies this by quasi spiritual reasoning, forcing his Proverbs to justify his poor behaviour.

Pro 25:5 remove the wicked from the king's presence, and his throne will be established in righteousness-
This was justifying the way he killed Shimei at the establishment of his kingdom. The promises to David involved the establishment of Solomon's throne. But God had declared clearly enough that this depended upon Solomon's personal spirituality. But he willfully failed to see this, deciding that: "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness" (Prov. 25:5 AV). He externalized

righteousness, believing in a form of guilt-by-association, which the righteous would avoid. He redefined righteousness not as anything personal, but a separation from sinners. And there is no lack of evidence that the Christian community has in places and at times fallen into some similar form of legalism. His concept of righteousness was not God's. He forgot all about personal holiness, and instead focused upon not being guilty by association with sinners. And he thought this would justify him as righteous. The same error has been made so many times since. For how often has it happened that brethren who have had the most to say about separation from "the wicked" reveal personal lives which are anything but righteous. Solomon's attitude to being king was similar.

Pro 25:6 Don't exalt yourself in the presence of the king, or claim a place among great men-
Solomon thought that his possession of theoretical wisdom placed him in a God-like position above his people (see on :3), and therefore they dare not even begin to question him or examine him; and none should therefore dare to 'put himself forth' in the King's presence (Prov. 25:6 AV). Truly, "knowledge puffs up". And our very possession of 'the truth' of Christ and the word of God carries with it the same potential temptations, leading us to consider the world so far beneath us, that we can do what we wish with no accountability to anyone. And so brethren with amazing Biblical knowledge end up in court for pedophilia, etc. etc.

Pro 25:7 for it is better that it be said to you, Come up here, than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen-
These words are worked by the Lord Jesus into His parable of the final judgment (LK. 14:9). But Solomon's original idea is that he is the undisputed prince, to whom there should be no opposition. Any who rise up closer to the throne would do so by Solomon's express invitation; and any who tried to rise up without that would be shamed. The Lord Jesus reapplied all this to Himself and His Kingdom and judgment. Solomon wrongly imagine his kingdom to be God's Kingdom, and himself the Messianic ruler. And so the Lord's parable alludes to Solomon's words and corrects them.

Pro 25:8 Don't be hasty in bringing charges to court. What will you do in the end when your neighbour shames you?-
"Bringing charges to court" is AV "strive" and that may simply be the meaning; it is the same word for "debate" in :9. But it is all the same true that recourse to the judiciary is not the ideal thing for believers, as Paul also says. Rather should there be discussion between individuals and seeking for resolution (:9). But the motive for Solomon's advice is so that you don't get shame if you are judged to be in the wrong (:10). This desperate

avoidance of shame at all costs is a major theme in Solomon's Proverbs, and reflects his overall focus upon the external rather than the internal. He does indeed talk about the heart, but on balance I would conclude that he is more concerned about appearances before men than before God. And this led to his own spiritual downfall.

Pro 25:9 Debate your case with your neighbour, and don't betray the confidence of another-
See on :8. The advice in :8 is not to "debate" at all (s.w. 'bring charges to court'). The endless need to 'take the matter up' with others really reflects much about our own insecurity. The 'debating' in view appears to involve betraying the confidence of another. If we hear gossip about another, we are to seek to disregard it, rather than go to our neighbour and raise / debate the matter. We are not to gossip, nor are we to distribute gossip; he that utters or distributes a slander is a fool (Prov. 10:18). This is an Old Testament foretaste of the spirit of love expounded in 1 Cor. 13 in the New Testament.

Pro 25:10 lest one who hears it put you to shame, and your bad reputation never depart-
This desperate avoidance of shame at all costs is a major theme in Solomon's Proverbs, and reflects his overall focus upon the external rather than the internal. He does indeed talk about the heart, but on balance I would conclude that he is more concerned about appearances before men than before God. And this led to his own spiritual downfall.

Pro 25:11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver-
Appropriate speech to others is compared here to the spreading and action upon gossip condemned in :9,10. The idea seems to be that good words will be preserved as an ornament (:12), beautifully framed. This may be true, but Solomon as ever has the subtext inserted of his own self justification; for it is his words of wisdom which he knew were to be preserved, and he was compiling the book of Proverbs as a permanent record of his words, as an ornament. Settings is LXX "in a necklace of sardius", connecting with the idea of body jewelry in :12. But Solomon was blown away by the jewelry of his illicit Gentile girlfriend; he looked on the external, rather than on the internal. "The necklace you are wearing has stolen my heart" (Song 4:9 GNB).

Pro 25:12 As an earring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold, so is a wise reprover to an obedient ear-
This again may be Solomon's justification of his father David, who was obedient to the reproofs of Nathan, regarding Bathsheba and the temple building project. But again the hint is of external show; the obedient ear is outwardly adorned with a gold earring. Wisdom is portrayed as profitable because of the good public image it creates for the wise.

Pro 25:13 As the cold of snow in the time of harvest-
This is hyperbole, because it contradicts Prov. 26:1, where snow in harvest is a curse. What Solomon says is always true in a sense. But he seeks to exaggerate wisdom and folly to such an extent that he ends up with a simplistic dichotomy between good people and bad people which is unrealistic to the point of being false. Because wise people suffer and fail; and fools are sometimes wise. Human behaviour and its outcomes are not so simply divisible. The wise don't enjoy wonderful lives, nor do fools have miserable lives. The final outcomes are not in this life, as Solomon wrongly implies, but at the last day and in the eternity of God's future Kingdom- which perspective Solomon simply fails to adopt.

So is a faithful messenger to those who send him; for he refreshes the soul of his masters-
This positive comment about faithful ambassadors must be read in the context of the fact that Prov. 25:13 was one of the Proverbs rewritten in Hezekiah's time. He sinned with regard to the ambassadors of Babylon (2 Chron. 32:31), but perhaps he was led into this by willfully misreading this Proverb, or at least getting it rewritten with the subtext of justifying what he did. See on :2,25. Perhaps also in view is Hezekiah's sending of messengers to Isaiah and their returning a positive answer from him concerning the Assyrian threat.

Pro 25:14 As clouds and wind without rain, so is he who boasts of gifts deceptively-
LXX "As winds and clouds and rains are most evident objects, so is he that boasts of a false gift". I suggested on :1 that these words were rewritten at the time of Hezekiah. The boasting of gifts deceptively would then refer to the false claims of Rabshakeh to give Judah a land of blessing, or to offer them horses upon which to fight him. However we clearly have a kind of prophecy here of Ananias and Sapphira, especially if we read it as "boasting of gifts never given".

Pro 25:15 By patience a ruler is persuaded; a soft tongue breaks the bone-
The Hebrew for "persuaded" is nearly always translated "deceived". The connection of a soft tongue is with Prov. 15:1, where a soft answer turns away wrath. This would have relevance to the soft answers of Isaiah and Hezekiah to the princes of Assyria, which resulted in the turning away of the angry Assyrian army. So whilst this verse is [as ever] true as it stands, there is the subtext added which glorifies Hezekiah' response to the Assyrian crisis; see on :1.

Pro 25:16 Have you found honey? Eat as much as is sufficient for you, lest you eat too much and vomit it-

Solomon warns about only eating a limited amount of the honey you may find. Yet Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 show how Solomon found honey as it were, he had the opportunity to do and experience what he wanted- and he ate so much he became spiritually sick. The allusion may be to Job 20:15, where the man who has gained riches wrongfully vomits them up (s.w.). The same word is used of eating too much honey, and vomiting it up (Prov. 25:16). All this is true, but Prov. 23:8 says that eating the tasty food of the wicked ruler will also lead to vomiting it up. Again Solomon may be cementing his own power, suggesting that any other wealthy ruler is somehow fake, and to sit at his table, in acceptance of him, would be like eating too much honey, partaking in riches wrongfully acquired. Perhaps he has Jeroboam in view.

Solomon may also have in mind how Jonathan ate only a little honey (1 Sam. 14:29,43), whereas Saul foolishly forbad his men to eat any honey. Again we get the impression that Solomon is inserting a subtext of criticism of the house of Saul, and justification of his father's friend Jonathan.

Pro 25:17 Let your foot be seldom in your neighbour's house, lest he be weary of you and hate you-
This must be connected with :18; the warning is against being such a busybody in your neighbour's life that you end up falsely testifying about him to others.

Pro 25:18 A man who gives false testimony against his neighbour is like a club, a sword, or a sharp arrow-
Solomon has much to say about true and false witnesses (Prov. 6:19; 12:17; 14:5,25; 19:5,9,28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18). Whilst his warnings are true enough, he surely has an element of self justification in what he writes. Because he was aware that his parents, David and Bathsheba, had been accused of many things which had led to all the opposition against David at the end of his reign, and which opposition Solomon had to contend with in order to retain the throne for himself. David laments the false witness of the house of Saul and his own sons, Solomon's half brothers (Ps. 27:12; 35:11). The continual condemnation of false witnesses must be understood in this context. Whilst it is all true so far as it goes, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning.

Pro 25:19 Confidence in someone unfaithful in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a lame foot-
There are many references to the "day of trouble" in David's Psalms. Solomon appears to be boasting of his father's deliverance from various 'days of trouble'. But the phrase is used of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3). And this and some of the Proverbs were rewritten at the time by Hezekiah (Prov. 25:1). "Confidence" is the word for "trust"

associated with Hezekiah's trust in Yahweh, and perhaps the relevance to his times is that trust in Egypt for deliverance from the Assyrians didn't work out.

"Transgressors" or "unfaithful" is the term used by David of Saul and his supporters (Ps. 25:3; 59:5; 119:158). Solomon uses this term, teaching that "transgressors" must be rooted out of the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham (Prov. 2:22), and that the "transgressors" are to face judgment (Prov. 11:3,6; 13:2; 21:18; 22:12; 23:28; 25:19). All Solomon says is true, but he clearly has in view the house and supporters of Saul, who were a group he felt he needed to repress in order to keep his own kingdom and power intact.

Pro 25:20 As one who takes away a garment in cold weather, or vinegar on soda, so is one who sings songs to a heavy heart-
The taking away of a garment may be a comment upon the man who demands back the pledge of a garment overnight (Dt. 24:13). We marvel at how the God who is so apparently far removed from this world actually knows and feels for the desperately poor, and imagines their situations. And wishes to legislate on their behalf. And He is no less sensitive today. LXX "As vinegar is bad for a sore, so trouble befalling the body afflicts the heart".

Pro 25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat. If he is thirsty, give him water to drink-
This was a radical paradigm break with the general philosophy that enemies were to be hated. Solomon however elsewhere urges strict judgment upon others for their failures; and he showed no grace in his own life. So we see the warning of knowing all about grace, but acting as if untouched by it. Which is a challenging warning to we who profess to live under grace. See on :22.

Pro 25:22 for you will heap coals of fire on his head, and Yahweh will reward you-
"Hot coals" is the word used to figuratively describe condemnation (Ps. 120:4; 140:10; Prov. 6:28; 25:22; 26:21). But God hates having to condemn the wicked, he takes no pleasure in this, but rather wishes their salvation. So although what Solomon says is true enough, and apparently quoted with approval in the New Testament (Rom. 12:20), we wonder whether he really had any kind of a heart for grace and the salvation of others. For he seems to reason as if we should be kind to our enemy so that he might later be condemned- rather than in the hope that our grace might lead him to repentance.

The fire of condemnation at the judgment has already been kindled by men's attitudes now (Lk. 12:49), and hence by doing good to such men when they abuse us we (now)

"heap coals of fire upon his head". "Your enemy" here must therefore refer to someone who is responsible to the last judgment. 2 Thess.3:15 implies 'an enemy' was first century vocabulary for a shunned and rejected false teacher. See on Jude 23. By showing grace to your enemy within the people of God / the church who refuses to repent, you are actually making his final punishment worse.

But I don't understand this as meaning that our motivation for such kindness should be the gleeful thought that we will thereby earn for them greater and more painful condemnation at the last day. Such motives would surely be foreign to all we have seen and known in the Father and Son. Rather am I attracted to the suggestion that there is a reference here to the practice, originating in Egypt, of putting a pan of hot coals over the head of a person who has openly repented. In which case, we would be being taught to show grace to our enemies, in order that we might bring them to repentance. This would chime in with the teaching elsewhere in Romans that God's goodness leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). And this is how we should be, especially with our brethren. The idea of excluding our brethren seems to me the very opposite of the spirit of grace which we have received.

Paul quotes the words of Prov. 25:21,22 in Rom. 12:20. But he omits to apply the last part of Prov. 25:22 to us: "And the Lord shall reward you". Paul's point is that we should not resist evil, leave God to glorify His Name- and enable this to happen, without seeking for a personal reward for our righteousness. It's as if Paul is saying: 'The condemnation of the wicked, when *God,* not you, pours out His vengeance, will glorify Him. So do your part to bring this about, don't worry about the reward you're promised so much as the bringing about of His glory'.

Pro 25:23 The north wind brings forth rain: so a backbiting tongue brings an angry face- GNB "Gossip brings anger". Solomon rightly condemns gossip and the stirring up of divisions. But he is writing up his Divinely given wisdom at the start of his reign, where there were various groups of opposition to him. These groupings had all arisen from the divisions which arose after his parents' sin with each other; they were a consequence for David's sin, which Nathan had prophesied. Inevitably, David's behaviour had invited all manner of gossip and strife. But Solomon seems to blame this on the gossipers, and carefully considers they alone are guilty; for he is ever glorifying and whitewashing his father David.

Pro 25:24 It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop, than to share a house with a contentious woman-

A man on a housetop recalls the story of David's sin with Solomon's mother, Bathsheba. I detected on Prov. 18:22 Solomon's justification of David's divorce with Michal. And here too there is a subtext, however unconscious even. Solomon appears to have totally whitewashed his parents, and any consequence of David's sins are blamed by Solomon upon his half brothers and foolish men, as if they were totally guilty and David totally innocent; for this was his worldview. See on Prov. 21:8,19.

Pro 25:25 Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country-
This is one of the Proverbs reapplied to Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1). The good news or gospel from a far country could refer to the news from Ethiopia which made the Assyrians withdraw from Jerusalem. But "a far country" in the Old Testament often refers to Babylon, and is the phrase used about the ambassadors from there who were Hezekiah's undoing (Is. 39:3). This could be read as a justification of Hezekiah's wrongful handling of the business of the Babylonian ambassadors; see on :1,2,13.

Pro 25:26 Like a muddied spring, and a polluted well, so is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked-
David in his earlier Psalms exalts and boasts to God that his feet have not slipped, indeed he was overly confident that his feet would never slip / "be moved" (Ps. 17:5; 21:7; 55:22; 62:2,6; 125:1). His more mature reflection is that he had wrongly said "I shall never slip [AV "be moved"]" (Ps. 30:6), and his feet had indeed slipped, not least over the Bathsheba incident (Ps. 38:16; 94:18). Solomon didn't learn this lesson, for he likewise assumed that the righteous would never be moved / slip (Prov. 10:30), although he appears to accept that even a righteous man like his father had indeed slipped (Prov. 25:26). And Solomon himself did so, not learning the lesson from his father's mistaken assumption that the righteous can never slip.

Pro 25:27 It is not good to eat much honey; nor is it honourable to seek one's own honour-
See on :16. Solomon was so sure of his own rightness that he just couldn't conceive that in reality he might sin or break the principles he preached. He describes in Ecclesiastes how he indulged every possible desire, and took each of his lusts to its ultimate term. Yet he warned his son to only eat honey in moderation, i.e. don't gorge your natural desires. This sense of the impossibility of spiritual failure is stamped all over Solomon; and it has been the downfall of so many others too.

LXX "It is not good to eat much honey; but it is right to honour venerable sayings". This would suggest that the honey refers to teachings, and Solomon is basically implying that his sayings should be honoured, and any others rejected.

Pro 25:28 Like a city that is broken down and without walls is a man whose spirit is without restraint-
LXX "So is a man who does anything without counsel". Again as noted on :1, this may be a justification of Hezekiah, who dealt with the Assyrian crisis by saying he trusted in God's counsel to overcome the Assyrians (2 Kings 18:20). Like Solomon, Hezekiah's Proverbs are all Divinely inspired and true, but he seems to insert into them a subtext of self justification.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 26

Pro 26:1 Like snow in summer and as rain in harvest, so honour is not fitting for a fool-
We note the apparent contradiction with Prov. 25:13, where snow in the time of harvest is seen as a blessing. This is hyperbole, because it contradicts what we read here in Prov. 26:1, where snow in harvest is a curse. What Solomon says is always true in a sense. But he seeks to exaggerate wisdom and folly to such an extent that he ends up with a simplistic dichotomy between good people and bad people which is unrealistic to the point of being false. Because wise people suffer and fail; and fools are sometimes wise. Human behaviour and its outcomes are not so simply divisible. The wise don't enjoy wonderful lives, nor do fools have miserable lives. The final outcomes are not in this life, as Solomon wrongly implies, but at the last day and in the eternity of God's future Kingdom- which perspective Solomon simply fails to adopt.

Pro 26:2 Like a fluttering sparrow, like a darting swallow, so the undeserved curse doesn't come to rest-
Perhaps as GNB "Curses cannot hurt you unless you deserve them. They are like birds that fly by and never light". As noted on Prov. 25:1, these Proverbs are relevant to the Hezekiah and Assyria situation, and the reference may be to the curses of Rabshakeh against Yahweh and His people. By contrast, Yahweh saved Jerusalem at that time "as birds flying" (Is. 31:5).

Pro 26:3 A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools!-
In tandem with Solomon's later lack of conscience and real spiritual mindedness, there arose an incredible hardness in Solomon in his later life. His wisdom initially made him soft and sympathetic, able to empathize with the mind of others (e.g. the prostitute mother of the baby); and even before his endowment with the gift of wisdom he had the humility to recognize that he was but a little child (1 Kings 3:7) . But as his apostacy developed, he came to whip his people (1 Kings 12:14), treating them as he thought fools should be treated (Prov. 26:3)- suggesting that he came to see himself as the only wise man, the only one truly in touch with reality, and therefore despising everyone else. 1 Kings 5:13-16 reveals that Solomon had 153,000 full time and 90,000 part time male servants. Israel's complaint that Solomon had whipped them implies that he treated them like slaves, with himself as the slave-driver.

LXX "As a whip for a horse, and a goad for an ass, so is a rod for a simple nation". It was this attitude which led Solomon to beat his own people (1 Kings 12:11). Like many who hold God's truth, the mere holding of it lifted Solomon up in pride, and he came to despise all others who didn't accept his wisdom.

Pro 26:4 Don't answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him-
This verses is clearly intended to be connected with :5, the idea being that there are times when a fool should be answered according to his folly, and times when he shouldn't be. This is one of the Hezekiah Proverbs (see on Prov. 25:1), and the allusion may be to how Hezekiah commanded the people not to answer Rabshakeh (2 Kings 18:36), who is thereby interpreted as the archetypical "fool". But a fool must at times be answered (Prov. 26:5), and the idea may be that God will answer fools like Rabshakeh in His own way and in His own time; and we don't need to. But we then get the hint that Hezekiah, like Solomon, was using the Divine truth of the Proverbs with a subtext of his own self justification, just as we can. See on :6,7,8,16.

Pro 26:5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes-
Solomon may have in view how God resurrected Samuel to rebuke the foolish Saul, the night before his death. Solomon is continually making historical allusions which justify his father and mock his competitors for the throne. See on :4.

Pro 26:6 One who sends a message by the hand of a fool is cutting off his own feet and drinking violence-
I suggested on :4 that this is one of the Hezekiah Proverbs, specifically relevant to the situation during the Assyrian encirclement of Jerusalem. Rabshakeh, the servant of the king of Assyria, is presented as a "fool", and by using him, the king of Assyria was cutting off his own feet. This and other of Hezekiah's Proverbs (see on Prov. 25:1) which mock messengers would then be the reference of 2 Kings 19:21, where we read that the daughter of Zion had mocked at and despised the Assyrians and their messengers. There is no other recorded fulfilment of this. Defeat by Assyria looked certain, and so to mock them at the time when they would [humanly speaking] soon be seeking their grace- was a true act of faith. See on :16.

Pro 26:7 Like the legs of the lame that hang loose: so is a parable in the mouth of fools-
LXX "As well take away the motion of the legs, as transgression from the mouth of fools". This would then continue the mockery of the messengers of the King of Assyria (see on :6). But on a more general level, it is true that parables are actually to confirm the fools in their foolishness; this was the reason the Lord effectively gave when asked why He had started speaking in parables. It was so that the audience might *not* understand (see on Mt. 13:13,14). See on :9.

Pro 26:8 As one who binds a stone in a sling, so is he who gives honour to a fool-
I suggested on :4,6 that the particular fool in view is Rabshakeh, who had been

honoured by the king of Assyria. But because of God's anger with this "fool", the military technology of Assyria would be confounded. Not a stone would be hurled at Jerusalem- exactly as stated in 2 Kings 19:32.

Pro 26:9 Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunk person, so is a parable in the mouth of fools-
"Parable" is the usual word for "Proverb" used of Solomon's Proverbs. He is saying that they will do no good to fools, nor will they be effective if taught by the mouth of fools. The idea of the Proverbs is that they are to be as thorns, provoking our response; but the fool is as it were drunk, and it will have no effect upon them. This is true to an extent. But Solomon is effectively saying that there is no point in trying further to educate those he classifies as "fools". And this is seen in the attitude of so many who claim to have "the truth". It is in sharp contrast to the continually searching, seeking attitude of the Father and Son, who approach the lost as if they are going to keep seeking them until they find them.

Pro 26:10 As an archer who wounds all, so is he who hires a fool or he who hires those who pass by-
The reference to the Hezekiah / Assyria situation continues. For the Assyrians hired passers by as their mercenaries in their onslaught against Jerusalem. They are mocked as foolish; see on :4. Their archers would be ineffective because "not an arrow shall be fired" against Zion (2 Kings 19:32). Such mockery was an act of faith, seeing that defeat and begging for mercy from the Assyrians seemed inevitable, humanly speaking. LXX "All the flesh of fools endures much hardship; for their fury is brought to nought". This recalls Is. 51:13 about the Assyrians: "Where is the fury of the oppressor?".

Pro 26:11 As a dog that returns to his vomit, so is a fool who repeats his folly-
This is true, and is quoted in 2 Pet. 2:22. Peter uses it about the Jews whom he had baptized on the day of Pentecost who were returning to Judaism. Their conversion away from Judaism had been a vomiting up of rotting unclean food; and they were now returning to what they had once vomited up. Judaism is not at all spirituality, according to how Peter, Paul, Stephen and others allude to it. The washing of baptism is likened to a vomiting up of rotten food. Again the implication is that the vomiting of the old life was a one off act which occurred at a specific time- their baptism. Baptism is therefore a specific action of the Spirit upon us in moral terms.

But as noted on :9, Solomon is arguing that fools never learn, and so it's not worth trying with them. And this is seen in the attitude of so many who claim to have "the truth". It is in sharp contrast to the continually searching, seeking attitude of the Father and Son, who approach the lost as if they are going to keep seeking them until they find them.

Pro 26:12 Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him-
Not being 'wise in our own eyes' is a major theme of Solomon's Proverbs (Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 26:12,16; 28:11). We are to recognize that there is no inherent wisdom in man; it must be taught to us from God's word. And yet we live in a postmodern world, where what seems or feels good to our own gut is taken to be the highest personal truth. This was what led Judah to condemnation (s.w. Is. 5:21), because trusting in their own opinions and gut feelings left them insensitive to God's word. Paul quotes the idea in Rom. 12:16; to be wise in our own eyes means that we ignore those whom we naturally consider worthy of being ignored. But that is not necessarily the way of the Spirit. But when Solomon lost his faith, he comments that whether a man has wise eyes or not (s.w.) is irrelevant in the face of death (Ecc. 2:14). He clearly conceived wisdom as only helpful for this life; he had no real personal faith in the resurrection of the dead or the establishment of the future Kingdom of God. And this led him to ultimately despise his own wisdom as futile.

LXX "I have seen a man who seemed to himself to be wise; but a fool had more hope than he". This would imply that a specific individual is in view, and I suggested on :4,6 that it is Rabshakeh in the Hezekiah context.

Pro 26:13 The lazy person says, There is a lion in the road! A fierce lion roams the streets!-
As explained on :14, Solomon's condemnation of laziness is unrealistic in that he is justifying his own works based righteousness, rather than the righteousness of faith. Surely a wise person will not go outside if a lion is roaming around. Solomon clearly overstates his case here. In the Hezekiah context (see on :4,6), the fierce lion that was being feared was the Assyrians. But it seems rather inappropriate to complain that those who feared them were lazy; faithless, maybe, but "lazy" suggests an obsession against this particular vice. LXX "A sluggard when sent on a journey" would continue the theme of criticizing messengers, which as noted on :4,6 has especial reference to Rabshakeh in the Hezekiah context.

Pro 26:14 As the door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy one on his bed-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4;

21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 26:15 The lazy one buries his hand in the dish; he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth-
See on :14. This is a caricature of laziness, and not a particularly convincing one, suggesting the author has an obsessive campaign against it rather than a rational position. Solomon as a personality type was an active person who despised laziness. But laziness or zeal is to some degree an inherited characteristic, and can arise from a host of factors unrelated to the presence or absence of wisdom / true spirituality. Solomon was using the Divine truths given to him to reinforce and confirm his own native personality type, as many do today. And it seems Hezekiah was wired likewise (see on Prov. 25:1).

Pro 26:16 The lazy one is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer with discretion-
See on :12,14,15. LXX "A sluggard seems to himself wiser than one who most satisfactorily brings back a message". This would continue the apparent obsession with criticizing evil messengers who are lazy fools. This makes sense when we appreciate what is explained on :4,6; that the reference is to the messengers of the king of Assyria in Hezekiah's time.

Pro 26:17 Like one who grabs a dog's ears is one who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own-
LXX "As he that lays hold of a dog's tail, so is he that makes himself the champion of another's cause". As noted on 4,6, this has relevance to the situation at the time of the Assyrian encirclement of Jerusalem. Rabshakeh is presented as championing the cause of others, and treating Judah like a dog; and from his use of the Yahweh Name, ability to speak Hebrew and knowledge of the situation within Judah, it would seem Rabshakeh was an apostate Jew who then championed the cause of Assyria. This is yet again the daughter of Zion mocking those who looked poised to overcome her. See on :19.

Pro 26:18 Like a madman who shoots burning torches, arrows, and death-
This is the language of siege engines shooting these things. The "madman" would refer to Rabshakeh and the Assyrians. Their intention to do these things was stymied (2 Kings 19:32). See on :10. The LXX would allude to the fair but deceptive words spoken by him in offering the Jews a great life in a land like their own: "As those who need correction put forth fair words to men...".

Pro 26:19 so is the man who deceives his neighbour and says, Am I not joking?-
LXX "So are all that lay wait for their own friends". This would again allude to Rabshakeh, the betrayer of his people (see on :17), and those within Judah who had gone over to the Assyrian side. "Joking" is the word for "mockery", and that may be the idea here. Rabshakeh was joining in the mockery of Yahweh and the faithful in Zion.

Pro 26:20 For lack of wood a fire goes out; without gossip, a quarrel dies down-
Solomon rightly condemns gossip and the stirring up of divisions. But he is writing up his Divinely given wisdom at the start of his reign, where there were various groups of opposition to him. These groupings had all arisen from the divisions which arose after his parents' sin with each other; they were a consequence for David's sin, which Nathan had prophesied. Inevitably, David's behaviour had invited all manner of gossip and strife. But Solomon seems to blame this on the gossipers, and carefully considers they alone are guilty; for he is ever glorifying and whitewashing his father David.

Pro 26:21 As coals are to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindling strife-
"Hot embers" is the word used to figuratively describe condemnation (Ps. 120:4; 140:10; Prov. 6:28; 25:22; 26:21). Strife between persons can lead to condemnation, because God will finally judge according to our attitudes to others. We must therefore be so careful not to be contentious, for the contentions and strife engendered might well trigger strife and hatred between brethren which leads to their condemnation. Those who endlessly cause contention in the name of "contending for the faith" need to consider this seriously.

Pro 26:22 The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, they go down into the innermost parts-
Solomon rightly condemns gossip and the stirring up of divisions. But he is writing up his Divinely given wisdom at the start of his reign, where there were various groups of opposition to him. These groupings had all arisen from the divisions which arose after his parents' sin with each other; they were a consequence for David's sin, which Nathan had prophesied. Inevitably, David's behaviour had invited all manner of gossip and strife. But Solomon seems to blame this on the gossipers, and carefully considers they alone are guilty; for he is ever glorifying and whitewashing his father David. And yet what he writes is so true; throwaway comments of gossip take deep lodgment in the hearers.

LXX "the words of cunning knaves" would have reference to internal court intrigue against his father David.

Pro 26:23 Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are smooth words with an evil heart-
LXX "Silver dishonestly given is to be considered as a potsherd: smooth lips cover a grievous heart". Solomon probably has in view Absalom, and Hezekiah has in view (as in :18) the fair but deceptive words spoken by Rabshakeh in offering the Jews a great life in a land like their own.

Pro 26:24 A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but he harbours evil in his heart-
LXX "A weeping enemy promises all things with his lips, but in his heart he contrives deceit". Again (as in :18) this references the fair but deceptive words spoken by Rabshakeh in offering the Jews a great life in a land like their own.

Pro 26:25 When his speech is charming, don't believe him; for there are seven abominations in his heart-
"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry. See on :24.

LXX "Though thine enemy intreat thee with a loud voice, consent not: for there are seven abominations in his heart". Again (as in :18) this references the fair but deceptive words spoken by Rabshakeh in offering the Jews a great life in a land like their own.

Pro 26:26 His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly-
Solomon's initial reference would have been to the deceit and hatred of his half brothers Amnon (s.w. 2 Sam. 13:15) and Absalom. The Hezekiah context, as noted throughout this chapter, would refer to the betrayal of Rabshakeh. But again we note that for Solomon, the greatest reward for wickedness was shame before others. This was about the only concept he had of punishment, and likewise blessing was understood in terms of glory before others. He has no Kingdom perspective because he considered he was the ultimate judge of all, and his kingdom was, he supposed, the Kingdom of God on earth as promised to David.

Pro 26:27 Whoever digs a pit shall fall into it; whoever rolls a stone, it will come back on him-
This likewise as in :26 had in view the various adversaries to David who had come to a sticky end; and in the Hezekiah context, to Rabshakeh.

Pro 26:28 A lying tongue hates those it hurts; and a flattering mouth works ruin-
The Bible quite rightly emphasizes the extreme power of words. Such emphasis was not seen in contemporary religion. And neither is it today. The "lying tongue" was that of Saul and Absalom in Solomon's context (s.w. Ps. 109:2); for Hezekiah, the "lying tongue" was that of Rabshakeh, and the same phrase is used about him in Ps. 120:2.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 27

Pro 27:1
Don't boast about tomorrow; for you don't know what a day may bring forth-
This could be read in the Hezekiah context (see on Prov. 25:1) as commentary upon the boasts of the Assyrians to return to destroy Jerusalem after defeating the Ethiopians, and various other boasts about what they would do to Zion. In just one night, their army was destroyed.

Pro 27:2 Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips-
Solomon's hypocrisy is complete; for the praise of the "wise man" throughout Proverbs is effectively self praise. Perhaps his desire for praise from a stranger / foreigner was misused by Solomon in order to justify his Gentile girlfriend who praised him, according to the Song of Solomon. And perhaps this was likewise twisted by Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1) to justify his acceptance of the praise of the Babylonian ambassadors which was his spiritual undoing. See on :21.

Pro 27:3 A stone is heavy and sand is a burden; but a fool's provocation is heavier than both-
GNB "The weight of stone and sand is nothing compared to the trouble that stupidity can cause". This is a Hezekiah Proverb (see on Prov. 25:1); the "provocation" of his son Manasseh led to the huge burden of judgment upon Judah (s.w. 2 Kings 23:26). Hezekiah's son clearly paid no attention to his father's proverbs. And what Hezekiah aims at others became true for his own family.

Pro 27:4 Wrath is cruel and anger is overwhelming; but who is able to stand before jealousy?-
Solomon has much to say about the evil of jealousy / envy (e.g. Prov. 14:30; 23:17; 24:1,19; 27:4). But true as his condemnations of envy are, he surely has in mind the way that Ephraim envied Judah, and envied his throne (s.w. Is. 11:13). This all came to full term after his death, when Ephraim departed from Judah under Jeroboam. Again, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning. But as he faced death, he came to realize that all such envy is as nothing before the reality of death, which he understood as the end of life, as he had assumed this life was the time for reward and expresses no personal hope in a resurrection of the body (Ecc. 4:4; 9:6).

Pro 27:5 Better is open rebuke than hidden love-
David had accepted rebuke and was open to it, notably from Nathan the prophet (Ps.

38:1; 141:5); and so again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father. But Solomon was only to remain the prophetic son of David if he accepted reproof (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:14); and he didn't. He refused to personalize his own wisdom, as we can.

Pro 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend; although the kisses of an enemy are profuse-
As noted on :5, the allusion is to how David had accepted rebuke from Nathan, but had been betrayed by the kisses of Ahithophel, who was the great grandfather of Solomon, and who had turned against David. Again Solomon's Proverbs are true, but he harnesses them to the justification of himself and his father.

Pro 27:7 A full soul loathes a honeycomb; but to a hungry soul, every bitter thing is sweet-
This may be another connection with the parable of the prodigal son; see on :8. "Loathes" is 'tramples upon', a may be a critical comment upon how Saul had forbidden his men to eat anything, but Jonathan disobeyed and ate a honeycomb. All the time we observe Solomon's implicit criticism of his enemies.

Pro 27:8 As a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man who wanders from his home-
But the Lord's parable of the prodigal son again seems to deconstruct Solomon's attitude here (see on :7); for all the same, the loving Father sought the return of such a man. LXX is even more appropriate to this: "As when a bird flies down from its own nest, so a man is brought into bondage whenever he estranges himself from his own place".

Pro 27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart; so does earnest counsel from a man's friend-
This is true, but Solomon may again be using Divine truth to justify himself; for he had appointed the son of Nathan the prophet, loyal to David his father, as "the king's friend" (1 Kings 4:5).

Pro 27:10 Don't forsake your friend and your father's friend. Don't go to your brother's house in the day of your disaster: better is a neighbour who is near than a distant brother-
As noted on :6, this is true, but Solomon is clearly alluding to himself and his father. David's loyal friends such as Hushai (s.w. 2 Sam. 16:17) were the ones who established Solomon in power, whereas his own half brothers were competitors for his throne.

Pro 27:11 Be wise, my son, and bring joy to my heart, then I can answer my tormentor-
The "tormentor" suggests a specific reference to the Assyrian / Hezekiah situation (Prov. 25:1). The idea was that the sons of the faithful would at that time would speak with the enemies in the gate (Ps. 127:5). We note that David wanted to answer his tormentors / reproachers by receiving God's grace (Ps. 119:41,42). Solomon instead wants to answer them by having a wise son. Again we see his lack of focus upon grace. LXX "And remove from thyself reproachful words".

Pro 27:12 A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge; but the simple pass on and suffer for it-
As noted on Prov. 25:1, these proverbs of Hezekiah are true, but tend towards his own self justification. Here the reference seems to be to the wise taking refuge within Jerusalem during the Assyrian invasion, whilst those who didn't were overrun and suffered.

Pro 27:13 Take his garment when he puts up collateral for a stranger-
The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27). But Solomon in the Proverbs is quite obsessed with forbidding it in very strong terms (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis*)*. Perhaps Solomon recalled some bad experience in his family because of this. There is the otherwise curious statement in 1 Sam. 17:18 that David's brothers, Solomon's uncles, were to return a collateral. Perhaps this ruined the family and Solomon's wisdom has some human element in it, reflecting his own bad experiences in his family life. But there is nothing wrong with giving or taking collateral for a loan; what is condemned in God's law is the abuse of the debtor and the abuse of the situation. Indeed David and Hezekiah ask God to be collateral for their needs and debts in various ways (Ps. 119:122; Is. 38:14). And God gives the Holy Spirit in our hearts as collateral on His debt, as He sees it, to save us (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; Eph. 1:14); and in response we give our hearts as a pledge to Him (Jer. 30:21 Heb.). So forbidding the practice seems out of step with the spirit of grace. It would mean asking of God what we are unprepared to do for others. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to this matter. It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom.

Hold it for a wayward woman!-
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply

personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" (AV) woman (2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon.

Pro 27:14 He who blesses his neighbour with a loud voice early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse by him-
This is a Hezekiah Proverb (see on Prov. 25:1); the phrase "with a loud voice" is that used of Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18:28. The "blessing" he hypocritically announced was the offer of a wonderful new life for Judah in Assyria. He is the one presented by Hezekiah as the fool.

Pro 27:15 A continual dropping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike-
LXX "On a stormy day drops of rain drive a man out of his house; so also does a railing woman drive a man out of his own house". I detected on Prov. 18:22 Solomon's justification of David's divorce with Michal, from whose house he had to flee the night her father sent to murder him there. So here too there is a subtext, however unconscious even; however true Solomon's observation may be in more general terms.

Pro 27:16 restraining her is like restraining the wind, or like grasping oil in his right hand-
Solomon does the very opposite of what he says here; for he uses the word for "oil" or "ointment" about the ointment of his illicit Gentile girlfriend, which he found so attractive (Song 4:10). Yet in Prov. 27:16 he warns that a bad woman has such oil; but he falls for her. He utterly failed to personalize his wisdom, it flowed through his mouth and mind without taking any personal lodgment within him. And we must be warned by this ability of human nature.

Pro 27:17 Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens his friend's countenance-
Perhaps this is to be connected with the teaching about the shape or face of men in :19,

where a man's face is his heart. We don't read that a file or whetstone makes iron sharper; but rather than iron sharpens iron. The idea may be that is because we are of the same nature that fellowship sharpens us. This was why the Lord Jesus was of the same nature as ourselves, so that His fellowship with us can change our face into His, as Paul says in 2 Cor. 3:16-18.

Pro 27:18 Whoever tends the fig tree shall eat its fruit; he who looks after his master shall be honoured-
This could be a reference by Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1) to the false offer by Rabshakeh that his "master", the king of Assyria, could give Judah a land of fig trees where they could enjoy the fruit.

Pro 27:19 As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man-
This continues the great Biblical theme that the heart is the man; the face [the external] is the heart [the internal]. The critical importance of the heart / mind is unique to the Bible and true Christianity. Other religions focused upon the external and tokenistic, the behaviour alone; whereas the passion of Yahweh is for the human heart. The great emphasis upon the work of the Spirit in the New Testament likewise reflects this. LXX "As faces are not like other faces, so neither are the thoughts of men".

Pro 27:20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied; and a man's eyes are never satisfied-
The lack of "satisfaction" is a major theme in the descriptions of condemnation for those who break the covenant (s.w. Lev. 26:26). And it is the principle we must live by today; that the only satisfaction is in the things of God's Kingdom. Even in this life, the eye is not "satisfied" with seeing or wealth (s.w. Prov. 27:20; Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10). And those who seek such satisfaction from those things will find that dissatisfaction is the lead characteristic of their condemnation (Ps. 59:15). Tragically Solomon knew the truth of all this but lived otherwise; just as so many do who give lip service to the idea that the things of the flesh cannot satisfy.

Sin never satisfies. "Hell and destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20 RV), Solomon wrote in his youth; and then in old age, he came to basically the same conclusion, having spent his life working back to the truth that he had been taught in his youth (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8). And there are many men and women who have done the same. We all tend to be empirical learners; and yet this is the great power of God's word, that through it we need not have to learn everything through our failures; but we can receive His Truth, trust it, and simply live by it. Otherwise we shall be like Solomon...

Pro 27:21 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but man is tested by his praise-
This must be connected with Prov. 17:3: "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but Yahweh tests the hearts". The idea is that Yahweh seeks purified hearts, spiritual mindedness, more than anything else; and the fire of affliction is used to purify our thinking. Purified hearts or spirits is the aim of the work of the Holy Spirit as taught in the New Testament. Yet a man must use the refining pot when he receives praise (Prov. 27:21 AV "so is a man to his praise"). We have some election over this refining process, we are to work together with God in it; but the end result is the purification of the heart / mind / spirit.

I suggested on :2 that there is reference here to the praise Hezekiah received from the Babylonians. This Proverb was twisted by Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1) to justify his acceptance of the praise of the Babylonian ambassadors which was his spiritual undoing. He was tested by the receipt of praise- and failed the test.

Pro 27:22 Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with grain, yet his foolishness will not be removed from him-
LXX "Though thou scourge a fool, disgracing him in the midst of the council, thou wilt still in no wise remove his folly from him". Solomon sees public shaming fools as the only possible way to get them to accept wisdom. And he laments that even this doesn't work, and so one must give up with fools. But all this is at variance with the unending searching of the Father and Son for the lost, as taught in Lk. 15. And love seeks to shield from shame, just as the Father sought to do for his foolish prodigal son, rushing out to accompany him on the walk home through the village, lest he be shamed. There are today those like Solomon who think that their mere possession of Divine truth justifies them. And they have the same tendency- to write off people as foolish and not worthy of further effort. This not only stymies their entire approach to evangelism, but makes them wrongly judgmental of those they consider to be foolish, and to have an over exalted view of themselves.

Pro 27:23 Know well the state of your flocks, and pay attention to your herds-
As explained on :24, this appears to be Solomon veering towards the spirit of Ecclesiastes, urging every effort to get wealthy in this life, because that is all you have. Neither he nor Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1) have any Kingdom perspective. Solomon liked to think he was God's Kingdom, and Hezekiah was content with his extra 15 years of mortal life and enjoying them as far as he could (Is. 39:8).

Pro 27:24 for riches are not forever, nor does even the crown endure to all generations-

This is true, and evidence enough that Solomon was not in fact the eternal Messianic "son of David" who would reign eternally. And yet despite knowing this, Solomon acts exactly as if his kingdom is the eternal Kingdom of God. And yet on the other hand, he admits here that he has no hope of eternal retention of his wealth or crown. Therefore he urges to zealously count your wealth and work as hard as you can to get wealthy now, in this life, and enjoy it. So we have here the spirit of Ecclesiastes.

Pro 27:25 The hay is removed, and the new growth appears, the grasses of the hills are gathered in-
See on :23,25. The idea again seems to be a glorifying of human labour, so common in Proverbs. Hence LXX "Take care of the herbage in the field, and thou shalt cut grass, and gather the mountain hay". Solomon has no understanding of grace or of relationship with God without works. He was a naturally hard working person, and his many Proverbs glorifying labour and hard work appear to be merely justifying and reinforcing his own native personality type. And we can abuse God's truth likewise. The new growth appearing may be a picture of a new restored situation in the land appearing after the Assyrian invasion had been overcome.

Pro 27:26 The lambs are for your clothing, and the goats are the price of a field-
As suggested on :25, this appears to continue a description of an ideal situation which would come upon the land at the time of the "new growth" of :25. It is perhaps Hezekiah's vision of how things would be under his rule. But it falls far short of Isaiah's prophecies of the Kingdom of God which all could have come true after the Assyrian defeat. Sadly Hezekiah wanted to think, like Solomon, that the reward for righteousness and wisdom was mainly in this life; he has no Kingdom perspective. LXX "That thou mayest have wool of sheep for clothing: pay attention to the land, that thou mayest have lambs".

Pro 27:27 There will be plenty of goats' milk for your food, for your family's food, and for the nourishment of your servant girls-
This is a picture of happy agricultural self sufficiency after the Assyrian threat has been dealt with. But it falls so far short of the Kingdom potential; see on :26.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 28

Pro 28:1 The wicked flee when no one pursues; but the righteous are as bold as a lion-
This was the situation promised for Israel if they were obedient to the covenant. But they were not at Hezekiah's time; the victory was by grace, but he gives no space for that consideration. This is a Hezekiah Proverb (see on Prov. 25:1), and the allusion would be to the remaining Assyrians fleeing after the Angel slew 185,000 of them. The lion was a symbol of Assyria, but as the remnant raced out of Jerusalem to gather their spoil, they were the bold lions. But Hezekiah likes to think that the Assyrians are the wicked, and the Jews were the righteous. He has the same overly simplistic worldview which Solomon also had, whose Proverbs are now being reused by him. For the prophets condemn the Jews at that time; there was only a tiny righteous minority, and the whole salvation of Zion at this time was by grace and not their own righteousness. See on :12.

Pro 28:2 In rebellion, a land has many rulers, but order is maintained by a man of understanding and knowledge-
When Solomon laments that a sinful land has many rulers, but stability comes from a wise ruler, he is stating an inspired truth; but it is inevitable that he framed it in such terms as justified his own dictatorial rule, as if his wisdom justified him in crushing any opposition leaders. It was really Solomon's self-justification. And in the Hezekiah context (see on Prov. 25:1), this becomes a prophecy of how his descendants were to indeed be "many princes" (AV) just before the Babylonian overthrow of the kingdom.

For "order" the AV has "the state thereof shall be prolonged". Like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:27), Solomon could have prolonged his days as king over Israel if he walked in the ways of David (1 Kings 3:14), which we are specifically told he did not. Seeing Solomon reigned 40 years, this promise of prolonged days surely implied supernaturally prolonged life, beyond usual human lifespans. Indeed the term is used of how the Lord Jesus "prolonged his days" eternally (Is. 53:10). Hence Solomon twice uses the word to speak of how wise rulers could prolong their reigns (Prov. 28:2,16). He surely has himself in view; but failed to realize this potential. Indeed he cynically uses the word in Ecc. 7:15; 8:12 in claiming that it is the wicked and not the obedient who have their days prolonged.

Pro 28:3 A needy man who oppresses the poor is like a driving rain which leaves no crops-
Oppression seems to have been a characteristic of the reigns of Saul and Absalom. See on Ps. 62:10. This was the equivalent of how Saul oppressed David (Ps. 119:121,122,134). Samuel's insistence that *he* has not oppressed the people is in the context of his warning that Saul would do this (1 Sam. 12:3,4). When Solomon later condemns the 'oppressors' (s.w. Prov. 14:31; 22:16; 28:3,24), he has in view a wishing of

judgment upon the house of Saul. "The poor" whom they had oppressed would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6). But Solomon failed to personalize all this, so obsessed was he with justifying his father. For Solomon ended his reign oppressing his own people.

Pro 28:4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked; but those who keep the law contend with them-
Solomon condemns those who "forsake the law" (Prov. 4:2; 28:4), and he likely has the house of Saul in view as his father David did when using this phrase (Ps. 119:53). But he speaks in Prov. 4:2 of those who forsook *his* law; as if he was playing God, considering any inattention to himself as inattention to God. David by contrast continually emphasizes the need not to forsake *God's* law.

Pro 28:5 Evil men don't understand justice; but those who seek Yahweh understand it fully-
This is true, but Solomon had established himself as the judge of Israel, and considered that his judgments were ultimately just and beyond criticism. He condemns any who did criticize him as not seeking Yahweh and evil.

Pro 28:6 Better is the poor who walks in his integrity, than he who is perverse in his ways, and he is rich-
This must be placed alongside Solomon's common theme that the wise are blessed with riches, and the poor are poor because they are foolish. So he admits that some wicked people do get rich, but comparing it with the other Proverbs, he sees this as only temporary.

Pro 28:7 Whoever keeps the law is a wise son; but he who is a companion of gluttons shames his father-
This desperate avoidance of shame at all costs is a major theme in Solomon's Proverbs, and reflects his overall focus upon the external rather than the internal. He does indeed talk about the heart, but on balance I would conclude that he is more concerned about appearances before men than before God. And this led to his own spiritual downfall. The Lord's parable of the prodigal son appears to deconstruct Solomon's approach here. For the prodigal was a companion of sinners and didn't keep the law; but his father wasn't unduly worried about the shame on him, and didn't therefore disown the son. Instead he watched constantly for his return, and when he sees him, he runs out [it was shameful for an older man to run in public] through the streets, in order to escort his son home and protect him from shame in the village. And the elder son who claimed to have kept the law was the one who finally rejected himself from the Father's house.

Pro 28:8 He who increases his wealth by excessive interest gathers it for one who has pity on the poor-
Solomon on one hand teaches pity towards the poor (Prov. 14:21,31; 19:17; 28:8). But on the other, he mocks the poor as being poor because of their unwisdom, believing that wealth is given in response to wisdom. He is very conflicted in his attitude to the poor. The Divine revelation of truth to him was clearly that he should be generous to the poor. But he fences against this in other places by saying that the poor are being punished for their unwisdom. So like us when we encounter need that requires our generosity, he hedges his position very carefullly; rather than accepting the simple force of the wisdom given to him, that pity to the poor as it were transfers our wealth from earth to heaven, and we will receive it back in due time (Prov. 19:17). And he is quite obsessive about not being collateral for the poor. Solomon had not known need, neither material nor spiritual, and it shows in his attitude to so obsessively forbidding the giving of collateral to guarantee a loan (Prov. 6:1-3; 11:15; 17:18; 20:16; 22:26; 27:13- all quite some emphasis). It makes hollow all Solomon's exhortations to be generous to your poor neighbour and to be a brother in adversity to your neighbour (Prov. 14:21; 17:17). Solomon is here reasoning from the viewpoint of secular wisdom. The law of Moses didn't forbid giving or taking collateral for loans, it accepted this would happen (Ex. 22:25-27).

Another approach is to understand Solomon's positive comments about helping the poor as historical allusion to his father David. "The poor" would easily refer to David (1 Sam. 18:23; Ps. 34:6).

Pro 28:9 He who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination-
"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idoltary is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

Pro 28:10 Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, he will fall into his own trap; but the blameless will inherit good-
Both Solomon and Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1) doubtless had individuals in view, who were the subtext of this wisdom. But to describe the wise as "blameless" is an example of their over simplistic worldview. All have sinned, none are blameless (Rom. 3:23), as

David reflected in his Bathsheba Psalms. But Solomon had whitewashed his parents' sin, and knew nothing of the grace David had discovered at that time. The Lord's parables of the lost in LK. 15 may be seeking to deconstruct Solomon's attitude. The self righteous older son, who considered himself blameless, connects with the 99 sheep who "need no repentance". But "all we like sheep have gone astray", those 99 only thought they needed no repentance, and being so snug in their sheepfold actually only enhanced their sense of self righteousness, and that they were not in fact the lost. The phrase "inherit good" is only found again in 1 Chron. 28:8, where David says that this is to be the outcome for those who "seek" for obedience to God's ways. But 'seeking' is not being "blameless". None are blameless, but the spiritually minded seek for God's ways and will therefore "inherit good". Solomon totally lacked this humility and spiritual reality of David. And so did Hezekiah (see on Prov. 25:1), who never seems repentant for any of his failures [such as giving the gold of the temple to buy off invaders].

Pro 28:11 The rich man is wise in his own eyes; but the poor who has understanding sees through him-
Not being 'wise in our own eyes' is a major theme of Solomon's Proverbs (Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 26:12,16; 28:11). We are to recognize that there is no inherent wisdom in man; it must be taught to us from God's word. And yet we live in a postmodern world, where what seems or feels good to our own gut is taken to be the highest personal truth. This was what led Judah to condemnation (s.w. Is. 5:21), because trusting in their own opinions and gut feelings left them insensitive to God's word. Paul quotes the idea in Rom. 12:16; to be wise in our own eyes means that we ignore those whom we naturally consider worthy of being ignored. But that is not necessarily the way of the Spirit. But when Solomon lost his faith, he comments that whether a man has wise eyes or not (s.w.) is irrelevant in the face of death (Ecc. 2:14). He clearly conceived wisdom as only helpful for this life; he had no real personal faith in the resurrection of the dead or the establishment of the future Kingdom of God. And this led him to ultimately despise his own wisdom as futile.

Pro 28:12 When the righteous triumph, there is great glory; but when the wicked rise, men hide themselves-
The allusion was to the way that Saul "rose up" against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29), and David hid himself from Saul. The same word is used in :28. But this is a Hezekiah Proverb (see on Prov. 25:1). The reference would be the glorious triumph over the Assyrians, after the 'arising' of the wicked Assyrians which had led the Jews to "hide themselves". But Hezekiah likes to think that the Assyrians are the wicked, and the Jews were the righteous. He has the same overly simplistic worldview which Solomon also had, whose Proverbs are now being reused by him. For the prophets condemn the Jews at that time; there was only a tiny righteous minority, and the whole salvation of Zion at

this time was by grace and not their own righteousness. The "triumph" and "glory" was God's and not that of the Jews. See on :1.

Pro 28:13 He who conceals his sins doesn't prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy-
"Mercy" is the word for "compassion". But the basis for that compassion was to be Israel's repentance (s.w. Dt. 30:13 etc.). But God's compassion / mercy was often given to His people anyway, because they were His children, by grace. His compassion is therefore on the basis of His mercy and grace, rather than a proportionate response to steel willed human repentance and self reformation (s.w. Ps. 116:5). His compassion is actually always there for His children, even when they are in exiled punishment from Him (s.w. Jer. 31:20; 33:26). Solomon failed to perceive this grace, instead focusing solely upon the aspect of God showing compassion to those who are repentant (s.w. Prov. 28:13). He may have in view his father's confession of sins. For David uses the same phrase about how *God* had covered his sins (Ps. 32:1,5). But it was confession of personal sin which was so lacking in Solomon and Hezekiah, and was the basis for their spiritual undoing. It's one thing to know the theory of grace and repentance, another to actually personalize it and live and feel by it.

Pro 28:14 Blessed is the man who always fears; but one who hardens his heart falls into trouble-
This may be true, but Solomon ended up terrorizing his own people, allowing no opposition, beating them into submission (1 Kings 12:11), and thereby inculcating a culture of fear. And he was abusing wisdom such as this to justify that climate he wished to create for his own ends. Both Solomon and Hezekiah hardened their hearts in that they decided that they would maintain a set psychological attitude to spiritual things until their deaths. And so they did, as witnessed by Ecclesiastes and Is. 39:8.

Pro 28:15 As a roaring lion or a charging bear, so is a wicked ruler over helpless people-
The book of Proverbs has in view a bad ruler (s.w. Prov. 28:15; 29:2,12,26; Ecc. 9:17). And this bad ruler offers deceitful food (Prov. 23:3), which Solomon in Prov. 23 advises against eating. We need to recall that eating together was seen as a sign of fellowship and acceptance of each other within the same cause. Solomon may have in view Jeroboam, who clearly sought to usurp Solomon as king. Or he may be alluding back to the various people like Absalom and Adonijah who had feasted to celebrate their apparent usurping of David's throne. The LXX in Prov. 23:1-8 reads rather differently to the Masoretic Text, and speaks much of the evil of the ruler in view.

Pro 28:16 A tyrannical ruler lacks judgment. One who hates ill-gotten gain will have long

days-
"What hath the wise more than the fool?" (Ecc. 6:8) shows how effectively Solomon despised his wisdom; he lost sight of the Kingdom which it led to ultimately, and the God manifestation which it could enable in this life. He had written in his Proverbs that the ruler who lacks wisdom will oppress his people (28:16 AV); and although his wisdom remained with him right to the end, in terms of knowledge (Ecc. 2:9; 12:10), yet at the end of his reign Solomon was the ruler who did oppress his people. And he had gone on in Prov. 28:16 to warn against covetousness in a ruler, even though he went ahead with practicing every conceivable form of it in Ecc. 2. See on Prov. 8:6.

In the same way as Solomon criticized flirting with Gentile girls but then went and did this himself, so he said many other things in his wisdom which actually condemned himself. Thus "the prince that lacketh understanding is also a great oppressor" (Prov. 28:16 AV). Yet Solomon did oppress the people (1 Kings 12:11)- despite possessing wisdom. He insists that throughout his life, his wisdom had remained with him (Ecc. 2:9 RVmg.). So what does this indicate? Surely that the wisdom which he had did not affect his life practically, and thus it was as if he lacked wisdom completely. Mere possession of truth leads to great temptations- for like Solomon, we can reason that this alone justifies us in any behaviour.

Pro 28:17 A man who is tormented by having taken life blood will be a fugitive until death; no one will support him-
David's prayer of repentance and request to be saved from "blood guiltiness" (Ps. 51:14) is literally 'from blood'. He was a man of blood and was guilty of Uriah's innocent blood. David had asked for 'men of blood' to be slain (Ps. 55:23 s.w.), those who had taken the blood of the innocent (Ps. 94:21), and for 'men of blood' to be expelled from his presence (Ps. 139:19). And it is not at all clear whether all those Psalms were written before his sin with Bathsheba. God was trying to teach David that he was the type of person whom he condemned. And yet it is unclear if he learned that lesson. Solomon liberally condemns the man who sheds innocent blood (Prov. 6:17; 28:17), refusing to recognize that his much lauded father had done just this, and was only saved by grace and not by any obedience to wisdom. There is so little grace in the book of Solomon's Proverbs because Solomon had failed to perceive the grace shown to his father.

Pro 28:18 Whoever walks blamelessly is kept safe; but one with perverse ways will fall suddenly-
We wonder at the possible arrogance in assuming that he or any man can walk blamelessly. Only the Lord Jesus fits this. And yet this is the phrase used in God's command to Abraham and his seed (Gen. 17:1). It was only possible for Abraham to do so by his faith in imputed righteousness, by grace through faith. David only realized that

after he had to learn it through reflection upon the wonder of how God had counted him righteous after the sin with Bathsheba.

Pro 28:19 One who works his land will have an abundance of food; but one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty-
Solomon speaks often of how hard work will "satisfy with bread" (Prov. 12:11; 20:13; 28:19). David his father uses the phrase in the context of saying that being 'satisfied with bread' is part of God's gracious blessing (Ps. 132:15). We see here how Solomon became focused upon works, rather than faith in the blessings which come from Divine grace. And yet he uses the words his father had used; but he interprets them as justification of works rather than acceptance of grace.

Solomon repeatedly sees poverty as being the fault of the poor, and their refusal of his teaching of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 6:11; 10:4,15; 13:7,8,18,23; 24:34; 28:19; 31:7). Many of these passages are effectively mocking the poor, which Solomon condemns in Prov. 17:5. He fails to take his own wisdom, as we also see in his behaviour with foreign women. Again we see Solomon's works based approach to righteousness, and lack of grace; refusing to accept that we are all poor men before God, as David himself exemplified when he cried to God as a poor man (Ps. 34:6). But his much beloved father David was unashamed to say he was a materially "poor man" (1 Sam. 18:23); and Uriah, whom he wronged, is described also as a "poor man" (2 Sam. 12:1). The poor were to be defended and given to (Ps. 82:3), and the Bible is clear that poverty isn't necessarily a result of sin or unwisdom. But Solomon fails to appreciate this, so obsessed is he with works, and the idea that obedience to his anthology of Proverbs will make the poor prosperous, as if God's truth is a kind of wealth creation scheme.

Pro 28:20 A faithful man is rich with blessings; but one who is eager to be rich will not go unpunished-
This states clearly Solomon's position that the faithful are blessed in this life [note *"is* rich"], and the blessings for faith are riches. But this is simply not true to spiritual reality. The righteous are often poor, and the wicked prosper. And the blessings promised to Abraham were of forgiveness of sins and a future eternal inheritance of the earth at the resurrection of the body. And the patriarchs died without having received what God promised in this life. These most basic aspects of the Gospel of the Kingdom were not at all appreciated by Solomon nor Hezekiah. Hezekiah was blessed with wealth after his sickness, as was Solomon at the start of his reign; but hee is wrong to thereby deduce that he wasa "faithful" and the wealth was some kind of reward for that.

Pro 28:21 To show partiality is not good; yet a man will do wrong for a piece of bread-
See on :22. Solomon was famous for his wise judgment of the two prostitutes. He

showed no partiality in that judgment. And so again, whilst what he says is true, he is using Divine truths to justify himself. And he is also having a swipe at his competitor Absalom, who set himself up as the judge of Israel and yet showed partiality towards his potential supporters (2 Sam. 15:5,6).

Pro 28:22 A stingy man hurries after riches, and doesn't know that poverty waits for him-
Both Solomon and Hezekiah [after his deliverance from the Assyrians] were suddenly given great riches by God. They didn't have to seek wealth, because it was just given to them. And yet here they criticize those who seek wealth and are "stingy" in order to attain it. It's easy to criticize people in situations which we haven't been in, and to moralize against them. So whilst the Proverbs warning against seeking to become rich are true enough, they were clearly used by Solomon and Hezekiah as self-justification.

Pro 28:23 One who rebukes a man will afterward find more favour than one who flatters with the tongue-
This may be Solomon justifying how David gave favour to Nathan who rebuked him, whilst rejecting those who merely flattered. The same phrase is used of Ahithophel (Ps. 55:21). And yet Solomon uses the phrase about the danger of Gentile women who flatter with the tongue (Prov. 2:16; 7:5). But he honoured exactly those women. He is a stellar example of assuming that truth possessed does not need to apply to me. It is beyond hypocrisy; it is a psychological situation whereby the person considers themselves beyond the truth which they themselves assent to and teach to others, even demanding it of them. It is pride and conceit in their worst form.

Pro 28:24 Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, It's not wrong is a partner with a destroyer-
See on :3 and Ps. 62:10. David likely has in view Absalom and other brothers of Solomon who were seeking to usurp Solomon. The "destroyer" uses the same word which is applied to the Assyrians in Hezekiah's time (2 Kings 18:25; 19:12; Is. 51:13; 54:16). The Assyrians become the epitomy of evil and foolishness in Hezekiah's Proverbs. But he fails to take on board the fact that the Jews were as wicked as them. His simplistic dichotomies take no account of this.

Pro 28:25 One who is greedy stirs up strife; but one who trusts in Yahweh will prosper-
AV "He that is of a proud heart". Perhaps Hezekiah has in view the Assyrians, with himself as the prospering one who trusted in Yahweh (2 Kings 18:5). Again he is using these truths to justify himself.

Solomon correctly implies here that pride is an outcome of lack of faith, and this was exactly true in Solomon's case. His lack of faith in the future kingdom led him to be proud. An example of indirect reference to Solomon's pride is found in the way the record points a similarity between Paul and Solomon. Each was given wisdom, and each was given a Satan to humble them because of the way wisdom bloats a man's ego. The fact that we have 'the truth' in basic doctrinal terms - plus a fair bit of other Divine wisdom - really will tempt us to be proud. This is the sort of thing we individually and collectively need to exhort ourselves strongly about. Like us, Solomon knew theoretically the paramount danger of pride; he lists it as the most fundamental of the seven things God hates (Prov. 6:17 cp. 16:5,18).

Pro 28:26 One who trusts in himself is a fool; but one who walks in wisdom is kept safe-
"Trusts" is s.w. "trusted" in Prov. 3:5. Hezekiah is commending himself again (2 Kings 18:5). Trust in God is indeed predicated upon some form of "understanding" or 'wisdom', for faith comes by hearing the word of God; although not necessarily of the abstract, academic type which Solomon had in view. Trusting and having wisdom are parallel; to trust in Yahweh requires "understanding" and 'having wisdom'. For faith must have some basis, there are things which need to be believed before "faith" can be faith. Thus David predicates "trust" (s.w.) upon knowing Yahweh's Name, His character (Ps. 9:10). But David's "trust" in God was connected with his trust or belief in God's mercy to him regarding his sins (Ps. 13:5; 21:7; 32:10 s.w.). But Solomon doesn't seem to have had any conscience of personal sin, and so trust in the Yahweh whose lead characteristic is grace and forgiveness was not elicited within him.

Pro 28:27 One who gives to the poor has no lack; but one who closes his eyes will have many curses-
David predicates "no lack" upon fearing Yahweh and simply trusting in Him (Ps. 34:8,9). Solomon picks up the idea of the righteous experiencing "no lack" but instead claims it is a reward for generosity (s.w. Prov. 28:27). This is a parade example of the difference between David and Solomon. Solomon picks up his father's words and conclusions, but reframes them to justify himself and works rather than faith.

Pro 28:28 When the wicked rise, men hide themselves; but when they perish, the righteous thrive-
Saul 'rose up' against David (s.w. 1 Sam. 25:29; 26:2), and then evil men 'rose up' against David out of his own family (2 Sam. 12:11 s.w.), especially Absalom who rose up against his father (2 Sam. 18:31,32 s.w.). But David has a tendency to assume that all who rose up against him were arising against God. It's not always so that our enemy is God's enemy. Relationships and the hand of God in human affairs and relationships is

more complex than that. And David in Ps. 139:21 goes further, to assume that his hatred of people is justified, because they must, he assumes, hate God because they are against him. Solomon seems to make the same mistake when he alludes to such 'risings up' in Prov. 28:28. We must note that "all in Asia" turned away from Paul personally (2 Tim. 1:15), and yet according to the letters to the seven churches of Asia in Rev. 2,3, there were many faithful individuals amongst them.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 29

Pro 29:1
He who is often rebuked and stiffens his neck will be destroyed suddenly, with no remedy-
This sounds like a criticism of Solomon's political enemies in the family of Saul. Being broken without remedy (as in Prov. 6:15) suggests that what is in view is an earthen vessel smashed, a figure used in the prophets of the last judgment. Israel were likewise smitten without remedy at the hands of their invaders (s.w. 2 Chron. 36:16; Jer. 8:15; 14:19). Many of Solomon's warnings of judgments in the Proverbs come exactly true for the Israel whom he wrongly assumed would be his eternal kingdom. The "remedy" Solomon has in mind is giving heed to wisdom.

Pro 29:2 When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people groan-
This surely refers to the way the people rejoiced at Solomon's ascension to power (2 Chron. 9:7); again he is justifying himself. All the knowledge of God which we quite rightly seek after must be *personally applied*. The very possession of it and teaching of it to others can of itself make a man or woman demotivated to personally apply it. He foretold that the people would sign when a wicked man ruled them (Prov. 29:2 RV)- and they did "sigh" because of the heavy burdens he placed upon them (1 Kings 12:4). See on :4,12.

Pro 29:3 Whoever loves wisdom brings joy to his father; but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth-
At the end of his days, Solomon recognized that although he had loved the theory of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted his soul: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me" (Ecc. 7:23). His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom. In Prov. 19:12 he speaks as if his own wisdom was like the dew coming down- as if he felt that the mere possession of wisdom made him the Messiah figure which his father had so hoped for him to be in Ps. 72:6. And he says as much in Prov. 29:3: "Whoso loveth wisdom [exactly what Solomon was commended for doing] rejoiceth his father".

The Lord's parable of the prodigal son appears to deconstruct Solomon's approach however. For the son who squandered his wealth with prostitutes was the one who was finally saved; whereas Solomon seems to just give up with those he considered fools and sinners. Whereas the love of God is ever seeking and waiting for them.

Pro 29:4 The king by justice makes the land stable, but he who takes bribes tears it down-
Solomon imposed the "yoke" of tribute upon the people (2 Chron. 10:4), whereas he himself had warned that a king that imposes tribute [NEV "bribes"] on his people "overthrows" a country (Prov. 29:4 RV mg.). He saw it all as true- and yet it was far from him personally. See on :2.

Pro 29:5 A man who flatters his neighbour spreads a net for his own feet-
In the Hezekiah context, this would refer to Rabshakeh, the apostate Jew who knew Hebrew, used the Yahweh Name and knew the situation in Judah. His flattery was in offering the Jews horses, and to 'emigrate' to Assyria, to receive there a land like their own.

Pro 29:6 An evil man is snared by his sin, but the righteous can sing and rejoice-
As in :8, in the Hezekiah context (see on Prov. 25:1), the snare in view is the Assyrian encirclement of Jerusalem, which led to their own destruction. The joy of the people of Jerusalem is therefore in view. But Hezekiah likes to think that the Assyrians are the wicked, and the Jews were the righteous. He has the same overly simplistic worldview which Solomon also had, whose Proverbs are now being reused by him. For the prophets condemn the Jews at that time; there was only a tiny righteous minority, and the whole salvation of Zion at this time was by grace and not their own righteousness.

Pro 29:7 The righteous care about justice for the poor; the wicked aren't concerned about knowledge-
This sounds like a self justifying reference to the way Solomon judged the two prostitutes. LXX "A righteous man knows how to judge for the poor".

Pro 29:8 Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger-
"Stir up" is AV "bring into a snare". Hezekiah is referring to the judgments upon Jerusalem, encircled by the snare of the Assyrians. But he sees the "wise men" in Zion ass turning away God's wrath from the city. This was true to an extent, but he fails to engage with the massive dimension of God's salvation of Zion from the Assyrians by grace.

Pro 29:9 If a wise man goes to court with a foolish man, the fool rages or scoffs, and there is no peace-
LXX "A wise man shall judge nations". Solomon has in view how all the nations came to

him for instruction in justice, and Hezekiah was visited by the leaders of the surrounding nations after the destruction of the Assyrians. They see themselves as "the wise man", in self justification.

Pro 29:10 The bloodthirsty hate a man of integrity; and they seek the life of the upright-
Solomon again alludes to those who sought the life of his father, whom David in his Psalms describes as "bloodthirsty"; for it was the same family groups of Saul and Absalom / Adonijah who were the potential opposition to Solomon. He constantly uses his Proverbs to justify the integrity of David and himself, and to bring down his potential opponents.

Pro 29:11 A fool vents all of his anger, but a wise man brings himself under control-
LXX as GNB "but the wise reserves his in part". The implication is that the anger of the wise is still there and will be expressed later; perhaps a warning that Solomon the wise man would express in due course his anger with all who had opposed his father and himself.

Pro 29:12 If a ruler listens to lies, all of his officials are wicked-
The book of Proverbs has in view a bad ruler (s.w. Prov. 28:15; 29:2,12,26; Ecc. 9:17). And this bad ruler offers deceitful food (Prov. 23:3), which Solomon in Prov. 23 advises against eating. We need to recall that eating together was seen as a sign of fellowship and acceptance of each other within the same cause. Solomon may have in view Jeroboam, who clearly sought to usurp Solomon as king. Or he may be alluding back to the various people like Absalom and Adonijah who had feasted to celebrate their apparent usurping of David's throne. The LXX in Prov. 23:1-8 reads rather differently to the Masoretic Text, and speaks much of the evil of the ruler in view.

Pro 29:13 The poor man and the oppressor have this in common: Yahweh gives sight to the eyes of both-
In the Hezekiah context, "the oppressor" was the Assyrian and Judah were the poor man. But Hezekiah takes comfort as does David in the fact that all men are no more nor less than human. "Oppressor" is elsewhere "creditor", and may refer to the abuse of the poor by the rich in Hezekiah's time, a vice which the relevant prophets comment upon.

Pro 29:14 The king who fairly judges the poor, his throne shall be established forever-
Solomon is clearly referring to the promises to David, which he assumed were about him. He thought that because he had judged the poor harlots wisely, therefore he would be the promised Messiah. And this was just what David his father had hoped and expected of him. David had even asked Solomon to “do wisely” i.e. to show wisdom, in

order that the promises to him about Messiah would be fulfilled (1 Kings 2:3 RVmg.). So *this* was surely one of Solomon's motives in giving them justice and being 'wise'; he sought to live out his father's expectations and to fulfil the requirements of the Messiah figure.

"Established forever" is the language of the eternal establishment of the Davidic line through his Messianic son; which Solomon wrongly assumed must automatically refer to himself. David led him into this wrong assumption by dedicating "Kingdom" Psalms like Ps. 72 to Solomon. Solomon's fulfilment of the role of David's greater prophetic son was strictly conditional; and he failed totally to meet those conditions. But he uses his possession of wisdom, and teaching of it with his lips, as a reason to wrongly think that he fulfilled the role (Prov. 12:19; 29:14).

Pro 29:15 The rod of correction gives wisdom, but a child left to himself causes shame to his mother-
This appears to be an out of context allusion to David's words in Ps. 38:14, reflecting on his sin with Bathsheba, and how he felt unable to give reproof to others: "Yes, I am as a man who doesn't hear, in whose mouth are no reproofs [s.w. "correction"]". Solomon was obsessed with David his father, speaking hundreds of times of "David my father". But he failed to have his humility; he endlessly dishes out reproofs in Proverbs, indeed he sees his Proverbs as reproofs to people (e.g. Prov. 1:25; 6:23; 10:17; 12:1; 13:18; 15:5,31; 29:15); whereas David humbly felt unable to do so because of his awareness of his sins. And at the time David wrote the Proverbs, when he received wisdom at the start of his reign, he was sinning likewise [in essence] by marrying foreign women.

Discipline and punishment of the unwise is a big theme in Solomon's Proverbs. He took it to the extent of whipping his own people (1 Kings 12:11). This abusive attitude to people arose from his obsession with the idea that he had wisdom, and people generally are fools, idiots, unwise- and therefore he could abuse them. This abusive attitude to people is another outcome of believing that mere possession of truths about God justifies us, and declares all other people foolish, unwise and able to be legitimately abused by us. In contrast, the heart of God (as of David) bleeds for such people and wants to save them rather than gloat in their unwisdom and punish them for it.

This desperate avoidance of shame at all costs is a major theme in Solomon's Proverbs, and reflects his overall focus upon the external rather than the internal. He does indeed talk about the heart, but on balance I would conclude that he is more concerned about appearances before men than before God. And this led to his own spiritual downfall.

Pro 29:16 When the wicked increase, sin increases; but the righteous will see their

downfall-
The first part of this verse is axiomatic, and seems inserted in order to emphasize the reality of the second half, which is what Solomon wants to emphasize. Again Solomon implies that the downfall of the wicked is in this life, so that it is seen by the righteous. But this will only finally be true at the day of judgment, which Solomon has little place for in his thinking as he considers himself the ultimate judge of all. And it was this attitude which led him to major moral failure as he refused to judge himself; and there are many examples of such a path to ruin in Christian leaders.

Pro 29:17 Correct your son, and he will give you peace; yes, he will bring delight to your soul-
As will be explained on :19, this is true so far as it goes, and is a fair enough commentary upon the Mosaic instruction to stone to death a disobedient son. But Solomon took this idea of physical chastisement too far, to the point of not giving due weight to the power of God Himself through His wisdom to discipline or chastise a person.

Pro 29:18 Where there is no Divine revelation, the people cast off restraint; but one who keeps the law is blessed-
The parallel is between "Divine revelation" (AV "vision"), and "the law". But "the law" of Moses was already in existence and available. This seems another case of where Solomon effectively places his words, the Divine revelation of wisdom to him in a vision of the night, as being the effective replacement of God's law. And he often teaches that "blessing" comes from obeying his teachings about wisdom, rather than directing attention to keeping the covenants with Moses and Abraham which were to be the basis for Divine blessing.

Pro 29:19 A servant can't be corrected by words; although he understands, yet he will not respond-
Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or "instruction" coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such

correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Pro 29:20 Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him-
Solomon now creates a category lower even than "a fool". What he says is true, but he seems to rejoice in categorizing idiots and placing the majority of society in those categories. This all arose from a persuasion that he was the ultimately "wise" because he possessed Divine truth; and such hyper judgmentalism became narcissism, and was his undoing. Those who are proud and judgmental in their possession of "truth" are liable to the same path.

Pro 29:21 He who pampers his servant from youth will have him become a son in the end-
GNB "If you give your servants everything they want from childhood on, some day they will take over everything you own". This sounds very much like Solomon's reflections upon Rehoboam, who was his servant but who then tried to overthrow Solomon and take power. Again, Solomon states Divine truth, but as ever inserts his own agenda of self justification into the way he uses it.

Pro 29:22 An angry man stirs up strife, and a wrathful man abounds in sin-
LXX "digs up sin", perhaps Solomon having a swipe at anyone who dared to make an issue about David's sin with his mother Bathsheba. As noted on :21, he is always seeking to justify himself through the truth which he states and preaches.

Pro 29:23 A man's pride brings him low, but one of lowly spirit gains honour-
GNB "You will be respected". Solomon's idea is that the advantage of wisdom is that it gains the holder respect and honour in this life, whereas the fool will be brought low in this life. But the ultimate humiliation and honour are not now, but at the last day, of which he has little to say.

Pro 29:24 Whoever is an accomplice of a thief is an enemy of his own soul; he takes an oath, but dares not testify-
The sense is as GNB "He will be punished if he tells the truth in court, and God will curse him if he doesn't". Solomon's wisdom was given him so that he might wisely judge Israel. And he here outlines how he will judge, as the supreme judge of Israel. But as in

:23, he sees sinners as destroying themselves. This is true, but he assumes that sin and righteousness have their reward right now in this life; whereas this is only part of the story. Solomon usually omits the final and more important perspective, of God's final judgment and the eternal outcomes of human behaviour in His Kingdom.

Pro 29:25 The fear of man proves to be a snare, but whoever puts his trust in Yahweh is kept safe-
Solomon presents his father David's being 'set on high' (Ps. 69:29) as programmatic for the exaltation of all the righteous; he sees David as the epitome of the righteous, and thereby justifies the Davidic dynasty (s.w. Prov. 18:10; 29:25).

LXX "Ungodliness causes a man to stumble: but he that trusts in his master shall be safe" would be Solomon again seeking to inculcate personal loyalty to himself through his Proverbs.

But GNB is also helpful: "It is dangerous to be concerned with what others think of you, but if you trust the LORD, you are safe". Worry about image and the opinion of others is a lack of faith. Because

Pro 29:26 Many seek the ruler's favour, but a man's justice comes from Yahweh-
See on :12. Solomon was the judge of Israel, and through this Proverb he insists that his justice is directly from Yahweh. This may have been true initially, or insofar as he judged according to the Divine wisdom he had; but it led him to consider himself generally infallible. He thereby lost any sense of personal sin, possibility of failure or self examination. And this led him to personal spiritual disaster. This is still a Hezekiah Proverb (see on Prov. 25:1), and would refer to the ambassadors of the nations coming to Hezekiah to seek his favour.

Pro 29:27 A dishonest man detests the righteous, and the upright in their ways detest the wicked-
"Abomination" is the common word for idols (e.g. Dt. 7:25,26). Idolatry is here interpreted as things like pride and telling lies (:17). These seven things are the essence of idolatry. There is a recurring nature to them, just as idols got a grip on the mind of the worshipper. Solomon often uses the word for quiet, secret sins, words and the matters of the heart, internal attitudes and judgments (Prov. 11:1,20; 12:22; 13:19; 15:26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 24:9; 26:25; 28:9; 29:27). And this of course is the essence of idolatry in our age; this is the practical force to us of all Biblical teaching about idolatry.

LXX adds: "A son that keeps the commandment shall escape destruction; for such an one has fully received it. Let no falsehood be spoken by the king from the tongue; yea, let no falsehood proceed from his tongue. The king's tongue is a sword, and not one of

flesh; and whosoever shall be given up to it shall be destroyed: for if his wrath should be provoked, he destroys men with cords, and devours men's bones, and burns them up as a flame, so that they are not even fit to be eaten by the young eagles. My son, reverence my words, and receive them, and repent". The additions of the LXX are at times quoted in the New Testament. So we can take this quite seriously, as a reference to how Solomon and Hezekiah (see on Prov.. 25:1) feared their sons were going astray. And they both did, Manasseh especially. We also have an insight here into what Solomon thought kings had the power to do to their people, and he ended up therefore not reigning for God but for himself, and abusing his people (1 Kings 12:11).

PROVERBS CHAPTER 30

Pro 30:1
The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle-
In identifying Agur, we must give full weight to the statement in Prov. 1:1 that this book of wisdom sayings compiled by Solomon is all the wisdom of Solomon. I will suggest on Prov. 31 that the "Lemuel" is Solomon. And so likewise here. "Agur" means "the collector", and Solomon is clearly the collector or compiler of this work. The mention of his father makes little sense if he is totally unknown; so I suggest this is a code for "David".

The man said to Ithiel, even to Ithiel and Ucal-
These names are not attested as Hebrew personal names at the time, and so as noted above, we can understand them to be symbolic persons. The relevance of the meanings of their names may have been more apparent to the original readership than it is to us. But the text is hard to understand, and can be rendered "God is not with me, God is not with me, and I am helpless" (GNB); "The man declares, I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out" (ESV).

Pro 30:2 Surely I am the most ignorant man, and don't have a man's understanding-
LXX "For I am the most simple of all men, and there is not in me the wisdom of men". The style of these words of Agur / Solomon is different to the Proverbs generally. But this doesn't mean it is not by Solomon. It may be that this chapter is Solomon's reaction to the gift of wisdom he was given (see on :8), and the rest of the Proverbs are his transcription, with editing, of that wisdom. Or parts of it. He may here be reflecting as in :3 that he had not attended any school of wisdom, as was common for an oriental wise man. All his wisdom, therefore, was a direct gift from God.

Pro 30:3 I have not learned wisdom, neither do I have the knowledge of the Holy One-
As noted on :2, Solomon had not attended any school of wisdom, as was common for an oriental wise man. All his wisdom, therefore, was a direct gift from God. Hence LXX "God has taught me wisdom, and I know the knowledge of the holy". This could as well be "the holy ones". He has a place amongst the holy ones, the sages, although a young man; because God had given him wisdom.

Pro 30:4 Who has ascended up into heaven, and descended? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has bound the waters in his garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if you know?-
This is very much the language of the book of Job. The conclusion there, as here, is that no man has done these things. Only God, and not even Moses, despite his ascents and descents to God in Sinai. And that God had given that wisdom to His spiritual child

Solomon. Hence GNB "Have any ever mastered heavenly knowledge? Have any ever caught the wind in their hands? Or wrapped up water in a piece of cloth? Or fixed the boundaries of the earth? Who are they, if you know? Who are their children?".

It is tempting to see in this verse a prophecy of the Lord Jesus. The language of ascending and descending is that of God manifestation and theophany. And this theophany comes to its ultimate revelation in the Son of God, whose name was not then known. For He is made of God "wisdom" to us (1 Cor. 1:24).

Pro 30:5 Every word of God is flawless. He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him-
"Every word of God proves true" (ESV). This is very much the sentiment of David in Ps. 119, expressing faith that his promised kingship would come about because God's word would come true. And Solomon likewise saw his kingship as due to the fulfilment of the word of God promised to David. Hezekiah likewise saw his kingship and survival as king as the fulfilment of God's word to Isaiah. The fulfilment of those prophetic words had involved God being a shield to those who trusted in His prophetic word.

Pro 30:6 Don't you add to His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar-
This is alluded to in Rev. 22:19. Solomon may have in mind those who might try to add to the promises to David in order to justify their power grabs or taking of his throne from him. Always in Proverbs Solomon seems to use God's truths to bolster himself and his position of power, just as can be done today.

Pro 30:7 Two things I have asked of You; don't deny me before I die-
LXX "take not favour from me before I die". This could imply that Solomon felt he as David's Messianic son [as he liked to imagine himself] was covered by grace / Divine favour all his days. And this led him to behave in the unspiritual way he did in his private life.

Pro 30:8 Remove far from me falsehood and lies. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me-
Even if Agur isn't Solomon (but see on :1), the words of Agur were selected by Solomon for inclusion in his anthology. Solomon is here alluding to the way that he did not ask for riches, but wisdom (see on :2); and was rewarded with the gift of riches. But this is but false humility. For he boasts about his riches in Prov. 14:24 "The crown of the wise is their riches, but the folly of fools crowns them with folly". It was Solomon who was the king and wore the ultimate crown in his society. And he implies that his fantastic riches were a result of his wisdom, and that his pattern should be followed by others. But he fails to remember that his desire for wisdom was recognized by God in that He gave Solomon riches. Those riches were a gift from God, by grace, and not acquired or

generated by his own application of wisdom (1 Kings 3:13). He therefore misused his possession of wisdom and experience of grace to justify himself, and present himself as a self made man; when he was not that at all.

Pro 30:9 lest I be full, deny You, and say, 'Who is Yahweh?', or lest I be poor, and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God-
But this is what happened to Solomon, as it did to Hezekiah. When he was "full", his wives turned his heart away from Yahweh, and he wrote the denial of true faith which we have in Ecclesiastes.

Pro 30:10 Don't accuse a servant along with his master, lest he curse you, and you be held guilty-
This may be a reference to Rehoboam, Solomon's trusted servant who then turned against him. This is why the Proverbs have much to say about servants. Solomon would be asking that the exiled Rehoboam not be seen as representative of himself. And he threatens that he as the master will then curse any who did so. But LXX has simply "Deliver not a servant into the hands of his master". This would be tacit admission that there were unreasonable masters, and an abused slave had the right to run away.

Pro 30:11 There is a generation that curses their father, and doesn't bless their mother-
Solomon may be alluding to his half brother Absalom and others in the family who had revolted against David their father, and who were against Solomon's kingship. This means that Solomon is here using Divine truths with a subtext of justifying his own rulership and lineage through David. And this is always a temptation to any who have God's truth; to use it for their own justification. LXX "A wicked generation" is a phrase quoted by the Lord Jesus about the Israel of His day and the last days. Attitudes to family life and parents are seen as the litmus indicator of wickedness.

Pro 30:12 There is a generation that is pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness-
LXX "A wicked generation"; see on :11. The idea of being washed from their filth is alluded to by Peter in 2 Pet. 2:22. Solomon ended up abusing his people, whipping and beating them because he considered them fools (1 Kings 12:11). He seems to imply here that his generation were impure, filthy and therefore worthy of such treatment. The heart that bleeds for sinners will be ever seeking to save them, not categorizing them in various compartments of wickedness and then mocking and judging them, as Solomon does in the Proverbs.

Pro 30:13 There is a generation, oh how proud are their eyes! Their eyelids are lifted up-
"A proud look" is exactly what Solomon's father David didn't have (s.w. Ps. 131:1). He is justifying him, and the word for "lifted up" is a theme here (:13,21,32). It is that used to refer to the various attempted coups against David and Solomon (e.g. 2 Sam. 18:28; 20:21; 1 Kings 11:26). But :32 uses the same word for "lifted up" and appears to offer the chance of repentance and forgiveness to such people, which is not typical of Solomon, who generally condemns all opposition to him or David.

This however is the language used in Song of Solomon of the eyes of his illicit Gentile girlfriend (Song 4:1,9; 7:4); indeed he was overcome by her eyes (Song 6:5).

Pro 30:14 There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and their jaws like knives, to devour the poor from the earth, and the needy from among men-
Even if Agur isn't Solomon (but see on :1), the words of Agur were selected by Solomon for inclusion in his anthology which is the book of Proverbs. The language here is very similar to that used by David about his persecution by Saul. Solomon may be implying that that "generation" continued, it was the same group who opposed his kingship.

Pro 30:15 The leach has two daughters: 'Give, give'. There are three things that are never satisfied; four that don't say, 'Enough:'-
LXX "The horse-leech had three dearly-beloved daughters: and these three did not satisfy her; and the fourth was not contented so as to say, Enough"; GNB "A leech has two daughters, and both are named "Give me!"". The leach was a blood sucker. But Solomon's criticisms of animals in :19 (see note there) are because he likens bad women to them. He appears to have in mind a particular woman, perhaps one he codenames Aluqah [translated "leach"], who he found insatiable, along with her daughters. See on :16. Solomon had over 1000 wives, and slept with whom he chose. But he finds this particular woman and her daughters have broken his heart and irritate and anger him because they are so insatiable. Solomon, the apparently powerful over women, becomes ensnared by them, as he laments in Ecc. 7:26.

Pro 30:16 Sheol; the barren womb; the earth that is not satisfied with water; and the fire that doesn't say, 'Enough'-
Solomon's 1000 wives would not have seen much of him. He slept with a girl he fancied, and she became his wife, shut up in the harem and perhaps never called for again. And so she was left without children, a barren womb being like a parched land, with an ever burning fire of resentment against him which as it were burnt to the grave, *sheol*. Solomon, the apparently powerful over women, becomes ensnared by them, as he laments in Ecc. 7:26.

Pro 30:17 The eye that mocks at his father, and scorns obedience to his mother: the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, the young eagles shall eat it-
We will read in Prov. 31 of Bathsheba's commands to Solomon about women and wine. But he scorned obedience to this.

Pro 30:18 There are three things which are too amazing for me, four which I don't understand-
The things listed in :19 all leave no trace of their path or movement. And they all point forward to the way of an adulterous woman (:20). Throughout Proverbs, Solomon is very hard on women and the behaviour of prostitutes and adulterous women. It's quite an obsession with him, and he expresses great bitterness at them, confessing here that their behaviour is beyond even his understanding. Yet he had every woman he fancied, with a harem of 1000 women. But he is so bitter against women who commit adultery. It was inevitable that those women became adulterous, and would hardly remain faithful to Solomon. He likely never saw most of them in the course of a year. And their adultery, as he imagine or fears it, becomes so painful for him. And yet it was the direct result of his unbridled lust in taking so many wives. He who considered himself in power over women was in fact revealed as powerless before them.

Pro 30:19 The way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent on a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maiden-
These things all leave no trace. "The way of a man *within* a woman" (Heb.) would refer to the sexual act. As discussed on :18, Solomon lived in fear that his many wives were adulterous but with such large numbers, he could never actually prove it. If a king slept with a woman, she became his wife, and was therefore shut up in the harem, perhaps never to be called for by the king ever again. And yet Solomon therefore lived in fear of those women, because he suspected them of adultery but could never prove it as there was no outward sign of it, just as birds, snakes and ships leave no evidence of their path. His reference to the ship in the midst of the ocean may be a wry commentary upon how his mother had described his ideal wife (Prov. 31:14).

Pro 30:20 So is the way of an adulterous woman: she eats and wipes her mouth, and says, 'I have done nothing wrong'-
LXX "who having washed herself from what she has done, says she has done nothing amiss". There is a strange connection with Bathsheba ritually washing herself *before* David slept with her (2 Sam. 11:4). This may be some psychological reflection of the way Solomon continually seeks to whitewash the sin of his father David with his mother Bathsheba. "Wipes her mouth" is GNB "takes a bath". The woman has a quasi spiritual image to her, as found in the whore of Prov. 7 who likewise outwardly appears ritually

obedient to the Mosaic law. In the Song of Solomon, Solomon describes his illicit Gentile girlfriend in the language of Israel and Mosaic laws; he fell for the very kind of woman he so bitterly curses here. Again we see that he comes the parade example of a man who does the very opposite of the truth he has received from God. This is a stage beyond mere hypocrisy; it is the narcissism of someone playing God, who considers themselves personal obedience to the Divine principles they teach. And this is for all time an acute temptation to those who have God's truth, especially in the area of sexuality.

Pro 30:21 For three things the earth trembles, and under four, it can't bear up-
The idea is that these are things which should not lifted up in the earth / *eretz* promised to Abraham. The word for "bear / lift up" is that used to refer to the various attempted coups against David and Solomon (e.g. 2 Sam. 18:28; 20:21; 1 Kings 11:26).

But LXX "By three things the earth is troubled, and the fourth it cannot bear". This would make the handmaid of :23 the most awful of all these scenarios.

Pro 30:22 For a servant when he is king; a fool when he is filled with food-
GNB "a slave who becomes a king". The allusions would be to Jeroboam Solomon's servant who wanted to become king (1 Kings 11:26); and to Nabal the fool. If Solomon had truly trusted in God's prophetic word to establish his throne, he wouldn't have needed to continually be fencing and defending himself by sniping at his opponents through his Proverbs.

Pro 30:23 for an unloved woman when she is married; and a handmaid who is heir to her mistress-
The allusions are to Leah, and then to Hagar and Sarah. Solomon's harem of 1000 women doubtless contained many who felt they were "unloved women". He sees truth, but lived otherwise. But LXX "or if a maid-servant should cast out her own mistress; and if a hateful woman should marry a good man". It was the mistress Sarah who cast out Hagar the maidservant; the LXX suggests that if it were the other way around, this would have been a terrible thing. Solomon's justification of Sarah's actions seems wrong; for she was not right in what she did, even though the incident is given typical significance in Galatians 4.

Pro 30:24 There are four things which are little on the earth, but they are exceedingly wise-
LXX "Wiser than the wise". I will note on :26 that all the animals mentioned are seen by Solomon as representative of himself as a hard worker; and he sees himself as the preeminently wise one in Israelite society.

Pro 30:25 The ants are not a strong people, yet they provide their food in the summer-
Even if Agur isn't Solomon (but see on :1), the words of Agur were selected by Solomon for inclusion in his anthology of Proverbs. This statement repeats that of Solomon in Prov. 6:6. The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 1, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

Pro 30:26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks-
"Rock badgers" (ESV), "rabbits" (LXX). To have a house in rocks was an allusion to royal palaces (Is. 33:16) and summer palaces carved in mountains. Solomon had such a palace in the Lebanon mountains, and likewise the royal palaces of Babylon (Jer. 51:25) and Edom (Obadiah 3) were houses in the rocks. Allusions to kings and their palaces continue in :27,28. The idea is that by hard work (see on :26), a man rises up from lowly beginnings to the throne and palace. This is Solomon presenting himself as having attained his throne and palaces by his hard work. But he misses the point; that he was exalted by grace, because he was David's son, and was given wealth and glory by God, and not because of his hard work.

Pro 30:27 The locusts have no king, yet they advance in ranks-
LXX "march orderly at one command". As explained on :26, the idea is that a tiny locust works his way up to be a leader. Or just reading it as it stands, the idea may be that unity is not brought about by human leadership but by obedience to God's word; which Solomon sees as being taught by his mouth through his Proverbs.

Pro 30:28 You can catch a lizard with your hands, yet it is in kings' palaces-
LXX "is easily taken". As explained on :26, the idea is that a tiny lizard works his way up to be a king in a palace, even though earlier it would have been easy for men to catch him. But he persevered and got into the palace. This is Solomon presenting himself as having attained his throne and palaces by his hard work. But he misses the point; that he was exalted by grace, because he was David's son, and was given wealth and glory by God, and not because of his hard work.

Pro 30:29 There are three things which are stately in their march, four which are stately in going-
"Stately" implies these animals are to be compared to kings in regal procession; and as noted on :30, Solomon clearly has himself in view, as in all these allusions to animals.

Pro 30:30 The lion, which is mightiest among animals, and doesn't turn away for any-
Solomon again has himself in view, seeing himself as the lion of the tribe of Judah against whom there can be no opposition as king of beasts. But this language was only finally appropriate for the Lord Jesus as the true Messianic son of David (Rev. 5:5). See on :32. Solomon assumed the promises to David were totally fulfilled in him, and he was perhaps encouraged in this by David's fantasy that this would be the case in Ps. 45,72 etc. He whitewashed in his own mind the much laboured conditional nature of those promises; he assumed he was right and acceptable before God. This is a particular tendency for some, although not for all. For some struggle to have any positive view about themselves, whereas others are over confident and arrogant in their self perceptions.

Pro 30:31 the greyhound, the male goat also; and the king against whom there is no rising up-
This is Solomon implying that revolt against his kingship is futile; there can be no opposition to him, and any such rising up against him or his father was the work of fools without wisdom (see on :30,32). LXX "a cock walking in boldly among the hens, and the goat leading the herd; and a king publicly speaking before a nation". ESV "a king whose army is with him".

Pro 30:32 If you have done foolishly in lifting up yourself, or if you have thought evil, put your hand over your mouth-
The one who exalted or 'lifted up' himself would refer to the various attempted coups against David and Solomon (e.g. 2 Sam. 18:28; 20:21; 1 Kings 11:26). "Thought evil" is the word used by David for his enemies within the camps of Saul and Absalom (Ps. 10:2,4; 21:11; 31:13; 37:7). See on :13,21. But :13 uses the same word for "lifted up"; but here in :32 there is the apparent chance of repentance [with hand over mouth] and forgiveness to such people. But this is not typical of Solomon, who generally condemns all opposition to him or David.

On one hand Solomon condemns mirth (Ecc. 7:4; Prov. 20:32 LXX "If thou abandon thyself to mirth, and stretch forth thine hand in a quarrel, thou shalt be disgraced"). But this is exactly what Solomon did in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. He refused to accept his own wisdom. It was merely a teaching position, and he felt the need to empirically find its

truth. he failed to personalize the wisdom he taught, and therefore turned away in the end .

Pro 30:33 For as the churning of milk brings forth butter, and the wringing of the nose brings forth blood; so the churning of wrath brings forth judgment-
GNB "If you hit someone's nose, it bleeds. If you stir up anger, you get into trouble". This is as ever true as far as it goes. But the Proverbs often seek to instill a spirit of conservatism into Israelite society, which would quash opposition, criticism of the leadership and thereby leave Solomon established in power. If he had truly trusted in the promises about the Divine establishment of David's throne, he wouldn't have needed such intrigues.

PROVERBS CHAPTER 31

Pro 31:1
The words of king Lemuel; the oracle with which his mother warned him-
Bathsheba was a spiritual woman, married to a man of faith (Uriah). Solomon (the Lemuel of the book of Proverbs) was brought up by a very spiritual mother. The spiritual woman of Prov. 31 whom Solomon likens to his mother is a cameo of the sort of woman Bathsheba was. Note how Lemuel's mother (Bathsheba) warns her son not to give his strength to women, to those relationships which destroy kings. She surely said this with a sideways glance back at her own failures with David.

The poem is an acrostic, each verse starting with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet. In terms of style, it's been observed that this was typical of the "heroic hymn." "It is the kind of hymn that typically would celebrate a soldier's mighty deeds and his victory in battle" [Waltke]. Domestic work is being lifted up to heroic status, which was not at all how the male based societies of the time saw it. Her "strength" (:17,25), fearlessness (:21,25) etc. are praised, and the Hebrew word translated "virtuous" is elsewhere translated as army, [military] company, band of soldiers, valiant, strong, war etc. (Ex. 14:4, 9, 28; Num. 31:14; 2 Sam. 8:9; Is. 10:14; Mic. 4:13). The military sense there in the word is clear. The word is used three times in Ruth; Boaz was a man of "power"(Ruth 2:1), and Ruth is called a "virtuous" woman who would "do mightily" (Ruth 3:11; 4:11). She appears to be the prototype of the woman of Prov. 31, but she is given the same title as the powerful Boaz. The point is, the strength was in different ways, but none the same, the power was joint between them, they were in a spiritual and psychological sense as equals. It appeared, of course, that Elimelech was the man of power and Ruth was the powerless female Gentile. But the record is making the point that they were equals.

LXX removes all reference to "Lemuel": "My words have been spoken by God—the oracular answer of a king, whom his mother instructed". In this case, Solomon is claiming that he is inspired by God because his mother was.

Pro 31:2 Oh, my son! Oh, son of my womb!-
LXX "What wilt thou keep, my son, what? the words of God. My firstborn son, I speak to thee". Solomon was Bathsheba's firstborn son by David; perhaps because she was more of a daughter to Uriah, he had not had children by her (2 Sam. 12:3).

Oh, son of my vows!-
GNB "the answer to my prayers". After the loss of her first son by David, she would have prayed and vowed to God to give any other son to God.

Pro 31:3 Don't give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings-

Prov. 31 was perhaps written by Bathsheba as advice to her son Lemuel (Solomon). In it she seems to be rebuking Solomon for his ways; or giving him commands which he broke, despite all his emphasis in Proverbs upon obeying the law of ones mother: "What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to them that destroy kings (i.e. women and adultery; surely this was said with a sideways glance at her own relationship with David)" (Prov. 31:3 RVmg). Prov. 31 goes on to describe the ideal wife for Solomon, based upon his mother; exactly the opposite of the women Solomon married. We are left to imagine Bathsheba's grief of mind, especially recalling her husband's special pride in Solomon. This was not just a case of protective mother checking out Solomon's girlfriends in a disapproving manner. She knew, through the inspiration of the Spirit as well as her own personal experience, the seriousness of messing with women. And she could see her ever so spiritual son going wrong in this.

He praises his mother for teaching him not to give his strength, "nor to them [women] who destroy kings" (Prov. 31:3 RVmg.), and yet he must surely have perceived that this was just what he had done. But he praises his mother for having taught him this truth; all the emphasis was upon academic teaching and acceptance of positions, rather than upon personalizing these things.

Pro 31:4 It is not for kings, Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes to say, 'Where is strong drink?'-

Her warnings against alcohol were totally disregarded by Solomon in his later search for fulfilment in the flesh (Ecc. 2:3). Despite condemning those who ignore the teaching of their mother, Solomon did just that. He was a stellar example of a man who does the very opposite of the truth he has received from God. This is a stage beyond mere hypocrisy; it is the narcissism of someone playing God, who considers themselves personal obedience to the Divine principles they teach. And this is for all time an acute temptation to those who have God's truth, especially in the area of sexuality and addiction.

Pro 31:5 lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice due to anyone who is afflicted-

She pleads with him not to drink lest he "pervert the judgment of any that is afflicted" (:5 AV). And yet on his death, the complaints about his hard oppression of the people indicate that he did just this (due to his taking to drink, according to Ecc. 2:3?). And yet Prov. 31 has Solomon praising his mother for her wisdom; he was proud of his mum, and yet he so miserably disobeyed her. He seems to have a mindset in which he felt it was impossible for him to be disobedient. The all important thing for him was who his parents and pedigree were.

LXX "forget wisdom, and be not able to judge the poor rightly". Perhaps he has this in mind when he protests in Ecc. 2:9 that his wisdom remained with him. He didn't forget it, in that he still remained aware of it on a theoretical, intellectual level. But he was not thereby justified; and he failed to judge the poor rightly in that he whipped them and abused his people (1 Kings 12:11).

Pro 31:6 Give strong drink to him who is ready to perish; and wine to the bitter in soul- Bathsheba's appeal is for Solomon not to act like one who has no hope for future life, nor as one "bitter in soul". But he takes to alcohol in Ecc. 2:3 exactly because all his wisdom had taken no personal lodgment within him and he failed to have the perspective of eternity in God's Kingdom. It was those who followed David who were described as "bitter in soul" because of their sharing David's afflictions (1 Sam. 22:2; 2 Sam. 17:8). But David himself despaired of his men being like that; Solomon was to act as king, assured of God's love and final salvation, and not as David's initial followers and those condemned by Divine judgment (Ez. 27:31 s.w.). Uriah, Bathsheba's first husband, would have been amongst them and she knew their mindset. Hezekiah uses the same phrase about himself in his final 15 years of life (Is. 38:15), when as often noted (see on Prov. 25:1), he followed the sad path of Solomon.

Pro 31:7 let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more- By taking to drink (Ecc. 2:3), Solomon was acting as if he was a poor, miserable man with no wealth. This is the basis of so much destructive behaviour; a refusal to accept what God has blessed us with. Solomon repeatedly sees poverty as being the fault of the poor, making it parallel here with "misery" as if poverty is the worst calamity. He sees poor people as poor due to their refusal of his teaching of wisdom (s.w. Prov. 6:11; 10:4,15; 13:7,8,18,23; 24:34; 28:19; 31:7). Many of these passages are effectively mocking the poor, which Solomon condemns in Prov. 17:5. He fails to take his own wisdom, as we also see in his behaviour with foreign women. Again we see Solomon's works based approach to righteousness, and lack of grace; refusing to accept that we are all poor men before God, as David himself exemplified when he cried to God as a poor man (Ps. 34:6). But his much beloved father David was unashamed to say he was a materially "poor man" (1 Sam. 18:23); and Uriah, whom he wronged, is described also as a "poor man" (2 Sam. 12:1). The poor were to be defended and given to (Ps. 82:3), and the Bible is clear that poverty isn't necessarily a result of sin or unwisdom. But Solomon fails to appreciate this, so obsessed is he with works, and the idea that obedience to his anthology of Proverbs will make the poor prosperous, as if God's truth is a kind of wealth creation scheme.

Pro 31:8 Open your mouth for the mute, in the cause of all who are left desolate-

LXX "Open thy mouth with the word of God, and judge all fairly". Solomon initially did this, as shown by his judgment of the two prostitutes. But Solomon finally departed from his mother's command to care for the poor and desolate (:9) by abusing and whipping his people (1 Kings 12:11), considering them all fools.

Pro 31:9 Open your mouth, judge righteously, and serve justice to the poor and needy-
Solomon liked to imagine that he was perfectly obedient to his mother's command to open his lips in right judgment. But he went further, to assume that whatever he spoke in whatever context was right and true (see on Prov. 8:6-8, where the same words are used). Bathsheba speaks as David does in Ps. 72, where he fantasizes that Solomon will be the Messianic king characterized by righteous judgment for the poor and needy. But she realizes that Solomon must consciously act like this, he must be obedient to her command about this matter. Whereas David, and Solomon, assume that merely by being the favourite son of David he is going to automatically be like this.

Pro 31:10 Who can find a worthy woman? For her price is far above rubies-
"More precious than jewels" is the very phrase used about wisdom in Prov. 3:15. The virtuous woman here is portrayed as the embodiment of the 'woman wisdom' with which Proverbs starts. Indeed Prov. 1:8 begins with an appeal to heed our mother's teaching, and concludes with Solomon claiming to have done so himself. Solomon respected Bathsheba his mother (1 Kings 2:19) and appears to be justifying her as the most wonderful 'wise woman' ever- and he did so in he context of the sons of David's other wives pretending to the throne and being his political opponents.
"An excellent wife who can find?" (ESV) is perhaps Solomon cynically observing that none of his wives were like her, similar to his comment to this effect in Ecc. 7:28, which uses the same word for "find": "... which my soul has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found". And yet, as noted throughout Prov. 31, he finally disobeys all the commands him, to the letter. He becomes like the man who for ever upholds his mother's Christian wisdom and grace, but acts in the opposite way.

Pro 31:11 The heart of her husband trusts in her; he shall have no lack of profit-
"No need of spoil" (AV) could imply that he will not be tempted to go looking for other relationships because he trusts in his wife. And that feature of trust in our partner is a unique glue which binds a relationship together. But I noted on Prov. 30:18,19 that Solomon was sceptical of his 1000 wives; he suspected them of adultery, but couldn't prove it. His heart didn't trust in them, and so he looked for other women. He tool whoever he fancied, slept with them, and thereby the girl became his wife, entered the harem, was maybe hardly ever called for again. And thus she was left without children

and bitter against Solomon. This was all a direct result of Solomon departing from the teaching of his mother on this matter.

Pro 31:12 She does him good and not harm all the days of her life-
A swipe at David's other wives from the household of Saul? Solomon speaks in Ecc. 2:3 as if he were on a journey of discovery as to what would be "good" for a man "all the days of his life"; and yet in Prov. 31:12 he spoke of how the way of wisdom and having a wise wife will bring "good" for a man "all the days of his life". Perhaps this is a tacit admission that Solomon had not had a wise wife; and it is also an admission of the way the wisdom he taught had taken zero lodgment in his own heart. It was all just theoretical truth. This is such a warning to us. Solomon, the apparently powerful over women, becomes ensnared and deeply harmed by them, as he laments in Prov. 30:15,18,19; Ecc. 7:26. This was all a direct result of Solomon departing from the teaching of his mother on this matter.

Pro 31:13 She seeks wool and flax and works eagerly with her hands-
The ideal wife for Solomon is presented as someone like him, hard working and industrious. This fits in with the obsession with works and achievement which fills the Proverbs. There is nothing wrong with it of itself, but there is no emphasis here upon faith in God and spirituality as the lead characteristic a man should look for in a woman.

Pro 31:14 She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar-
GNB "She brings home food from out-of-the-way places, as merchant ships do". The idea may be that she prepares a wide range of dishes for her husband; something unusual in a society which basically ate the same kind of food each meal. Solomon appear to allude to this when he likens his wives to merchant ships who leave no trace of their path, in that he suspects them of adultery but can't prove it (see on Prov. 30:19). He is admitting that his wives were simply not as his mother had suggested; but she had taught him to focus upon one wife, and he had ignored this.

Pro 31:15 She rises also while it is yet night, gives food to her household and portions for her servant girls-
Despite having female servants and a husband "in the gate" (:23), presumably wealthy, this woman gets her hands dirty with making things with her own hands (:19 etc.). The "portions" are really things to do, assignments. She becomes the basis of the Lord's parable of how He gives His servants tasks when He goes away. He was unafraid to take the description of a woman as a role model for Him as a male.

Pro 31:16 She considers a field and then buys it. With the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard-
The Lord Jesus spoke of the wise man buying a field with hidden treasure in it; and it is God who planted the vineyard of Israel. Again we see how the Father and Son are unafraid to take the description of a woman as a role model for themselves.

Pro 31:17 She arms her waist with strength and makes her arms strong-
Her body is characterized by muscles, with strong arms and waist. This is not what Solomon finds attractive when we find him praising his Gentile lover in the Song of Solomon. He finds attractive the very opposite of the woman presented here by his mother. The lover of his Song appears to be the very antithesis of the virtuous woman.

Pro 31:18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable. Her lamp doesn't go out by night-
GNB "She knows the value of everything she makes, and works late into the night". LXX continues Solomon's emphasis upon justification by works: "And she finds by experience that working is good". Solomon's romance with the Gentile woman of the Song of Solomon contains only praise of her outward appearance and choice of cosmetics and jewellery; there is no mention of her work or industrious characteristics, which his mother tells him to be attracted to.

Pro 31:19 she lays her hands to the distaff, and her hands hold the spindle-
The idea may be as GNB that "She spins her own thread and weaves her own cloth", rather than buying it ready made. Again, the woman of the Song of Solomon is absolutely different, arrayed in the clothing of Egypt and other imported adornments, rather than in clothes she has homespun.

Pro 31:20 She opens her arms to the poor; yes, she extends her hands to the needy-
She is to support her husband in his focus upon the needy (:8,9). But Solomon's Gentile girlfriend of the Song of Solomon is not at all characterized by this. David had seen himself as "poor and needy", needing grace after his sin with Bathsheba and its consequences (Ps. 40:17; 70:5; 86:1; 109:16,22). He wished Solomon to likewise have pity on the "poor and needy" amongst the Gentiles, those who had likewise repented (Ps. 72:13). And David was especially desirous to himself see the "poor and needy" blessed and accepted as he had been (Ps. 82:3,4; 113:7). It is our personal experience of needing grace which leads us to have a heart for those like us, the poor and needy. Any other motivation will ultimately not abide. Solomon appears to glorify his mother Bathsheba for likewise pitying the poor and needy (Prov. 31:9,20).

Pro 31:21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with scarlet-
LXX "Her husband is not anxious about those at home when he tarries anywhere abroad: for all her household are clothed". This again would be the basis of the Lord's parable about Himself as the householder who goes abroad "to a far country". As noted on :15,16, the woman is given a very high status; she is presented as completely managing the household herself in the husband's absence, rather than a household manager assuming that responsibility.

Pro 31:22 She makes for herself carpets of tapestry, her clothing is fine linen and purple-
LXX "She makes for her husband clothes of double texture, and garments for herself of fine linen and scarlet"- rather than buying ready made clothes. But this contrasts with what Solomon found attractive in his illicit Gentile girlfriend in the Song of Solomon. There may here be allusion to the materials of the tabernacle, as if domestic life is but an extension of life in the tabernacle and formal worship of Yahweh.

Pro 31:23 Her husband is respected in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land-
An allusion to Ruth and Boaz. The implication is that this respect is largely due to his wife and his domestic situation under her good care. This contrasts with attitudes then and now, where a man's domestic life and relationships aren't seen as significant compared to his performance in the job. But the qualification of New Testament elders likewise takes into account domestic life, because this is the litmus test of spirituality in practice.

Pro 31:24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and delivers sashes to the merchant-
LXX "She makes fine linens, and sells girdles to the Canaanites: she opens her mouth heedfully and with propriety, and controls her tongue". The impression is that rather than buying ready made clothes from foreigners, she makes her own clothes, and also sells her produce to other nations. This all contrasts with the woman Solomon falls for in the Song of Solomon, who comes over as a painted doll, clothed in ready made clothes from other lands.

Pro 31:25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, she laughs at the time to come-
LXX "and rejoices in the last day". Unlike Solomon, his mother Bathsheba realizes that life is to be lived in the perspective of a "last day" of judgment, when there will be eternal outcomes for how life is lived today. It was Solomon's failure to realize this

which led him to so much arrogance, and the hypocrisy and disobedience which comes from assuming that judgment day will not come at the last day.

Pro 31:26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, faithful instruction is on her tongue-
She is to likewise teach as her husband does. Again, a very high view of women is presupposed here, quite different to that held in society at the time. But we note that David so often talks about *God's* "law", using the word *torah*. But Solomon so often speaks of his own *torah,* and that of his mother and his wife, the mother of "my son" (s.w. Prov. 1:8; 3:1; 4:2; 6:20; 7:2; 13:14; 31:26). Yet elsewhere in the Bible, the well over 200 occurrences of *torah* are always about *God's* law. Solomon applies the word to his own teachings and that of his wife, and thereby plays God. whilst it could be argued that Solomon's teachings were Divinely inspired, all the same he ought surely to have spoken of them as God's *torah* rather than his own *torah*. This kind of playing God is seen so often in the teachers of God's people.

Pro 31:27 She looks well to the ways of her household, and doesn't eat the bread of laziness-
To eat the bread of laziness was and is a particular temptation for the wife of a wealthy leader. But Solomon was to look for a woman who would not be like that. Yet the impression we get of the girl he fell for in the Song of Solomon is that she was a "prince's daughter" who was not at all a hard worker.

Pro 31:28 Her children rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also praises her-
LXX "And her kindness to them sets up her children for them, and they grow rich, and her husband praises her". The 'setting up' of their children would be because of the wife. There may be some reference to the repeated emphasis upon God 'establishing' the line of David- if they were faithful. There was no way that a Gentile wife could achieve this, and yet Solomon married hundreds of them. He hardly praises his wives; Prov. 30:16-19 is full of suspicion of them regarding their possible adultery. In fact, Solomon is very down on women in Proverbs, assuming many of them are adulterous and no better than prostitutes. But it was his sleeping with whoever he chose and thereby making them his wives which led to this situation.

Pro 31:29 Many women do noble things, but you excel them all!-
Again we note the positive view of women by Bathsheba, noting that many women do noble things. This was all the more radical, being said at a time when men dominated the public arena and were typically associated with doing noble deeds. LXX "He says, "Many women are good wives, but you are the best of them all"". This is quite contrary to the spirit of Solomon's experience in Ecc. 7:26,27, where he as it were goes through all

his "many women" one by one, and can't say that a single one of them is "good". Bathsheba clearly has in mind that Solomon would have but one wife, whom he would praise as the best of all women. He totally rejected this ideal.

Pro 31:30 Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain; but a woman who fears Yahweh, she shall be praised-
Yet Solomon fell for the external beauty of the Gentile woman in the Song of Solomon. David fantasized about Solomon's marriage in Ps. 45:11, where he says that Solomon would greatly desire his Gentile bride because of her "beauty" (s.w.). But Bathsheba here says the opposite; that such beauty is vain, and her fear of Yahweh should be the basis of Solomon's attraction to her. Solomon took David's perspective, which was simply wrong.

Pro 31:31 Give her of the fruit of her hands! Let her works praise her in the gates!-
LXX "Let her husband be praised in the gates", as in :23. This is another allusion to Boaz, whose marriage to Ruth produced the line which led to David and Solomon. She is asking Solomon to continue in that spirit; but he didn't. Solomon failed to be the true spiritual seed of David because he didn't at all live in the family spirit which began with the marital example of Boaz and Ruth.

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: ECCLESIASTES

ECCLESIASTES

PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don’t fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the

wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 1

Ecc 1:1 The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem-

This first verse of Ecclesiastes is a prologue, and there is an epilogue to the book, also written by this Divinely inspired editor of the book. The epilogue is the key. The "preacher' argues that life is meaningless and spiritual endeavour is pointless because death is the end. And that is indeed how life is "under the sun". But what makes all the difference is belief in the resurrection of the body, judgment which gives moment to every human thought and action, and the eternity of God's Kingdom beyond. This is what makes all the difference. The book very cleverly leaves this crucial observation to the very end. And that is typical of the 'end stress' which we see so often in the Lord's parables, where the essential point is left until the very end. So Ecclesiastes leaves us finding it hard to disagree with "the preacher"... wallowing in the despair, apathy and depression which is the malaise of our age. Until... we accept that in fact life is meaningful if lived with the Lord, man's search for meaning has an answer- in Him and living in responsibility to His future judgment and Kingdom.

I will explain on :16 why this book is appropriate to Solomon as author, at the time when his wives had turned away his heart from Yahweh. The "preacher", the convener or gatherer of an assembly for teaching, could as well mean the compiler. He says he produced and set in order many Proverbs (Ecc. 12:9), and this confirms that Solomon is the "son of David" in view. His emphasis upon how he was "king in Jerusalem" suggests he considers his kingship there as a fulfilment of the promises to David, which he considered to be fulfilled in himself. The description of his indulgence in every building project, woman and avenue of human experience in Ecc. 2 can only really apply to Solomon.

But a case has been made for Hezekiah as the author. The huge amount of Solomonic language, and connections with Proverbs, Song of Solomon and his own recorded life history, would mean that I would still take Solomon as the author. But as explained on Prov. 25:1, Hezekiah had a great interest in Solomon, and edited his

Proverbs in Prov. 25-29. The author of Ecclesiastes "set in order many Proverbs" (Ecc. 12:9). This clearly connects to Prov. 25:1 recording that the men of Hezekiah copied out Proverbs. I have pointed out throughout that section the relevance of so much of that material to Hezekiah. Thus Prov. 25:19 "Confidence in someone unfaithful in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a lame foot" is the phrase is used of the Assyrian invasion (s.w. Is. 37:3). There are 130 proverbs following, matching the numerical value of "Hezekiah". This is what forges the connection between Hezekiah and a preacher of "wisdom".

The way Hezekiah followed Solomon's path to apostasy in later life would explain his interest in the book. And so just as he reused Prov. 25-29, as stated in Prov. 25:1, so he may have used Ecclesiastes, as he found it so relevant to his own situation at the end of his life. He too had turned away from God in his heart but still retained Divine wisdom- in terms of theoretical truth. Likewise the observation has been made that there is much language used in Ecclesiastes which is influenced by Persian, as if the book was rewritten in captivity. That too may be the case, although I would add that whatever the processes, it was all under the overall inspiration of God. Judah in captivity were as Solomon at the end of his life and Hezekiah in his last 15 years, and the book would therefore have been used as an appeal for their repentance from the vanity of the good life in Persia.

"Son of David" is several times used about descendants of David [not least the Lord Jesus, the "son of David"], and Hezekiah's descent from David is several times stressed. He was saved from death and from destruction by Assyria "for the sake of David [his father]". So it is applicable to Hezekiah and not only Solomon as the immediate biological son of David. Hezekiah did what was “right in the eyes of Yahweh, according to all that David his father had done” (2 Kings 18:3; 2 Chron. 29:2). 2 Kings 20:5: "... say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, ‘Thus says Yahweh, the God of David your father". The author was king over Israel (Ecc. 1:12), but Hezekiah tried to bring Israel and Judah together, offering sacrifice for "all Israel" (2 Chron. 29:24) and inviting "all Israel and Judah" to come to him for a Passover celebration (2 Chron. 30:1,18). However almost every king of Judah ends spiritually weak. None of them die spiritually strong, even if overall God may accept them [as with David]. This was to point up the need for the perfect "king of the Jews", the Lord Jesus.

God "left" Hezekiah, so that "he might know all that was in his heart" (2 Chron. 32:31). If the "he" is Hezekiah, then Ecclesiastes would make sense for him to be the author. For it is the frank assessment by a man of his own heart. And despite Hezekiah's initial blush of zeal for Yahweh at 25 years of age when he destroyed many idols, his heart was not with Yahweh but was in materialism.

Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9 have the author proclaiming that he is the greatest king, greater than all who ruled over Jerusalem before him. This is more relevant to Hezekiah than Solomon. 2 Kings 18:5 says that "there were none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him". The wealth of Hezekiah is stated clearly: "And a great number brought gifts to Yahweh to Jerusalem and precious things to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward” (2 Chron. 32:23). The mention of huge amounts of silver (Ecc. 2:8) fits with Isaiah's condemnation of Hezekiah: "Their silver has become dross, their best wine has become mixed with water and their princes are rebels... Their land is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures” (Is. 1:22,23; 2:7).

The mention of huge possessions of livestock in Ecc. 2:7 fits with 2 Chron. 30:24; 31:3: "Hezekiah king of Judah gave to the assembly 1,000 bulls and 7,000 sheep for Passover offerings, and the princes gave to the assembly 1,000 and 10,000... The contribution of the king from his possessions was for the burnt offering". Likewise "Hezekiah had very great riches and honour… stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds. He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance, for God had given him very great possessions" (2 Chron. 32:27–29). The building projects of Ecc. 2:4-8 match the archaeological discoveries from Hezekiah's time. The "pool" of Ecc 2:6 is the same word used of his tunnel or pool in 2 Kings 20:20- for which Isaiah condemned him, claiming Hezekiah did it in human strength without trust in God.

Hezekiah described his death as a departure, a going, a walking (Is. 38:10). The same term is used in Ecclesiastes for death (Ecc. 1:4; 3:20; 5:15; 6:4, 6; 9:10; 12:5). His conception of death as unconsciousness where man cannot praise God (Is. 38:10) is repeated in Ecc. 9:10-12. "My generation has been uprooted… like a shepherd's tent" (Is. 38:12) is the same word as in Ecc. 1:4, where he reflects that one generation passes and another comes. Hezekiah saw death as a breaking / shattering of his bones (Is. 38:13), and the same word is used in describing death as a shattering in Ecc. 12:6. Hezekiah sees death as "bitter" (Is. 38:15,17), and he does so again in Ecc. 7:26 "I find more bitter than death the woman ...". We of course note the common phrase "under the sun..." in Ecclesiastes, and wonder if this connects with how the shadow of the sun went back ten degrees for Hezekiah. He uses the same word for "shadow" in Ecc. 6:12; 8:13: "It shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he lengthen days like a shadow; because he doesn't fear God". It was Hezekiah whose days were lengthened by the shadow. He appears to see himself as having had this experience because he was righteous- when in fact it was by grace alone. It's so sad to read Ecc. 6:13 in this context: "who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he spends like a shadow?", or "who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his enigmatic life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?". The extra life he was given he felt was "vain", and in any case, the shadow of the sun was declining for him as the 15 years came to a close.

The writer of Ecclesiastes is the "preacher" (Ecc. 12:9), 'qoheleth', the one who addresses an assembly. The related term is used multiple times for how Hezekiah assembled the people and addressed them (2 Chron. 29:23, 28, 31, 32; 30:2, 4, 13, 17, 23, 24 (twice), 25 (twice); 31:18).

Ecc. 9:13-16 speaks of a city surrounded by invaders, saved by a poor wise man. As discussed there, this would be relevant to Isaiah and the siege of Jerusalem in Hezekiah's time. The passages that speak of oppression (Ecc. 4:1–3) and perversion of justice (Ecc. 3:16; 5:8) match with Isaiah's criticism of how things were under Hezekiah's reign. They are not particularly relevant to Solomon's reign. Hezekiah's wealth, both before and after the Assyrian invasion, was considerable.

So I suggest that Solomon was the original author, but the book was rewritten by Hezekiah with references to his own similar experience. But there is evidence from language and style that the book was further rewritten during the exile. And we can understand why. Life seemed pointless for the Judean exiles, God seemed distant, justice was not seen to be done. But the resolution of those concerns was again in the

epilogue- there will come a day of resurrection, judgment and God's eternal Kingdom. That is the answer to man's struggle with perceived injustice and God's apparent distance, to the point that it seems life is random event and spiritual effort is pointless.

Ecc 1:2 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher; Vanity of vanities, all is vanity-
Many attempts have been made to claim that Ecclesiastes is a kind of dialogue between a believer, or arguments for belief in Yahweh, and those for unbelief. But all these arguments for some kind of dialectic rather break down, in my opinion, because the Preacher himself here states, and repeats it often, that everything is vanity, including wisdom. Such statements are so global that they cannot really be as it were cancelled out by some other side in a dialectic. And there is no clear schema according to which we can discern which verses fall within which side of the supposed dialectic. It's true that there is a difference between the words of the Preacher and those of the narrator, but this kind of thing is common enough in autobiography. For Ecclesiastes is just that; chapter 2 speaks of Solomon's early kingship, and proceeds to conclude with the description of him in very old age in Ecc. 12. The overall thrust of Solomon's argument is clearly against commitment to God, which is to be expected seeing we know that in old age his heart turned away from Yahweh. The few verses which appear to contradict that are, I suggest, Solomon quoting his previous wisdom and mocking it as vanity. Some of the verses which mention "God" appear to reference Him with sarcasm (see on Ecc. 2:24,26; 6:12); and not as commending belief in God at all.

I suggest therefore that there is no such dialectic, but rather we are reading here Solomon's reflections upon his life, as an old man facing death. And this was at a time when the Scriptures tell us his heart had been turned away from Yahweh by his wives; and he died abusing his people (1 Kings 12:11). Seeing Ecclesiastes was clearly written in his old age, it was written at this time when he had turned away. Ecclesiastes therefore never mentions the title "Yahweh", there is no mention of Israel as God's people, nor really of the Mosaic law. If indeed this is a dialectic between faith and unbelief, then we would expect there to be such references to balance out the dialogue. But there is nothing of the sort.

I suggest that we are hearing Solomon straight up, telling it how he feels it to be, baring his heart. A heart which had turned away from Yahweh. There are some similarities between the book and Egyptian literature, not least an Egyptian work, *The Man Who Was Tired of Life*, written between 2300 and 2100 BC, where a man disputed with his soul whether life was worth living. Whilst Solomon's words are recorded by inspiration, this doesn't mean that the content of all that is said in Ecclesiastes is true; for there is a difference between inspiration and revelation, and his thoughts here are hardly a "Thus says the Lord". And so it could be that his Egyptian wives had introduced him to this literature and philosophy, and had indeed turned his heart away from Yahweh and towards this.

I noted throughout commentary on Proverbs that Solomon held God's truths in his mind and preached them; but his heart was far from them, he never personalized them, and his behaviour with women and in whipping his people was all a stellar denial of the truths which he knew and taught. It was beyond hypocrisy, beyond even narcissism, but rather a mindset which arose from assuming himself to be the Messianic son of David, and his kingdom to be the promised Kingdom of God on earth. As he came closer to death and his faculties failed, he ought to have realized his mistake, and looked forward instead to David's greater son, the Lord Jesus. But instead he simply preferred to conclude that for him, all these great ideas were bunk.

He made the mistake so many make; that "truth" is truth 'for you', 'for me'; rather than accepting that Divine truth is indeed absolute and global truth for all hearts at all times.

But his wisdom remained with him, and he still taught those truths, although they were far from his own heart. In this he is a valuable warning to all who hold God's truths; his apostasy, recorded for us in such detail with a unique insight into the psychology of those who turn away. This is the value of Ecclesiastes. Just as I will discuss on the Song of Solomon how we have in those songs a unique insight into the mentality of the man who flirts with those outside the faith. And Solomon may even have been self aware of all this on some level, for he concludes Ecclesiastes by saying that his words are intended as goads (Ecc. 12:11); the very observation that "all is vanity" is in fact a goad to action.

This suggestion is true to observed reality. It is not uncommon to encounter those who 'know God's truth' who live absolutely contrary to that truth in their private lives. And yet they are keen to teach that truth to others, even commending it to others, and critical of any attempts to as it were water it down. They may be the conservative hawks of churches or denominations; but they have utterly failed to personalize any of it. They have the Solomon syndrome.

Ecc 1:3 What does man gain from all his labour in which he labours under the sun?-
The Proverbs contain repeated condemnation of laziness. Lack of a zealous work ethic is a rejection of wisdom, according to Solomon. As Solomon explains in Ecc. 2, he was an active person, not lazy by nature. And yet he lacked spirituality. He claimed that his service of God was due to his spirituality, but it was in reality merely a semblance of serving God when it was really just reinforcing his own personality type. His mocking of the "sluggard" or "lazy one" is so frequent (Prov. 6:6,9; 10:26; 13:4; 15:19; 19:24; 20:4; 21:25; 22:13; 24:30; 26:13-16). But it is a reflection of his own works-based approach to righteousness; the 'wise' "do" good things, and the wicked don't do enough good things. Personal spiritual mindedness and relationship with God are simply not emphasized.

As members of His people, doing His will, the labour of our lives is *not* in vain, seeing it is done "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Paul seems to be alluding to the spirit of Ecclesiastes, which laments that all achievement and labour "under the sun", not "in the Lord", is so tragically vain; there is no sense of final achievement, and this nagging fear about the ultimate validity of life's work must plague all who live outside the sphere of God (Ecc. 1:9-11; 2:18-23). We could understand Paul as specifically disagreeing with Solomon's attitude that all endeavour is vain.

Ecc 1:4 One generation goes, and another generation comes; but the earth remains forever-
This is indeed proof enough that the earth shall not be destroyed, but is rather presented as the territory of God's eternal Kingdom. But that was likely not what Solomon had in view primarily; his idea was that just as he felt helpless in old age and that he had achieved nothing of lasting value, so humanity likewise comes and goes as if on an eternal stage. Solomon uses the Hebrews words used in 1 Chron. 16:17; 17:14; 2 Chron. 9:8 of how David's seed would remain forever. In Ecclesiastes, he rejected any idea that he would live for ever, claiming he had no idea what lay beyond the grave apart from the unconsciousness of death, and considering that any fulfilment of the promises to David had been in him and his kingdom. But now he was to die and his kingdom pass to a son whom he suspected of being a fool; and his heart had

turned away from Yahweh and toward idols. He could be seen as therefore mocking at the very promises which could have been for him the ultimate gospel of the Kingdom.

Ecc 1:5 The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, and hurries to its place where it rises-
In line with :6, the idea may be that for all its hurrying [Heb. 'panting'], the sun just returns to where it was. And in that Solomon saw a parable of himself. He had sought wisdom, thought he had it, and now jettisoned it for himself; and he was back where he was, no personally wiser. As noted on :4, he had rejected the hope of resurrection from the dead and a future kingdom of God on earth. And so he was left with the impression that the natural creation continues as it were on clockwork, headed nowhere. It is that lack of sense of direction and progress towards an end which is the tragedy of rejecting a knowledge of Yahweh and His purpose.

Hezekiah had been shown that the position of the sun was not in fact just a clockwork mechanism- a far greater light could change its effect and shadow. But now he concludes that even that great intervention of God in his life was just part of the time and tide of human experience. He rationalized the wonderful thing God had done until it no longer touched him. And so it is with man today.

Ecc 1:6 The wind goes toward the south, and turns around to the north. It turns around continually as it goes, and the wind returns again to its courses-
This sense of endless, pointless cyclical operation developed in :5-7 is really arguing that the entire natural creation is encoded with the same nihilism and vanity which Solomon felt in himself. He saw the world in the same way as he saw himself, and that is indeed how we are wired. But for those who have the hope of the Kingdom and an awareness of the work of God's Spirit within them, the outlook is different. They therefore and thereby sense within nature a yearning within it toward the day of God's Kingdom coming on earth, trembling in eager expectation and yearning for that day (Ps. 96:12,13; Is. 55:12; Rom. 8:19). The passage in Rom. 8 connects the work of the Spirit within believers with the work of the same Spirit in all of creation.

Hezekiah had so earnestly wanted more life. But now he concludes that life is just part of a series of cycles (:7), and therefore meaningless. He fails to accept that the time and tide of human history and the history of the planet will in fact be radically interrupted- by the establishment of God's eternal Kingdom through His Messiah.

Ecc 1:7 All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they flow again-

See on :6. For Solomon, his "wisdom" was merely knowledge. The promises to David, the hope of the Kingdom, had no personal bite for him. He muses that "there is a time" for everything (Ecc. 3:1-7), as if his nihilism led him conclude that all behaviour is somehow predestined, all is cyclical, nothing is ultimately new, and even God is caught up in this- for "God seeks again that which He has driven away" (Ecc. 3:15). As water goes around the water cycle (Ecc. 1:7), so everything repeats, things just happen to us (Ecc. 3:1-8), there will be no resurrection, no coming back (Ecc. 3:22 RV); and there is therefore no real point in endeavour (Ecc. 3:9). This attitude reveals a pathetic failure to let the knowledge of God dynamically impact daily life; there's no appreciation of the Spirit, of God's radical life co-joining with human life, of His mind meeting that of man. Leaving knowledge as mere theory, as so much

Bible study can too easily remain, is a dangerous thing. And Solomon is the parade example of it.

Ecc 1:8 All things are full of weariness beyond uttering-

He is really arguing that the entire natural creation is encoded with the same nihilism and vanity which Solomon felt in himself. He saw the world in the same way as he saw himself. LXX "a man will not be able to speak of them". And yet Solomon had spoken of all things by the wisdom given him (1 Kings 4:32,33), but now he says that the vanity of all human experience is beyond speaking of. Whilst Solomon retained his wisdom, he felt that it was not the full answer to the mystery of life; and the answer was, so far as he could see it, that all things are vain and wearisome. Life is not therefore particularly worth living. He therefore effectively renounced his wisdom, as we will note throughout Ecclesiastes. This is the attitude which arises when we fail to personalize wisdom, and refuse to accept that this life is not God's Kingdom; that is yet to come.

Hezekiah had so desired life- but found life without God was a weariness, incredibly boring, just existence. Isaiah had told Hezekiah that although secular young people would faint and be weary, those who fear God would renew their strength and run and not be weary in God's Kingdom (Is. 40:30,31). But Hezekiah had no Kingdom perspective. The complaint "I have laboured / been weary in vain" is met with the strong response "Yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God" for future recompense (Is. 49:4). This is Isaiah's response to Hezekiah's words here. Work for the Lord will be recompensed- in the future Kingdom. And then, "they shall not labour in vain" (Is. 65:23). But Hezekiah refuses that perspective.

The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing-

Solomon had spent his life ingratiating his senses, and this was his conclusion. *The* lack of "satisfaction" is a major theme in the descriptions of condemnation for those who break the covenant (s.w. Lev. 26:26). And it is the principle we must live by today; that the only satisfaction is in the things of God's Kingdom. Even in this life, the eye is not "satisfied" with seeing or wealth (s.w. Prov. 27:20; Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10). And those who seek such satisfaction from those things will find that dissatisfaction is the lead characteristic of their condemnation (Ps. 59:15). Tragically Solomon knew the truth of all this but lived otherwise; just as so many do who give lip service to the idea that the things of the flesh cannot satisfy.

It is possible to see Solomon as an anti-Christ, as well as a type of Christ; like Saul, he was both a type of Christ, and also the very opposite of the true Christ. This point is really brought out in Is. 53:11, where the true Messiah is described as being “satisfied” with the travail or labour of His soul, and will thereby bring forth many children. The Hebrew words used occur in close proximity in several passages in Ecclesiastes, where Solomon speaks of how all his “travail” or “labour” has not “satisfied” him, and that it is all the more vain because his children may well not appreciate his labour and will likely squander it (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:3). Likewise the ‘Babylon’ system of Revelation, replete with its feature of 666, is described in terms which unmistakably apply to Solomon’s Kingdom. This feature of Solomon- being both a type of Christ and yet also the very opposite of the true Christ- reflects the tragic duality which is so characteristic of him.

In Ecc. 2:18,19 he laments that his labours will achieve nothing; doubtless alluding back to his words in Prov. 5:10, where he says that the Gentile wife will make the young Israelite's labours meaningless. Sin never satisfies. “Hell and

destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20 RV), Solomon wrote in his youth; and then in old age, he came to basically the same conclusion, having spent his life working back to the truth that he had been taught in his youth (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8). And there are many men and women who have done the same. Those words of Prov. 27 are amongst the proverbs Hezekiah's men copied out. Hezekiah knew this but lived otherwise. Likewise the warning not to eat too much honey is in that same section, but Hezekiah effectively says that this is what he did. We all tend to be empirical learners; and yet this is the great power of God's word, that through it we need not have to learn everything through our failures; but we can receive His Truth, trust it, and simply live by it. Otherwise we shall be like Solomon…

Ecc 1:9 That which has been is that which shall be; and that which has been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun-
The knowing of God and His Son is not something merely academic, consisting only of facts. It is above all an experience, a thrilling and dynamic one. There is no "new thing under the sun" (Ecc. 1:9)- all in this world is born to roll downhill. And yet in Christ, all things are made new in an ongoing sense. The "new song" which his father David loved to sing (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1 etc.) reflected the sense that the movement of the Spirit results in our living in "newness of life". But for Solomon, all was as it were old and boring. He had no sense of the Spirit's renewing work within him.

David's life was full of grief, anguish and joy (2 Sam. 1:19-27; 3:33,34; 12:15-23; 18:33; 19:4; 23:13-17); whereas Solomon's life lacked any pathos, and he concludes that "what has been done is what will be done" (Ecc. 1:9). Because he sought to only replicate his father externally, he never experienced his very own and personal experiences and growth; he did what he perceived was right not because it was what *he* wanted, but because it looked smart, and appeared in line with his father. For those raised Christian, these issues are live and difficult. On a psychological level, it appears that those without personal experience, i.e. experience which is uniquely their own, fall into destructive behaviour- and Solomon would fit that pattern. R.D. Laing comments: "If our experience is destroyed, our behaviour will be destructive" (*The Politics Of Experience* (New York: Pantheon, 1967) p. 12). And it's been observed that increasingly, modern society is creating behaviours rather than experiences (Martin Marty, *A Nation Of Behavers* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1976)). Typical 21st century man or woman has the Solomon syndrome- focused upon others as their heroes, endless learning from others rather than through empirical, personal experience; adopting the conclusions of others without having personally worked them through; indulging in virtual experience [especially, these days, online] rather than actual experience. Both psychology and the Biblical example of Solomon teach that all this tends to self-destructive behaviour in the end.

The "new thing" had been prophesied by Isaiah: "Behold, I will do a new thing. It springs forth now; don't you perceive it?" (Is. 43:19). Jeremiah likewise would speak of how "Yahweh has created a new thing in the earth" (Jer. 31:22). Hezekiah had surely heard Isaiah's words. But chose to disregard them.

Ecc 1:10 Is there a thing of which it may be said, Behold, this is new? It has been long ago, in the ages which were before us-

The answer of course is that yes there is. The engagement of God in human life

produces something radically new, and this will come to full term in the establishment of God's Kingdom upon earth when the Lord Jesus returns. That was effectively what was promised to Abraham and David, but Solomon liked to think that he was the fulfilment of it. And so he failed to as it were sing the "new song" which his father David loved to sing (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1 etc.). But for Solomon, all was as it were old and boring. He had no sense of the Spirit's renewing work within him. History only appears to repeat because of human nature being such a constant factor; but the gospel of the Kingdom is that destiny is not dominated by human nature, but will be the result of God's radical intervention in the human narrative upon this earth.

Ecc 1:11 There is no memory of the former; neither shall there be any memory of the latter that are to come, among those that shall come after-

"Memory" is LXX "memorial". He may have in view his half brother Absalom's vain desire to build a memorial to himself (2 Sam. 18:18). It is the Yahweh Name, symbolizing His eternal purpose with the earth, which is the memorial which abides. But Solomon doesn't use the Name in Ecclesiastes. He was concerned about making a memorial from himself, of his own works, failing to have learned the lesson of Absalom. If he had seen his connection with the Yahweh Name and the longer term purpose of God, instead of assuming that his kingdom was God's Messianic kingdom, then he would have had a memorial. But in the book of Proverbs he sees wisdom as good only in that it gives a good name in this life. But now he was facing death and thinking of the passage of the generations, he concludes that it is vain because man has no lasting memorial in this world. And that is so; but human character is so significant to God that we shall indeed have eternal memorial at the resurrection of the body into God's Kingdom upon earth.

Hezekiah's response to Isaiah is in Is. 56:5: "To them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off".

Ecc 1:12 I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem-

Solomon speaks about him being King in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:1,12; Prov. 1:1) as if this was the ultimate fulfilment of the Davidic promises. Consider the implications of 2 Chron. 1:9: "O Lord God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth... give me now wisdom, that I may go out and come in before (i.e. lead) this people". Solomon was asking for wisdom because he thought that he was the Messiah, and he saw wisdom as a Messianic characteristic. He failed to realize that the promises to Abraham and David were only being primarily fulfilled in him (e.g. 1 Kings 4:20); he thought that he was the ultimate fulfilment of them (1 Kings 8:20 states this in so many words). His lack of faith and vision of the future Kingdom lead him to this proud and arrogant conclusion (cp. building up our own 'Kingdom' in this life through our lack of vision of the Kingdom of God).

Ecc 1:13 I applied my heart to seek and to search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under the sky. It is a heavy burden that God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with-

"Seek" is the word typically used of how Israel were to seek God, and David often

uses it in the Psalms. But Solomon didn't seek relationship with God, but rather sought knowledge. And here we have a profound warning. For in these days of wide Biblical literacy and access to tools enabling even laymen to search out the meaning of the Biblical text, we can so easily end up seeking knowledge of itself, however true, without coming to seek or know God in the Hebraic sense of finding legitimate, two way, live relationship with Him.

David spoke of *seeking and praising God's grace* with his "whole heart" (Ps. 9:1; 119:58; 138:1). Solomon uses the phrase, but speaks of being *obedient* with the "whole heart" (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 6:14) and applying the "whole heart" to the intellectual search for God (Ecc. 1:13; 8:9). There is a difference. The idea of whole hearted devotion to God was picked up by Solomon, but instead of giving the whole heart to the praise of God's grace, he instead advocated giving the whole heart to ritualistic obedience and intellectual search for God. This has been the trap fallen into by many Protestant groups whose obsession with "truth" has obscured the wonder of God's grace.

Ecc 1:14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a chasing after wind-

This may be true on one level, but it fails to account for the fact work *for God* will indeed endure and have eternal consequence, granted at the final day of judgment. But this perspective is totally denied by Solomon, and he is writing Ecclesiastes as his autobiography in old age, when his heart had already turned aside from Yahweh. It is only for those who reject Yahweh that life is a chasing after wind; the term is used in Hos. 12:1 of how apostate Israel feed upon / chase after the wind, and in Jer. 22:22 of how the wind would chase apostate Judah to their destruction. But they were themselves chasing the wind, so condemnation by being chased by the wind was appropriate. If vanity fills our minds now, then the emptiness of unconsciousness will be an appropriate destiny for us. And the world is so full of vanity, which it seeks to insert into our minds.

Ecc 1:15 That which is crooked can't be made straight; and that which is lacking can't be counted-

This is typical of the kind of fatalism which Ecclesiastes abounds with. Secular people at the end of their lives often come to the conclusion that everything is somehow overruled by 'God', to the point that human behaviour is pretty much all determined and enforced by a force beyond ourselves. Solomon fails to accept the basic thesis of the book of Proverbs; that human actions can be controlled, we have election, and our choices are for real and eternally significant. We can change, and that which is lacking can be made by God's grace and operation in our hearts. And thereby we are accountable for our actions and to Divine judgment. But Solomon didn't believe in this, and so it led him to conclude that human behaviour isn't that significant and is somehow all orchestrated by some higher hand than our own. He may here be alluding to himself, arguing that change is impossible for him.

Hezekiah was told by Isaiah that God would make the crooked ways straight before the presence and coming of Messiah. But Hezekiah wasn't interested in that perspective.

Ecc 1:16 I said to myself, Behold, I have obtained for myself great wisdom above all

who were before me in Jerusalem. Yes, my heart has had great experience of wisdom and knowledge-

Those "before me in Jerusalem" has been used by some to argue that the author must have reigned in Jerusalem at a time when many kings had preceded him. But this would create a major problem with the description of the author as being king of *Israel* in *Jerusalem*. It ought to read the king of *Judah* in Jerusalem. But "before" almost never means 'before' in the sense of 'earlier'; the reference is not to "before" in terms of time, but rather is this the common Hebrew word for "in the presence of". All who had come before his presence in Jerusalem didn't match his wisdom. And this is exactly the case with Solomon; many visited him in Jerusalem and heard his wisdom, marvelling that it was greater than theirs.

The constant moral and physical experimentation led Solomon to the deep cynicism of Ecclesiastes: 'If this is the Kingdom, the ultimate experience, then I don't think much of it'. Ecclesiastes emphasizes that Solomon experienced more glory and wisdom than any other who had been in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9); this suggests that he felt he had reached the ultimate experience of the Kingdom, and yet he was not impressed by it. He lacked the faith and humility to look ahead to the future Kingdom, and to realize thereby that all the achievements of this life are as nothing.

Solomon's building of exotic gardens with "all kind of fruit" (Ecc. 2:5) sounds as if he was attempting to reconstruct Eden; he was so carried away with expressing his own abilities that he effectively created his own kingdom in this life. It seems Solomon's crazy program of building and moral experimentation (outlined in Ecc. 2) began after he had finished building the temple. He seems to have got cynical and depressed after that; he had his kingdom in this life; he looked back and compared himself with others (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9), and thereby he became proud. He could see that materially and spiritually (in terms of knowledge) he had far, far outstripped all God's previous servants. It was this comparison with others (there is triple emphasis on it) which well indicates his pride.

The words of Dt. 17:16-20 are evidently a prophecy of Solomon. He did multiply silver, gold, horses and wives; his heart *was* turned away (Dt. 17:16,17= 2 Chron. 9:20). Yet this passage says that if he studied the Law all his life, this would *not* happen, and also his heart would not be "lifted up above his brethren" (v. 20). Solomon's whipping of the people and sense of spiritual and material superiority (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9) shows how his heart *was* lifted up. Yet Solomon knew the Law, despite his explicit disobedience to the commands concerning wives, horses etc. But his knowledge of the word didn't bring forth the true humility which it was intended to.

Ecc 1:17 I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly. I perceived that this also was a chasing after wind-

LXX "My heart knew much- wisdom, and knowledge, parables and understanding". Solomon accepts his wisdom was as it were just in his head or mind. The LXX even implies he considers his desire for wisdom to have been mistaken, "a waywardness of spirit". And yet God had rewarded him for that desire. We see here the depth of his apostasy from God.

Ecc 1:18 For in much wisdom is much grief; and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow-

Solomon forgot that his wisdom was a gift from God; he speaks in Ecc. 1:16 of how

“I have gotten me great wisdom” (RV). His possession of truth led him to the assumption that this was a reward for his own diligence; whereas it was a gift by grace. Yet he himself knew that the wisdom given *by God* brings joy, whereas human wisdom leads to the grief and depression which afflicted Solomon (Ecc. 1:18 cp. 2:26). Solomon 'had the truth', he knew so deeply the true principles of Yahweh worship.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 2

Ecc 2:1 I said in my heart, Come now-

The more we come to know ourselves, the more we will perceive the importance of self-talk. I take Ecclesiastes to be Solomon’s self-examination at the end of his life. Five times in this short book he describes how “I said in my heart...” (Ecc. 2:1,15 [twice]; 3:17,18). As he looked back and analyzed how and why he had lived and been as he had, he appreciated that it was all a result of his self-talk, how he had spoken to himself in his mind. His introspection reveals just how we talk to ourselves – e.g. “I said in my heart, “Go on now, I will prove you with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure”“ (Ecc. 2:1). We all talk to ourselves; and the records of the Lord’s wilderness temptations are an amazing psychological window into the self-talk of God’s very own son.

Here again we have Hezekiah showing what was in his heart.

I will test you with mirth: therefore enjoy pleasure; and behold, this also was vanity-

On one hand Solomon condemns mirth (Ecc. 7:4; Prov. 20:32 LXX "If thou abandon thyself to mirth, and stretch forth thine hand in a quarrel, thou shalt be disgraced"). But this is exactly what Solomon did in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. He refused to accept his own wisdom. It was merely a teaching position, and he felt the need to empirically find its truth. He failed to personalize the wisdom he taught, and therefore turned away in the end.

Don't love "pleasure" (Prov. 21:17) and Prov. 14:13 "even in mirth there is sorrow" are both s.w. "mirth" in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. Solomon had to re-learn this for himself rather than accept direct Divine teaching about it. He recognized that fools love mirth (Prov. 7:4) but still he wanted it. He rejected this wisdom and only came to agree with it through doing just what Prov.14:13 condemns (Ecc. 2:2).

Hezekiah reasons that the pursuit of pleasure is "vanity" (Ecc. 2:1,10; 6:9), and likewise he often says that life itself is "vanity" (Ecc. 6:12; 7:15; 9:9; 11:10). So our life experience is according to what we are pursuing. If we pursue vain things, our life is vain. Herein lies the huge power of "seek first the Kingdom of God". If that is our passion, then our life likewise becomes of eternal moment. Self examination is about perceiving what are our core desires, our deepest dreams, our deepest heart wish.

This is why he so often speaks of human work: "all the toil that one has toiled under the sun” (7 times) or "the work that is done” (8 times), "(one’s) toil” (12 times) or “ all the work” (5 times). He asks what is the profit, the advantage, the gain- using accounting, business terms. And he sees, rightly, that if death is the final end- then it was all pointless, much expenditure for no end result. Surely Paul had reflected on this, when under Divine inspiration he wrote that our labour is *not* vanity "in the

Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). He writes that in conclusion of his teaching about the huge significance of the Lord's resurrection, which enables ours. This alone is what makes human labour meaningful and not meaningless. It gives eternal moment to all our being and labour. Striving for a career and human achievement can be painted as very noble and satisfying. But in the hard stare of death, it all crumbles.

Ecc 2:2 I said of laughter, It is foolishness; and of mirth, What does it accomplish?- "Mirth" is the word for "pleasure". Solomon sees wisdom as the way to wealth and "pleasure" in this life, and that is the basis for his appeal to men to be wise and accept his wisdom (Prov. 10:23). But David uses the word only of the "pleasure" of the future, restored Kingdom of God on earth (Ps. 126:2); whereas Solomon wanted it all now, just as the 'prosperity gospel' likewise does. And yet as he got older, Solomon realized that such "pleasure" from material things is not in fact pleasure, and he uses the word several times in Ecclesiastes of how pleasure in this life is vain (Ecc. 2:2; 7:3; 10:19). This approach is in fact a contradiction of his seeking after "pleasure" in Proverbs. He came to this nihilistic position because he failed to perceive that the true "pleasure" is not now, but in the future Kingdom. When we finally realized in Ecclesiastes that it was "not now", he came to see death as the greatest enemy; and yet he refuses to have faith in the hope of resurrection.

Ecc 2:3 I searched in my heart how to cheer my flesh with wine, my heart yet guiding me with wisdom, and how to lay hold of folly, until I might see what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under heaven all the days of their lives- Solomon in Prov. 23:29-31 strongly condemns wine, but later gave himself to wine (Ecc. 2:3). And so he again demonstrated how although his wisdom remained with him and he continued to teach it (Ecc. 2:9), he had failed to personalize that wisdom. It flowed through his mind and his mouth, but took no personal lodgment in his heart. Likewise Solomon speaks in Ecc. 2:3 as if he were on a journey of discovery as to what would be "good" for a man "all the days of his life"; and yet in Prov. 31:12 he spoke of how the way of wisdom and having a wise wife will bring "good" for a man "all the days of his life". Perhaps this is a tacit admission that Solomon had not had a wise wife; and it is also an admission of the way the wisdom he taught had taken zero lodgment in his own heart. It was all just theoretical truth. This is such a warning to us.

Solomon's mother warned him against alcohol, but her words were totally disregarded by Solomon in his later search for fulfilment in the flesh (Prov. 31:4,5). Despite condemning those who ignore the teaching of their mother, Solomon did just that. He was a stellar example of a man who does the very opposite of the truth he has received from God. This is a stage beyond mere hypocrisy; it is the narcissism of someone playing God, who considers themselves personal obedience to the Divine principles they teach. And this is for all time an acute temptation to those who have God's truth, especially in the area of sexuality and addiction.

His alcoholism contradicted his own earlier condemnations of drink as being for the unwise (e.g. Prov. 20:1). Thus by turning to drink he was throwing off his former wisdom, even though his access to it remained with him (Ecc. 2:9; cp. 'But I still believe the Truth, you know'). His mother pleads with him not to drink lest he “pervert the judgment of any that is afflicted” (Prov. 31:5). And yet on his death, the complaints about his hard oppression of the people indicate that he did just this (due to his taking to drink, according to Prov. 31?). And yet Prov. 31 has Solomon praising his mother for her wisdom; he was proud of his mum, and yet

he so miserably disobeyed her. He seems to have a mindset in which he felt it was impossible for him to be disobedient. The all important thing for him was who his parents and pedigree were.

Solomon later turned to alcohol for a while (Ecc. 2:3)- yet his girlfriend says that Solomon took her to the house of wine (Song 2:4 RVmg.) whilst still young. The seeds of failure were there early on- he preached against wine in Proverbs, and yet still drunk himself.

Ecc 2:4 I made myself great works. I built myself houses. I planted myself vineyards-
Solomon *loved* building (Ecc. 2:4-6)- he built cities and buildings because it was "the desire of Solomon which he desired" (1 Kings 9:19 AVmg.), i.e. one of his dominant desires. So when we read that it was the desire of Solomon to build the temple (1 Kings 9:1,11), he was merely serving God in a way that naturally appealed to him anyway. "The people sacrificed in high places, *because* there was no house built" (1 Kings 3:2) surely reflects Solomon's perspective, not God's- for God Himself didn't need a built house in which sacrifice could be offered. The temple became such an obsession with Solomon that he came to think that no really acceptable worship could occur outside of the idea which he had so developed in his own mind. It's rather like thinking that one *must* have a physical church building in which to be an ecclesia of the living God- who doesn't dwell in buildings made with hands.

Ecc 2:5 I made myself gardens and parks, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit-
Solomon didn't like the idea of God doing something for him (i.e. building the house); in his own mind, he swamped this concept with his obsession for achieving his own works. The fact that God needs and requires nothing failed to register with him; the fact that salvation is by pure grace meant nothing to him. After Solomon finished the temple, he started work on his own house; Ecc. 2:4 relates how he built houses and all kinds of gardens and parks, imitating the garden of Eden and trying to recreate it on earth, travelling down every road of human experience. The implication of this is that once the temple was finished, he felt that the Kingdom had come, and that he must create it himself. He taught Israel that if they sinned even in captivity, then all they had to do was pray towards the temple and they would be forgiven. He saw in that building some kind of atonement for sins. He lost sight of the importance of the blood that made atonement; he replaced the blood of Christ with a work of his own hands. Indeed, it would seem that God's response to the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 9:7 corrects what Solomon has said, in that He says that if Israel sin then He will cast the temple too out of His sight; which is rather different to how Solomon instructed the people to gain forgiveness for the sake of the temple if they were in dispersion. He saw the temple as a talisman- the need for real, meaningful change and repentance and spiritual mindedness to enable the dwelling of God went unperceived.

Ecc 2:6 I made myself pools of water, to water from it the forest where trees were reared-
Solomon's use of his wealth to create a garden with special rivers and fruit trees was surely an attempt to reproduce Eden on earth (Ecc. 2:5,6 RV). He thought that he could buy the Kingdom, create the Kingdom paradise on earth, have it now... and so very many have fallen into the same delusion. The Gospel of God's Kingdom and not our own, yet future and not right now, is a major challenge to all subconscious attempts to build a kingdom of God now in our lives.

Ecc 2:7 I bought male servants and female servants, and had servants born in my house. I also had great possessions of herds and flocks, above all who were before me in Jerusalem-

The constant moral and physical experimentation, rather than just accepting God's wisdom, led Solomon to the deep cynicism of Ecclesiastes: 'If this is the Kingdom, the ultimate experience, then I don't think much of it'. Ecclesiastes emphasizes that Solomon experienced more glory and wisdom than any other who had been in Jerusalem (Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9); this suggests that he felt he had reached the ultimate experience of the Kingdom, and yet he was not impressed by it. He lacked the faith and humility to look ahead to the future Kingdom, and to realize thereby that all the achievements of this life are as nothing.

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Ecc 2:8 I also gathered silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and of the provinces. I got myself male and female singers, and the delights of the sons of men- musical instruments, and that of all sorts-

These were things he did when he tried to find the meaning of life outside personal faith in God. “I got *myself*”, he said- he organized the temple worship, the courses of singers etc., because he liked music and orchestra- not from true service to God. Many like the Queen of Sheba rewarded him for his wisdom with presents- and “I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces” who visited him (Ecc. 2:8). He retained wisdom theoretically, but he allowed the human benefits of ‘having the truth’ to swamp him. And so we must beware, lest, e.g., the happy social environment which knowing the Truth has generated for some comes to dominate our lives *of itself*; we may ‘retain wisdom’ as Solomon did, but the fire of real spirituality can drop out of our lives so easily. He also fails to take into account that he did not in fact get the wealth and glory of himself. It was given him by God because of his initial choice of wisdom above all things. But his heart has now turned away from God and he sees every Divine blessing as in fact attained by his own labour.

The words of 1 Kings 11:1-4 have some interesting implications when analyzed. Even before he built the pagan temples for his wives, his marriages to them are described as "evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 11:6). Solomon's marriages are often explained away as political maneuverings. But the record says that Solomon "clave unto these in love", surely alluding to God's definition of marriage as a leaving father and mother and cleaving to a wife.
Solomon really loved those women; they weren't just political strings to his bow. They would not have turned away his *heart* if
they were only political relationships. 1000 seems a rather exorbitant number in any case. And Ecc. 2:8 RV says that Solomon sought “the delights of the sons of men, concubines of all sorts”. He took sex to its maximum extent- he had every possible type of woman in his harem. Every hair colour, size, type. “Whatsoever mine eyes desired [this is language elsewhere used about sexual desire] I kept not from them” (Ecc. 2:10). And yet still, he never found one… counting one by one, as he put it. If ever there is a warning against immorality, it is here. The more relationships one has- and our world glorifies this- the less ultimate satisfaction there can be. God’s way has to be best.

Ecc 2:9 So I was great, and increased more than all who were before me in Jerusalem-

Solomon claimed about his wisdom that "By me kings reign, and princes decree justice" (Prov. 8:15). He had been given wisdom in order to reign over Israel on God's behalf, but from that good basis he had slipped into considering himself as therefore automatically just and right in whatever abuse of power he chose to exercise (see on Prov. 8:14). And he ends his reign abusing and whipping his people. He maintained his intellectual grasp of wisdom to the end, but he didn't reign nor live by it. He is proof enough that mere intellectual assent to God's truth is not going to save anyone, nor is "keeping the faith" in intellectual terms the thing which is to be emphasized. For Solomon did this, and it didn't save him.

My wisdom also remained with me-

The idea of several of Solomon's proverbs is that "the righteous" are those with "understanding", and it is this understanding which feeds and gives life to others. This is true enough; our sharing with others and influence upon them can indeed lead them to life and not to die eternally. But Solomon appears to again have his own self justification in view; for he considered that he was the preeminently righteous because he was the teacher of Israel, giving them the wisdom given him. But Solomon fell away from Yahweh, even though he says his wisdom remained with him (Ecc. 2:9), and he continued to teach others that wisdom to the end of his life (Ecc. 12:9). And so it was simply not true that teaching others makes a person righteous, as Solomon supposed often in Proverbs (e.g. Prov. 10:21).

Solomon had earlier claimed in Prov. 14:33: "Wisdom remains in the heart of one who has understanding, and is even made known in the inward part of fools". But now, in the disillusion of Ecclesiastes, Solomon later alludes to this in saying that although he cast off his faith in Yahweh, and his heart turned aside to idols, his Divinely given wisdom [in an intellectual sense] remained with him. He seems to be saying that if one has wisdom, it will always remain in the heart, and thereby justify a man. But this isn't the case; one can know Divine truths and yet live otherwise,

without at all personalizing them. And so turn away from the true God, just as Solomon did.

Solomon had God's wisdom throughout his apostacy (Ecc. 2:9), as the Truth ever remains with us. God put that wisdom in his heart in order for him to help others, both in Israel and in the world (2 Chron. 9:23); yet Solomon failed to realize that he needed to apply it to himself. In the same way as Solomon criticized flirting with Gentile girls but then went and did this himself, so he said many other things in his wisdom which actually condemned himself. Thus "the prince that lacketh understanding is also a great oppressor" (Prov. 28:16). Yet Solomon did oppress the people- despite possessing wisdom. He insists that throughout his life, his wisdom had remained with him (Ecc. 2:9 RVmg.). So what does this indicate? Surely that the wisdom which he had did not affect his life practically, and thus it was as if he lacked wisdom completely. Mere possession of truth leads to great temptations- for like Solomon, we can reason that this alone justifies us in any behaviour. And again, consider Prov. 29:4 RVmg: "The king by judgment establisheth the land [another self-conscious justification of himself in his early reign]: but he that imposeth tribute overthroweth it". And this was exactly what Solomon did, in imposing unbearable tribute upon his people. He so clearly sees what is wrong- and then goes and does it. This is one of the features of our nature. And we all have this same tendency. The more we know what is wrong, the more we are inclined to do it.

Ecc 2:10 Whatever my eyes desired, I didn't keep from them. I didn't withhold my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced because of all my labour, and this was my portion from all my labour-

It's interesting how often in Proverbs that Solomon warns about only eating a limited amount of the honey you may find (e.g. Prov. 25:16). Yet Ecclesiastes 1 and 2 show how Solomon found honey as it were, he had the opportunity to do and experience what he wanted- and he ate so much he became spiritually sick.

Most people spend their lives pushing down one or two avenues of self-fulfilment- to own a large home, a nice car (cp. horses and chariots), to achieve some level of sexual and domestic fulfilment, financial power etc. Solomon fantastically succeeded in all these avenues- and came to realize that still he was unfulfilled. He became a workaholic, rejoicing in his own labour- but that too, as many a middle aged man can testify, brought nothing. If only we can perceive it, Solomon provides a fantastic challenge. If we believe the Biblical record of Solomon, none of these avenues will hold much attraction for us any more. But our community- the young especially- throw the majority of their energy into one or two of these avenues. Just a handful who learn the lesson of Solomon could turn the world upside down for Christ- especially given the financial and linguistic possibilities of our age. Yet in all such aspirations to burning zeal and achievement (would we had more of it!), the other lessons of Solomon must be learnt. His building of the temple was " all *Solomon's* desire which he was pleased to do" (1 Kings 9:1). There is a semantic connection between the Hebrew words for " desire" and " pleased" - the point of which is to emphasize that Solomon's work for God was only an expression of his own zest for self-fulfilment; he served the Truth in ways which only confirmed his own natural inclinations. Appreciating the spirit and blood of Christ, his own weakness, the grace of God, and the subsequent desire to live a life of self sacrifice, of carrying a cross in ways we wouldn't naturally chose- this was all foreign to Solomon. And is it so foreign to us? Solomon's materialism and self-fulfilment are sure warnings to our age.

Ecc 2:11 Then I looked at all the works that my hands had worked, and at the labour that I had laboured to do; and behold, all was vanity and a chasing after wind, and there was no profit under the sun-

Solomon had taught not to labour to be rich (Prov. 23:4), but he had done just this. He refused now to accept that his wealth and glory had all been given by God in response to his desire for wisdom above all things. He considered that he had worked for it all; and so he was disillusioned with it. For only the gift of God's grace, appreciated as such, will not tarnish in our own minds.

Ecc 2:12 I turned myself to consider wisdom, madness, and folly: for what can the king's successor do? Just that which has been done long ago-
Solomon often seems to doubt the wisdom and strength of his son Rehoboam. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are full of warnings to him, and Ecclesiastes laments the tragedy of a powerful man having a fool or weakling following him and squandering the kingdom built up. And that is indeed what happened. Solomon had persuaded himself that he was the unique and total fulfilment of the promises to David. He refused to consider any future Messiah, nor that his line should end in such a Messiah. He was totally self obsessed. He saw that no amount of personal possession of wisdom could affect his successor.

Ecc 2:13 Then I saw that wisdom excels folly, as far as light excels darkness-

This must be interpreted in the light of Solomon's cynical statements about his wisdom, and the comment in :15 that the reality of death means that there is no ultimate advantage of wisdom over folly. So he may simply mean, as he often does in the book of Proverbs, that wisdom indeed gives a smoother ride in this life, just as it is better to walk in the light than in darkness. But he never attaches to wisdom any eternal or future advantage; because he sees only this life. "Excel" is the word used only by Solomon in Ecclesiastes for "profit" (Ecc. 1:3; 2:11,13; 3:9; 5:9,16; 7:12). And he has just stated, as he often does, that there is no "profit" or excellence. Because all ends in death. So he here means that wisdom profits more than folly in this life- but in the wider context of Ecclesiastes, we must understand that he sees no profit in anything, ultimately, including in wisdom.

Ecc 2:14 The wise man's eyes are in his head, and the fool walks in darkness- and yet I perceived that one event happens to them all-

Not being 'wise in our own eyes' is a major theme of Solomon's Proverbs (Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 26:12,16; 28:11). We are to recognize that there is no inherent wisdom in man; it must be taught to us from God's word. And yet we live in a postmodern world, where what seems or feels good to our own gut is taken to be the highest personal truth. This was what led Judah to condemnation (s.w. Is. 5:21), because trusting in their own opinions and gut feelings left them insensitive to God's word. Paul quotes the idea in Rom. 12:16; to be wise in our own eyes means that we ignore those whom we naturally consider worthy of being ignored. But that is not necessarily the way of the Spirit. But when Solomon lost his faith, he comments that whether a man has wise eyes or not (s.w.) is irrelevant in the face of death (Ecc. 2:14). He clearly conceived wisdom as only helpful for this life; he had no real personal faith in the resurrection of

the dead or the establishment of the future Kingdom of God. And this led him to ultimately despise his own wisdom as futile.

Ecc 2:15 Then I said in my heart, As it happens to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart that this also is vanity-

The blasphemy of those statements in Ecclesiastes that wisdom is meaningless is hard to plumb. As discussed on Ecc. 1:1, this is indeed the position of Solomon, and not just part of a dialogue. Deep within his heart, Solomon's attitude was that "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me (the man made wise by God); and why was I then more wise?" (Ecc. 2:15). Ecc. 7:16 is in similar vein: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise"- even though wisdom and righteousness are what God desires from us above all! This despising of wisdom and the truly spiritually ambitious life was due to Solomon's lack of faith in a resurrection; he had his kingdom in this life, and he failed to see the blinding necessity of a resurrection, judgment and change of nature. This is again a kind of regret expressed by Solomon that he had asked God for wisdom, and God's commendation of his choice is thereby despised by Solomon.

LXX "This is also vanity, because the fool speaks of his abundance". The Lord's parable of the rich fool appears to allude to this; but Solomon has himself in view. He is therefore understood by the Lord as the rich fool. Despite all his theoretical wisdom.

Ecc 2:16 For of the wise man, even as of the fool, there is no memory for ever, since in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. Indeed, the wise man must die just like the fool!-

What makes the difference for Solomon is the issue of death and the absence for him of any hope of eternity. Had he accepted the gospel of the Kingdom, believed in by Abraham and David, he would have reasoned differently. In the end, Solomon felt that for himself, it was as well to be righteous as to be wicked, for in death there was no further difference (Ecc. 9:2,5,9). He knows judgment will come (Ecc. 11:9), at least for the young people, but he reasons as if it won't- at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (Ecc. 2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. But in Ecc. 7:12 he says that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But then again in Prov. 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, it's benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. I don't see these different perspectives as being the difference between life in the world and life in the spiritual realm. They are all spoken *with conviction* by Solomon, which, to my mind, ruins the idea that he himself believed the Truth but was simply outlining what life is like without God. He advocates both ways. My resolution of this is that he knew and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice.

Ecc 2:17 So I hated life, because the work that is worked under the sun was grievous to me; for all is vanity and a chasing after wind-

Hezekiah once so wanted life, but now he hates living. This is the classic case of the coveted possession becoming obnoxious and love turning to hate.

And here is the challenge. The man who had everything, wealth, women, career, artistic fulfilment, with long life and good health to 'enjoy' it... ended up hating life, because he found it all so vain without God. Finally, life is only worth anything if lived for God. And people spend their lives trying to get just a fraction of Solomon's experiences. Solomon here says he hates life, but in :18 he defines this as meaning he hated all his labour / works which he had done. His life was his works. It was all about external achievement. He had no internal spiritual life or development to look back at. The New Testament puts works and grace in counterpoint. And Solomon knew nothing of grace, nothing of the spirit of David his father, who perceived that we can but accept grace, rather than attempt to justify ourselves by works. There must be far more to our lives than our works. For then we are but human doings rather than human beings.

"The work that is worked" is the phrase used for how Israel were to "do your work" for six days and then observe the Sabbath (Ex. 23:12). That provision was to teach them that life is more than works; and the spirit of the Sabbath was to point forward to salvation by grace in Christ. This lesson was totally lost upon Solomon. The history of Israel repeatedly talked of how their salvation was the work which *God* worked (s.w. Dt. 11:3,7 etc.). But Solomon ignored God's work because he was so obsessed with his own work, passing off the work God worked as beyond understanding (Ecc. 3:11 s.w.).

Ecc 2:18 I hated all my labour in which I laboured under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who comes after me-

See on :17. I will suggest on :21 that the labour in view may also be his labour for wisdom. In Ecc. 2:18,19 he laments that his labours will achieve nothing; doubtless alluding back to his words in Prov. 5:10, where he says that the Gentile wife will make the young Israelite's labours meaningless. Sin never satisfies. “Hell and destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied” (Prov. 27:20 RV), Solomon wrote in his youth; and then in old age, he came to basically the same conclusion, having spent his life working back to the truth that he had been taught in his youth (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8). And there are many men and women who have done the same. We all tend to be empirical learners; and yet this is the great power of God’s word, that through it we need not have to learn everything through our failures; but we can receive His Truth, trust it, and simply live by it. Otherwise we shall be like Solomon…

We get the sense from :18,19 that Hezekiah already sensed from a child that Manasseh would be unwise. He got no joy from having sons, despite his begging to be given more life in order to have them. And this isn't the only point in Ecclesiastes where he is clearly skeptical about his children. He certainly has no pride nor confidence in them. Alternatively, it could be that the totality of death weighed so heavily upon him that Hezekiah considered that even your children and descendants can't ameliorate death for you personally. That betrays narcissism, and is in line with his attitude to Isaiah when told that his children will be eunuchs in Babylon and therefore his line would die out. More positively, we can reason that the hope of resurrection to a future eternity helps us not be narcissistic in this life. Hezekiah's obsession with death is really a form of narcissism.

Ecc 2:19 Who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will have rule over all of my labour in which I have laboured, and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity-

Again we see Solomon's fear that his inheritance would be wasted by his son Rehoboam. And he likely had many sons by his many wives, whom he considered fools. If his focus had been upon the fulfilment of the promises to David through a Davidic line [through Solomon] culminating in Messiah, he would have perhaps not struggled so much with this issue of having to leave everything to an heir. But he considered himself the fulfilment of the promises about the great son of David. So to now have to leave his labours to his own possibly unwise son... was a crushing anticlimax.

He had spoken in Proverbs of bringing up a child in the way he should go; whereas by the time of Ecc. 2:19 and his experience with his own children, he comments about his heir: “Who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool?”. He simply didn’t see the relevance of his wisdom to his own personal family life. Yet he proudly insisted: “Who is as the wise man?”, as if the possession of theoretical truth and wisdom was the ultimate possession; and he then goes on to say that this made him beyond criticism (Ecc. 8:2-4). This surely *must* be a danger for any community or individual who considers they have “the truth” and who considers the possession of it to be of the utmost importance.

Ecc 2:20 Therefore I began to cause my heart to despair concerning all the labour in which I had laboured-

Solomon's complaint at the pointlessness of wisdom in Ecc. 2:15-20 is liberally sprinkled with personal pronouns; his self-centeredness was part of his materialism and lack of faith in the Kingdom. And for us too, familiarity with the glorious principles of Divine Truth with which we have been entrusted can lead us to the blasphemy of saying, in effect, that those principles are unimportant; they come to mean little to us personally, and thereby we effectively deny their value and worth. "To despair" is the same word translated "without hope" (Is. 57:10; Jer. 2:25; 18:12). He had no hope beyond the grave exactly because he had vainly sought justification by works rather than by grace.

Under the sun-

As explained on Ecc. 1:2, I do not see any dialectical argument in Ecclesiastes, oscillating between life "under the sin" and on another hand, some more spiritual perspective. That other perspective is not made clear nor defined. I suggested that Solomon is talking about his life, in his old age position of having turned his heart away from Yahweh and to idols. I suggest it is simply a phrase used by Solomon to describe "life", perhaps influenced by his Egyptian wives, who at this point had turned his heart away from Yahweh to their idols, of which "the sun" was one of the most significant. It may well be a phrase taken from the Egyptian wisdom literature which had influenced Solomon. The only other Biblical usage of the phrase outside of Ecclesiastes is in 2 Sam. 12:12, where the consequences of David's sin with Solomon's mother were to be worked out openly and publically "under the sun". It

could be that despite trying to whitewash David and his sin in Proverbs, Solomon at the end of his life feels he is for ever living with the consequence of that sin of his parents; and thus he blames everything he sees as wrong with his life upon that. This would be a typical thing for a man to do, in psychological terms. And I have noted throughout Proverbs how often Solomon is having a dig at Absalom and others who played their part in the outworking of the consequences of the sin. See on :22.

Ecc 2:21 For there is a man whose labour is with wisdom, with knowledge, and with skillfulness; yet he shall leave it for his portion to a man who has not laboured for it. This also is vanity and a great evil-

He refers to himself when he writes at the end of his life of the man whose labour is in wisdom [cp. his labouring to write out so many Proverbs], and yet it is all pointless in that he will leave it all to a fool after him- he had already seen the unspirituality of his children (Ecc. 2:21). This thinking reflects a perception that his wisdom was totally irrelevant to himself- he wrote it all down for others, but not for himself. Right at the end of Ecclesiastes he chuffles that he still preaches his wisdom to the youth, although he himself has the attitude that it is all meaningless. This is one explanation of the paradox within Ecclesiastes- the teaching of Divine truth, whilst lamenting the pointlessness of it.

More than anything, Solomon was incurably selfish. Having spent his life writing and teaching wisdom, he makes one of his autobiographical comments: "There is a man whose labour is in wisdom…yet to man that hath not laboured therein shall he leave it for his portion. This also is vanity and a great evil" (Ecc. 2:21). Solomon saw "wisdom" as something he had worked for [forgetting it was God's gracious gift to him], and he treated it as a material possession. Because he saw that he couldn't take it with him, he felt therefore it was useless- he didn't, it seems, want to leave it to his son because he felt it was only for him. This was the spirit of the man who buried his talent of Divine Truth in the ground and thought that would be enough- he wouldn't risk it with others or share it with them. And so Solomon ended up hating all his labour for wisdom (Ecc. 2:18, 21) because at the end of his life that mere knowledge and teaching of it to others hadn't transformed or immortalized his personal life. The rejected at the day of judgment may well, tragically, feel the same.

All the wisdom and relationship with God that a man develops in his life cannot benefit anyone else; each soul must discover for himself (Ecc. 2:21). The emphasis which we have always given to *personal* Bible study and a lack of authoritarian spiritual leaders is surely correct. It was God's will that Israel should be without a human king. Their lack of such human leadership is described as them each doing what was right in their own eyes. Far from being the negative comment this is often taken to be, the idea is surely that while they were without a human King, as God intended, the people did what was right in their own judgment; they worked out their own relationship with God for themselves. It is significant that a quarter of the names listed in Heb. 11 were from the period of the Judges, when there was no human King.

Ecc 2:22 For what has a man of all his labour, and of the striving of his heart, in which he labours under the sun?-

As in :21, the labour in view is particularly Solomon's mental labour, striving in his heart, toward wisdom. He was given wisdom as a gift by Divine grace, but he ended up rejecting that and trying to work it all through in his own strength.

As members of His people, doing His will, the labour of our lives is *not* in vain, seeing it is done "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). This provides a definition of life "under the sun"; it is life not lived "in the Lord". But see on :20. Paul seems to be alluding to the spirit of Ecclesiastes, which laments that all achievement and labour "under the sun", not "in the Lord", is so tragically vain; there is no sense of final achievement, and this nagging fear about the ultimate validity of life's work must plague all who live outside the sphere of God (Ecc. 1:9-11; 2:18-23). We could understand Paul as specifically disagreeing with Solomon's attitude that all endeavour is vain.

Ecc 2:23 For all his days are sorrows, and his travail is grief; yes, even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity-

Solomon has been alluding to himself in the previous verses, lamenting his chasing after wisdom; and here he, the man with every available pleasure, laments that his days are full of sorrow and he can't sleep peacefully at night. Yet Solomon had prayed that when God's people were in grief and sorrow because of their sins, they could pray to God using his temple, and be forgiven and have their grief assuaged (2 Chron. 6:29). Yet in Ecc. 2:23, Solomon laments that all his days are spent in grief and sorrows (s.w.). The way out of the depression with which he ended his days was repentance and acceptance of God's free grace and forgiveness. But he refused to do this, and turned his heart away from Yahweh.

Ecc 2:24 There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God-

Paul quotes Solomon's words in Ecc. 2:24 as the words of those who have no faith that there will be a resurrection (1 Cor. 15:32). The rich fool likewise disbelieved the resurrection, and his words also allude to those of Solomon (Lk. 12:19 = Ecc. 2:24; 11:9). The core problem with Solomon was that he refused any notion of being personally judged, and the hope of eternal life as a consequence for belief and action in this life. Solomon is arguing that a man should just enjoy life now and be satisfied with his work. Because work in the area of wisdom leads to grief and bad conscience about sin (see on :20-23). Solomon's attitude to work is out of step with the teaching in Genesis 3. Labour is a curse to man, and yet is pregnant with blessing if the victory of the seed of the woman is accepted. But Solomon had closed his mind to any future Messianic figure, considering himself to be that. And so his attitude to labour is mistaken. He considers it the best thing that can be done in a life lived without God. For he is writing this at a time when his heart was turned away from Yahweh to idols. And yet this raises the question as to how we are to understand his comment that "This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God". There is indeed so much better for a man than to just enjoy this life and live without God and the hope of resurrection and judgment. So it could be that as elsewhere in Ecclesiastes, this is Solomon referring to God with some sarcasm, as in :26, where he refers to God's gift of wisdom to a man like himself as vanity.

We also see here one of many allusions to the curse in Eden, to labour in order to eat. And that curse is given by "the hand of God". One may as well just accept that, and try to find a bit of joy and satisfaction in the experience. Koheleth doesn't go onwards to focus upon the promise of Gen. 3:15, that the curse does have the prospect of being gloriously lifted through Messiah's work.

Ecc 2:25 For who can eat, or who can have enjoyment, more than I?-

In this we see the challenge of Solomon to us all. For he experienced, over a long, healthy lifetime, all the "enjoyment" which other men spend their lives trying to achieve just a fraction of. And yet it still filled his days with sorrow, without accepting God's ways for himself.

"More than me" or "If not me", Heb. "Except me". This fits Hezekiah's unique position, having been given life but now hating it (:17), and therefore finding the things that sustain life (eating and drinking) repulsive.

Ecc 2:26 For to the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy; but to the sinner He gives travail, to gather and to heap up, that He may give to him who pleases God. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind-

Solomon has himself in view, as in :25. He pleased God by choosing wisdom and so was given it, as he was given joy by God (Song 3:11), but he comments that this is all vanity. Because God had also given him wealth, which he had gathered and heaped up in store cities [the same Hebrew word is used]; and he complains that this is God treating him as a sinner. For the "travail" is what he complains of in Ecc. 1:13; 2:23; 3:10; 4:4. This is the kind of sarcastic, blasphemous attitude to God which we noted on :24.

Contrary to what he states here, he wasn't given wisdom because he pleased God. He had already married a Gentile woman before he became king. Rather was he given wisdom by grace, as a gift, and not as a reward for his righteousness. Many passages in Solomon's writings seem to indirectly and subtly justify himself. They may be perfectly true, reflecting the wisdom of God, and yet he was using his knowledge of God's Truth to justify himself as being right- instead of being humbled by wisdom and the true knowledge of God. Consider: "God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom and knowledge" (Ecc. 2:26). He didn't want to understand that God's offer to him as a young man, and his grant to him of wisdom, was by pure grace. Solomon suggests that his mere possession of truth made him a "good" man.

It would seem from Ecclesiastes that Solomon lost any personal hope even of resurrection, and because of this he wonders why he ever initially had asked for wisdom: "I myself perceived that one event [death] happeneth to them all. Then said I in mine heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so will it happen even to me; and why was I then more wise?" (Ecc. 2:14,15 RV). "God giveth to the man that is good in his sight wisdom… this also is vanity" (Ecc. 2:26). This is a definite reference back to himself, who was given wisdom, and he considers the gift meaningless because the wise die the same death as the fool. So he now saw it as vanity, seeing there was no personal future hope. What this teaches us is that unless we personally believe we will be in the Kingdom, then all our wisdom is of no value to us personally... and in the end, we will like Solomon live a life that reflects this.

Hezekiah had pleaded that he was "good' in God's sight. But he sees the blessing of that as actually being a curse.

We too have a tendency to build up masses of Biblical and spiritual knowledge, and to let the mere acquisition of it stop us from practicing it.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 3

Ecc 3:1 For everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven-
"The time" in view appears to be the day of judgment. Having spoken of how there is a *time* "to plant... pluck up... kill... heal" etc., we are then told that "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked (at the second coming): for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work" (Ecc. 3:1-8,17). Thus our actions and purposes in every department of life will be examined at "the place of judgment" (Ecc. 3:16). Because all things will in some ways be judged, and are even now, *therefore* we must fear God and keep His commands (Ecc. 3:1; 12:13,14). However in :9,10, Solomon seems to be saying that God has burdened men with a life whose every aspect [which he now lists] is without profit and vain. And he may be sarcastic (as noted on Ecc. 2:24,26) when he suggests "God" will bring men to judgment for all things in their lives. Or it may be that the whole of this chapter could be a description of how he once thought; he once said in his heart that there would be a future judgment of all things by God (:17). But the contradictions he now sees in the idea of a Divine judgment leads him up to the final conclusion in :22, that because "God" cannot resurrect man to judgment, therefore man may as well get on and enjoy life in a moderate kind of way. Elsewhere Solomon effectively denies any idea of future judgment by God, and so I am inclined to view this chapter as a description of what he once believed, which by the end of the chapter we see he has now jettisoned.

Ecc 3:2 a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted-
As noted on :1, the "time" for these things may mean 'a time for judgment' (:17). We are judged for the time of our birth and death in the sense that God takes into account human lifespan. A sinful man may only encounter God's ways later in life, starting at a certain point on the spectrum, God expects him to move a particular distance from there. Others live long lives and heard God's call in childhood; and a further distance of development is perhaps hoped for from them. God Himself planted and then plucked up His people and also other nations (Jer. 12:17; 18:7). There is a time to pull out of projects, to give up. But we will be judged as to how, when and with what motives we do so.

Hezekiah had once learnt that even if there is a time to die, even that is open to dialogue. For God gave him another 15 years added to his "days", his appointed time. See on :14. He rationalized the miracle as meaning that in any case, his "time" to die was simply 15 years from the point when he had been terminally ill. Now he just sees all events in human life as predetermined in a fatalistic way. He had pleaded with God to give him more life so that he could produce sons, but now he sees that there is simply a time to give birth and a time to die. It's so tragic when God does great things for man, but they are then later rationalized and philosophized away- as faith and relationship with God grow cold. Indeed the Hebrew here is translated by Blenkinsopp "A time to give birth and a time to put an end to one's life". Giving birth is a conscious act and appears parallel with consciously chosing to end life. In this case, the author sees suicide as a possibility and not, theoretically, a bad one. All so tragic that Hezekiah, who had been given extra life, should reason like this.

Ecc 3:3 a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up-
As noted on :2, God Himself breaks down and builds up, kills and heals. We cannot do all these things, but perhaps Solomon has himself in view. Or maybe he is

commenting upon the legislation in the law of Moses which required these things to be done. Although in :9 he argues that there is no profit in any of these things.

Ecc 3:4 a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance-
Solomon speaks elsewhere of the spiritual advantage of going to a funeral to weep and mourn, rather than to a wedding to laugh and dance. And here he seems to be saying that for our attitude to all these things, our behaviour in joy or grief, we will be brought into judgment at some time (:17).

Ecc 3:5 a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing-
"Cast away" is "cast", perhaps alluding to stoning people. I suggested on :3,9 that Solomon may have the Mosaic legislations partially in view. He recognizes that there are times when we withdraw from relationships, and times when we form them. And again, there is a time for judgment for all these things (:17).

Ecc 3:6 a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away-
The opposition between seeking and losing suggests that the losing is effectively the opposite of seeking. The idea is that there is a time to seek, and also a time to accept as lost, and give up seeking. It could be argued that the parables of Lk. 15 imply that God never gives up seeking. This would be one of many examples of where later scripture takes issue with what koheleth says in this book. But in practical reality, there does come a time to cease dialogue, to accept the loss, as God did with Israel. And there is a time for those inevitable choices to be judged (:17). There is a time when we accept that things are lost, cast away. But when and how we decide that, and from what motives, will have its time for judgment.

Ecc 3:7 a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak-
In these examples, it is impossibly to define the precise time when we should keep silence compared to speaking out, to unite in relationship or move away in it. And trying to define the precisely correct moment is unwise and inappropriate. But our motives and reasons will have their time for judgment (:17). As noted on :6, many of the examples given seem to be pertinent to human relationships (:8 also).

Ecc 3:8 a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace-
I observed on :6,7 that Solomon seems to have in view how human relationships begin and at times come to an end. He accepts that relationships sometimes come to an end, and there is even a time for contention. But when, how, with what motives... has its time for judgment (:17).

For Solomon, his "wisdom" was merely knowledge. The promises to David, the hope of the Kingdom, had no personal bite for him. He muses that "there is a time" for everything (Ecc. 3:1-7), as if his nihilism led him conclude that all behaviour is somehow predestined, all is cyclical, nothing is ultimately new, and even God is caught up in this- for "God seeks again that which He has driven away" (Ecc. 3:15). As water goes around the water cycle (Ecc. 1:7), so everything repeats, things just happen to us (Ecc. 3:1-8), there will be no resurrection, no coming back (Ecc. 3:22 RV); and there is therefore no real point in spiritual endeavour (Ecc. 3:9). This attitude reveals a pathetic failure to let the knowledge of God dynamically impact daily life; there's no appreciation of the Spirit, of God's radical life co-joining with human life, of His mind meeting that of man. Leaving knowledge as mere theory, as

so much Bible study can too easily remain, is a dangerous thing. And Solomon is the parade example of it.

The idea of Ecc. 10:11 and so often in Ecclesiastes is that no matter how wise you are, random chance event trumps all wisdom you may have. This is the idea that "there is a time for" everything. This reflects a studied refusal by Hezekiah / Solomon to accept the higher hand of providence leading to an ultimate end- future salvation in God's Kingdom. Even God's miraculous deliverance of Hezekiah from war and giving him peace is now renegotiated in his mind- there was just a foreordained time for that. The grace of God's action, and His response to prayer, is thereby nullified in Hezekiah's mind.

Ecc 3:9 What profit has he who works in that in which he labours?-
"Profit" is a favourite theme of Solomon. He had an incredibly utilitarian view of life, wanting to see the tangible effect of work in this life. Some of the things in :2-8 may allude to obedience to Mosaic legislation, yet he considers this of no profit; just as Israel later did (Mal. 3:16 perhaps alludes to Solomon's claim that there was no profit in working). I noted on Ecc. 2:17,18 that he ends up hating his life because he hates his works. The parallel between works and life meant that he was a human doing rather than a human being. He saw no ultimate profit in his works and life because he was now going to die. He had no sense at all that the works of the righteous "follow them" (Rev. 14:13), and we shall be given the eternal consequence of our works (Rev. 22:12). He concludes Ecclesiastes by admitting that this is the final truth (Ecc. 12:14), but this was not his personal belief nor how he had lived his life. He finally comes to the right conclusion, and had known it all along on some level, occasionally alluding to in his book of Proverbs; but he did not personalize it. He looked for the result of works in this life and didn't find it, and so he hated life, hated his works, and his heart turned away from God to idols. This is the kind of realization which men facing death often come to, but still they refuse to personalize it. We have all surely encountered this kind of thing. And this is our challenge; to personalize it, and live right now as if we are in God's judgment presence, for things great and small, things public and hidden.

The idea is that all human labour, physically and spiritually, is in vain. Ecc. 12:14 adjusts this by the inspired editor warning that in fact it is not vain because it will be incorporated somehow into our final judgment at the last day. Paul criticizes this by arguing that because of the resurrection [which koheleth denies], our labour is not in vain "in the Lord". And Isaiah critiques this position by saying that Messiah will be satisfied by the toil / travail of His soul (Is. 53:11). Hezekiah could have been a Messiah figure. But he failed, and didn't want to look forward to the future Messiah whose labour would not be in vain- in that it would bring forth the resurrection of all in Him.

Ecc 3:10 I have seen the burden which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted with-
This "burden" or "travail" is something Solomon laments throughout Ecclesiastes, and considers himself the parade example of it. He seems to complain that God has given this to people. I suggested on :8 that he considers the time for everything to be somehow predestined, and yet complains that for all these things God seeks to judge people (:17). And so he considers this to be a burden God has given to men to afflict them with. And yet the Biblical idea of travail or burden is that God brings these things in order to spiritually develop His people, to do them good in their latter end

(s.w. Dt. 8:2,3,16). The travail of Israel in Egypt was to bring a new nation to birth. But Solomon has no sense of ultimate, eternal outcomes; he expects an immediate consequence right now in this life. And so he considers God unreasonable.

Being "afflicted" was what went on throughout his father David's life (s.w. 1 Kings 2:26; Ps. 132:1). But unlike David, he sees no positive outcome for it.

Ecc 3:11 He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in their hearts, yet so that man can't find out the work that God has done from the beginning even to the end-

On Ecc. 2:17 I noted that Solomon despised all the 'work that he had worked', because he was obsessed with his own works rather than God's works of salvation by grace. "The work that is worked" is the phrase used for how Israel were to "do your work" for six days and then observe the Sabbath (Ex. 23:12). That provision was to teach them that life is more than works; and the spirit of the Sabbath was to point forward to salvation by grace in Christ. This lesson was totally lost upon Solomon. The history of Israel repeatedly talked of how their salvation was the work which *God* worked (s.w. Dt. 11:3,7 etc.). But Solomon ignored God's work because he was so obsessed with his own work, briefly passing off the work God worked as beyond understanding (Ecc. 3:11 s.w.), and any grasp upon eternity as therefore having been made too difficult by God. He made the mistake so many make, assuming that God's word and work is a riddle to be solved, with eternal life as the reward for figuring it out. God is not like that, hiding as it were behind the Bible or some doctrinal system which He has established as a code to be broken before He deals with men. He is far more proactive than that in seeking our salvation. And to those who truly love Him, His teachings are plain, as they were to David (Jn. 7:17).

But it seems Solomon or Hezekiah liked to think that finding God was a far too difficult intellectual exercise to be achievable, and God had in fact made it so (Ecc. 3:11; 8:17). Because, presumably, He wants to hide Himself from His own creations. Indeed there is the implication that God is cruel to have placed a desire for eternity in man's structure, and yet make it unattainable for him. Man sees a beautiful sunset and reaches for his camera to photograph it, sensing the eternal, but not able to make ultimate sense of it. It's the same idea as the comment that what is crooked cannot be made straight (Ecc. 1:15; 7:13), especially when God has made it crooked (although Isaiah's response is that the crooked will be made straight before Messiah). The argument seems to be that nobody can get totally right with God because He doesn't let them have the chance to change. This is part of the travail or curse which God gave man (:10). But this was just a convenient excuse to not pursue relationship with God. Paul rightly says that God is not far from every man. It is also a studied denial of the possibility of future eternity, at the resurrection. And we hear it today. Isaiah, as so often, comments on this verse by saying that God does declare [Heb. 'explain'] the end from the beginning- it can be found out through His word (Is. 46:10).

The goodness of God can lead *all men* to repentance (Rom. 2:4). God has set a sense of the eternal in the human heart (Ecc. 3:11 AVmg). An awareness of judgment is alive as a basic instinct in people. God is "not far from every one of us… forasmuch as we are [all] the offspring of God" (Acts 17:27-29- stated in a preaching context), being created in His image. But Solomon passes all this off as too hard for any human being. The truth was that he presented it as too difficult because he didn't actually want eternity as God offers it, in *His* Kingdom; he wanted an eternal now, enjoying his own titillations of his own flesh. And he considered that it was better never to have existed (Ecc. 4:3).

Ecc 3:12 I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice, and to do good as long as they live-

As noted on :1, his sense may be that he *now* knows [so he thinks] that it is better to just enjoy life, because God cannot resurrect to judgment (:22). Heb. "So long as they are alive" reflects Hezekiah's position with a defined period left to live.

Ecc 3:13 Also that every man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labour, is the gift of God-

I have suggested on Ecc. 3:1,17,24 that Solomon is accusing God of being unable to resurrect and judge, and therefore his previous understanding that everything will be brought to judgment was misplaced. Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes however with an admission that this is in fact the case; all in human life will be judged finally. So I take chapter 3 as bravado, which in the face of his final death he has to admit was wrong, although he still fails to repent and accept the personal implications of this. The idea that work is a "gift of God" appears to be deconstructed in the New Testament allusions to this; for they insist that the "gift of God" is the grace of salvation without human works (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:15; 6:23; Jn. 4:10). This suggests that as in Ecc. 2:24,26, Solomon uses this idea of "this is the gift of God" wrongly and sarcastically. As often, the allusion is to early Genesis- where God 'gave' labour as part of the curse, labouring to "eat and drink" until he dies.

Ecc 3:14 I know that whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; and God has done it, that men should fear before Him- This must be taken in the context of Solomon's denial that God can resurrect to judgment (:22), and his complaint that all the life choices of :2-7 are predestined and so God is burdening man with the idea of judging them (:8). Solomon reasons as if he has no perspective of eternity at all. I suggested on :8 that God is being accused of predestining the behaviour of people and then calling them to judgment. This is what Solomon once believed, but he is mocking that belief. And saying that in this case, then God is just putting men in fear of Him. Human behaviour is irrelevant, Solomon is saying, because nothing can be added nor subtracted from God's permanent actions.

The comment that nothing can be added to what God does clearly alludes to the adding of 15 years to Hezekiah's days. Perhaps Hezekiah is lamenting that nothing more could now be added to his 15 years. But verse 14 has alluded to the curse in Eden, and so here the idea may be that that curse from God cannot be changed. But that is a studied denial of the implications of Gen. 3:15, that the curse will be reversed through the future Messiah.

Ecc 3:15 That which is has been long ago, and that which is to be has been long ago: and God seeks again that which is passed away-

This continues Solomon's accusation that God is unreasonable in demanding judgment for that which is past, because everything is merely cyclical, as Solomon began Ecclesiastes by complaining. The "new song" which his father David loved to sing (Ps. 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1 etc.) reflected the sense that the movement of the

Spirit results in our living in "newness of life". But for Solomon, all was as it were old and boring. He had no sense of the Spirit's renewing work within him. The previous verses have alluded to the curse in Eden, which koheleth sees as having been given by God "long ago", and is an unreasonable 'seeking again' by God of the past sin in Eden. Instead of wallowing in the curse, koheleth should have seen that the answer to the problem is in the Christ.

Ecc 3:16 Moreover I saw under the sun, in the place of justice, that wickedness was there; and in the place of righteousness, that wickedness was there-

Solomon may simply mean that there is no justice in this world, and therefore he had been attracted toward the idea that the final judgment is from God, and at a future time (:17). But "the place of justice" is the phrase used of the place to be established under the Mosaic law for justice (Dt. 17:8). Solomon is saying that the Mosaic idea didn't work, because there was wickedness even in the place of justice. He has little to say about the Mosaic law even in Proverbs, apart from appropriating the language of blessing for obedience to obedience to his Proverbs, which he seems to see as a replacement torah. He was specifically disobedient to the commands about trading in horses and marriage to Gentiles. So specifically disobedient that it was as if he wished to as it were trash the Mosaic law and demonstrate it was obsolete or inapplicable to him.

This is relevant to Hezekiah because their leaders judged for bribes at his time (Mic. 3:11). "The place of righteousness" was the term for the middle court where laws were made, according to Rashi. But this was where Isaiah had received the gracious message of Hezekiah's salvation. But now Hezekiah shrugs that off as just a corrupt place. He has no concept of future judgment, and laments that in this life there is no justice in courts, as he does also in Ecc. 5:8. Hence the inspired editor concludes the book with the good news that there is in fact judgment to come.

Ecc 3:17 I said in my heart, God will judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work-

This could mean that this is what he once said in his heart. The whole of this chapter could be a description of how he once thought, and the contradictions he now sees in the idea of a Divine judgment leads him up to the final conclusion in :22, that because "God" cannot resurrect man to judgment, therefore man may as well get on and enjoy life in a moderate kind of way. The inspired epilogue reminds us that indeed, God will do this, as the Preacher once believed (Ecc. 12:14).

"Purpose" is the word for "delight". David's "delight" was in God's law (Ps. 1:2 s.w.) and also in the things of the future Kingdom of God (s.w. 2 Sam. 23:5); our "delight" in those things is reflected in our attitudes to God's word. And we shall be finally judged according to our 'delights', our dominant desires (s.w. Ecc. 3:17; 8:6). The Lord Jesus was devoted to sharing Yahweh's "delight" (Is. 53:10). We shall be judged according to what are our dominant desires.

Solomon had previously correctly understood that "God shall judge the righteous and the wicked (at the second coming): for there is a time there for *every* purpose and for *every* work... for God shall bring *every* work into judgment, with *every* secret thing, whether it be good or bad" (Ecc. 3:17; 12:14). Note the emphasis on "*every*". Even what we have spoken in the ear will be shouted out (Lk. 12:3) -implying others will somehow observe our judgment, cp. Mt. 12:41. If the judgment is merely a

yes/no statement which has been worked out taking our whole life into consideration, then this emphasis on every work having a time for consideration and judgment "there" is pointless. However, these verses must be considered in conjunction with those which speak of God's 'forgetting' of bad deeds on account of how people later chose to live. This need not mean that they are erased from God's infinite knowledge; all too often we perceive God's memory as a vast memory bank which can have our sins erased from it. But His knowledge knows no such bounds of human perception; yet He is willing not to hold those things against us, and to therefore count us as having never committed them.

Ecc 3:18 I said in my heart, As for the sons of men, God tests them, so that they may see that they themselves are like animals-

Again we see the outworking of God's judgment upon Hezekiah- he was "left" by God, so that Hezekiah might know what was in his own heart. And here he writes it down.

As suggested on :17, this may be Solomon's recollection of how he had previously [correctly] understood things. Although all this leads up to the conclusion in :22; that Solomon no longer considers God able to raise the dead and bring them to judgment. But what he writes here as the restatement of his previous position, when he still believed Divine wisdom, is therefore true. Ecc. 3:18 says that God 'tests' man by making him see that he is just an animal; i.e. those who are humble enough to be His true people will realize the truth of this, but those who are not will fail this 'test'. It is a considerable task to clear our thinking of the influence of humanism. The plain words of Ps. 39:5 are a help: "Man at his best state is but vapour". "It is not for man to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23 N.I.V.).

Having spoken of the coming of judgment, Ecc. 3:18 RV comments: "It is because of the sons of men, that God might manifest them [i.e. to themselves], and that they might see that they themselves are beasts". The purpose of the judgment is for us, to teach us the gripping truth of the mortality of man. This theory we know, as doctrine. But only in the chilling reality of the judgment will we know it in reality. Again and again I repeat: the judgment seat is for our benefit, not God's. "For he [God] needeth not further to consider a man; that he should go before God in judgment" (Job 34:23 RV). Yet man will go before God in judgment- but for our benefit.

Ecc 3:19 For that which happens to the sons of men happens to animals. Even one thing happens to them. As the one dies, so the other dies. Yes, they have all one breath; and man has no advantage over the animals: for all is vanity-

"Advantage" is the word for "profit". He sees poverty as the result of laziness, and profit / plenty coming from hard work (Prov. 14:23; 21:5); but now his advancing years remind him that there is no ultimate profit because death cuts it short, and reveals man as no better than an animal in the way he dies. Solomon fails to appreciate the wider narrative in spiritual life. The good news is for the poor, which group may include the lazy. And works will not save, and God's salvation is what is ultimately required by man. But Solomon had no eternal perspective, because he thought his kingdom was God's. And so as he got older and closer to death, he reasons that the reality of death means that man has no profit or preeminence (s.w. Ecc. 3:19). If he had accepted the Gospel of the future Kingdom of God, he would have focused

more upon salvation by grace through faith, and less upon the supremacy of hard work and profit / preeminence in this life.

I suggested on :17,18 that this is a recapitulation of how Solomon had previously understood things when he still held to God's truth. So despite the wrong things he says at times in Ecclesiastes, I believe these descriptions of the death state are true; and they corroborate other Bible passages which teach the same. For indeed there is no immortal soul nor conscious survival of death. The spirit which animates people is that possessed by animals.

The repeated stress that "all is vanity" is never met by a corresponding assurance that all will be resolved in God's Kingdom. Because the author has no faith or Kingdom perspective. Paul makes another allusion to Ecclesiastes when he was inspired to write in Rom. 8:20,21 that "The creation was subjected to frustration (*mataiotes,* the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *hebel* , "vanity") not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God". The counterpoint to the experience of "vanity" is that the believer has Hope of the Kingdom, by grace. But even when faced with terminal illness, and in thanking God for being saved from it, Hezekiah makes no mention of the future Kingdom. And in Ecclesiastes he dwells solely upon the "vanity" of the present world.

Ecc 3:20 All go to one place. All are from the dust, and all turn to dust again-

The "all" here refers in the context to both man and animals. As noted on :19, this is summary of how Solomon had correctly understood things; indeed he is here quoting Gen. 3:19; Job 10:9; 34:15; Ps. 104:29. There is no inherent immortality in man; in the way he dies, he is as an animal. The division between the righteous and unrighteous is not at death, seeing all go to the same place; rather is it at the resurrection to judgment at the last day. This belief is necessitated by the simple fact that at death, all go to the same place; not some to heaven and some to "hell".

This is one of many allusions to the curse in Eden, whereby "to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19), alluding also to the Genesis 2 description of human formation from dust and spirit of God, which must return to Him. There are many allusions to the curse in Ecclesiastes, especially in the verses which speak of man's labour being in vain and just to satisfy his appetite / need to eat. Especially Ecc. 5:17 "All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath". "God made man upright" (Ecc. 7:29), "one sinner destroys much good." (Ecc. 9:18 cp. Rom. 5:18 "for as by one man sin entered the world... so death passed upon all men"). But Genesis 3 held out the great Hope of redemption from the curse through Messiah. But the koheleth doesn't want to factor that in. He sees death as the final impenetrable frontier, the ultimate boundary, which no man can pass beyond. Although he surely knew Gen. 3:15 as well as he knew Gen. 3:19. Unlike Abraham, he refused to rejoice at the prospect of the day of Christ. But he wallows in the curse [as so much art and human thinking does today, just endlessly lamenting that we are only human], rather than the long term blessing of Eden restored in the Kingdom. But we are intended to perceive this glaring omission- and thereby to be led out of postmodern meaninglessness, to Christ. For it is His resurrection which changes the whole narrative about wallowing in the curse. This is how Ecclesiastes leads to Christ. As Spurgeon used to say, from every town, village and hamlet of England, there is a London road that leads towards London. And so all Scripture leads to the Lord Jesus.

Ecc 3:21 Who knows the spirit of man, whether it goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, whether it goes downward to the earth?-

This is not saying that the spirit of man goes upward to heaven, and the spirit of animals goes downward. "Who knows..." as in :22 means 'It is not the case that...'. The wrong idea is being deconstructed- there is no such distinction; for Solomon has just stated in :20 that man and animals all go to the same place. There is no reincarnation, but death is simply a return to the dust and the life force is retracted by God.

Ecc 3:22 Therefore I saw that there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who can bring him to see what will be after him?-
It may be that the whole of this chapter could be a description of how he once thought; he once said in his heart that there would be a future judgment of all things by God (:17). But the contradictions he now sees in the idea of a Divine judgment leads him up to this final conclusion in :22, that because "God" cannot resurrect man to judgment, therefore man may as well get on and enjoy life in a moderate kind of way. "Who can..." as in :21 means 'It is not the case that...'. Elsewhere Solomon effectively denies any idea of future judgment by God, and so I am inclined to view this chapter as a description of what he once believed, which by the end of the chapter we see he has now jettisoned.

The question "who can bring [a man] to see what will be after him?" is answerable- God, through the Lord Jesus. But Messiah was not in Hezekiah's worldview. And so he is left in the misery of having only this life. Likewise the refrain "There is nothing better" begs the question: 'Is there really nothing better?'. And there is a far better thing- resurrection to eternal life in God's Kingdom: "There is *nothing better* for a man than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labour (Ecc. 2:24)... I know that there is *nothing better* for them than to rejoice, and to do good as long as they live (Ecc. 3:12)... Therefore I saw that there is *nothing better*, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who can bring him to see what will be after him?" (Ecc. 3:22)... I commended mirth, because a man has *no better thing* under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be joyful" (Ecc. 8:15). Surely Heb. 11:40 has all this in mind: "God having provided *some better thing* for us..." at the resurrection. And "better" is a big theme: "Better things... a better hope... a better possession and an enduring one... a better country" (Heb. 6:9; 7:19; 10:34; 11:16).

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 4

Ecc 4:1 Then I returned and saw all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and behold, the tears of those who were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power; but they had no comforter-
"Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish" (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them (1 Kings 12:11). 1 Kings 5:13-16 reveals that Solomon had 153,000 full time and 90,000 part time male servants. Israel's complaint that Solomon had whipped them implies that he treated them like slaves, with himself as the slave-

driver. 600,000 adults came out of Egypt (Ex.12:37), and
assuming the population only rose slightly over the next 550 years, we have the picture of an Israel where almost half the males (i.e. probably the majority of the working population) were pressganged into slavery to a despotic King Solomon.

He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that "I returned and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun [by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way]; but they had no comforter" (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed. He even seems to say that there is nothing to be surprised at in the poor being oppressed, because the whole hierarchy of officialdom above them do the same (Ecc. 5:2). He saw his sin as inevitable, as part of his participation in humanity- he didn't own up to his own desperate need for grace. Yet he also knew that "man lords it over man [cp. Solomon's oppression of the people] to his own hurt" (Ecc. 8:9 RSV). But still he did so.

"Oppression" in Ecc. 4 is the same word used by Hezekiah about his suffering and illness (Is. 38:19 "I am oppressed"). If the verses in Ecc. 4:1-4 are relevant to Hezekiah, then it is as if he is regretting having been given 15 years extra to live. He concludes life is meaningless, despite having been given 15 years extra. Ecclesiastes stresses that death is inevitable- and who more than Hezekiah during his last 15 years to appreciate that? He thinks that death is preferable to life (Ecc. 6:3; 7:1). Because he saw no point in life as he saw the inevitable end approaching, at the end of the 15 years. Ecclesiastes has an obsession with death- and that fits Hezekiah perfectly.

Ecc 4:2 Therefore I praised the dead who have been long dead more than the living who are yet alive-
For all his wealth, power and the ability to enjoy it, Solomon sees life and existence as a bad thing. And this is the final end of those who live life for themselves and not for God. I noted on Ecc. 2:17,18 that Solomon "hated life" just as he hated his own works; because he was a human doing rather than a human being.

Ecc 4:3 Yes, better than them both is him who has not yet been, who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun-
I suggested on :2 that Solomon included himself in this bitter regret of life and existence. Life is God's great gift; but Solomon despises it. What he says here is really blasphemous. Because he sees no possibility of eternity (see on Ecc. 3:11), he therefore considers existence futile. If he had believed as David his father had, then the perspective of the Kingdom would have changed his entire outlook.

Ecc 4:4 Then I saw all the labour and achievement that is the envy of a man's neighbour. This also is vanity and a striving after wind-
Solomon has much to say about the evil of envy (e.g. Prov. 14:30; 23:17; 24:1,19; 27:4). And indeed, envy is so bitter that one may as well not labour or achieve more than our neighbour, because the resultant envy makes all our apparent success but vanity. But true as his condemnations of envy are, he surely has in mind the way that Ephraim envied Judah, and envied his throne (s.w. Is. 11:13). This all came to full term after his death, when Ephraim departed from Judah under Jeroboam. Again, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we

who claim to hold His truths must take warning. But as he faced death, he came to realize that all such envy is as nothing before the reality of death, which he understood as the end of life, as he had assumed this life was the time for reward and expresses no personal hope in a resurrection of the body (Ecc. 4:4; 9:6).

Ecc 4:5 The fool folds his hands together and ruins himself-
LXX "and eats his own flesh". This caricature continues the kind of mockery of the poor as being lazy and foolish which Solomon indulges in throughout Proverbs. He never totally quits his works based attitude, and justification of his own native personality type as a hard worker.

Ecc 4:6 Better is a handful, with quietness, than two handfuls with labour and chasing after wind-
LXX "waywardness of spirit". This continues Solomon's theme of :4 that excessive labour isn't worth the grief. Whilst absolute laziness is wrong (:5), Solomon urges a quiet life, with moderate effort, with quietness and ability to enjoy what you have as the important thing. This all reflects his nihilism and refusal to lift his spiritual horizons higher. The idea of working with God and for His glory was quite out of his mind.

Ecc 4:7 Then I returned and saw vanity under the sun-
"Returned" is the standard word used for changing the mind. I suggested on Ecc. 3:17,18 that Solomon is now changing his mind in his old age, rejecting the Divine truths he earlier held, in accordance with how we read that his heart turned away from Yahweh and to idols (1 Kings 11:3).

Ecc 4:8 There is one who is alone, and he has neither son nor brother. There is no end to all of his labour, neither are his eyes satisfied with wealth. For whom then, do I labour, and deprive my soul of enjoyment? This also is vanity. Yes, it is a miserable business-
The Lord surely built His parable of the lonely, rich fool on this. His punchline was "And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Lk. 12:19-20), alluding to "For whom then do I labour?". But the Lord's parable was not just wallowing in the folly of hard work when you can't long enjoy it. It connects with His teaching that correct use of wealth [giving it away] results in "treasure in heaven", a reward to be given to us when the Lord returns in judgment (Mt. 6:19; Mk. 10:21).

The Lord appears to have this character in mind when He frames the parable of the rich fool. And yet Solomon has himself in view. He laboured for yet more wealth, when God had given him huge wealth. And he sees his problem; his eyes could never be satisfied. And indeed, the Millionaire always wants another million… Solomon had lost his brothers, whom he saw as competitors to the throne and had constantly criticized in the Proverbs. And he had no son he appeared confident of as his successor. Solomon really sounds like the spoilt child he was. He complains that his soul was 'deprived of enjoyment' because he had wanted too much wealth.

The lack of "satisfaction" is a major theme in the descriptions of condemnation for those who break the covenant (s.w. Lev. 26:26). And it is the principle we must live by today; that the only satisfaction is in the things of God's Kingdom. Even in this life, the eye is not "satisfied" with seeing or wealth (s.w. Prov. 27:20; Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10). And those who seek such satisfaction from those things will find that

dissatisfaction is the lead characteristic of their condemnation (Ps. 59:15). Tragically Solomon knew the truth of all this but lived otherwise; just as so many do who give lip service to the idea that the things of the flesh cannot satisfy.

Solomon later concludes that despite having every material blessing, a man can still not be satisfied (s.w. Ecc. 4:8; 6:3). But in Proverbs he thinks that the righteous *do* satisfy their souls in this life (Prov. 13:25). But he thought that this would be experienced in this life, rather than in any future Kingdom of God on earth. As he got closer to death, he realized that he had not satisfied his soul despite all his wealth. And so he concluded that righteousness was vain, and turned away from Yahweh. This is what happens when we lose the perspective of the future Kingdom of God.

It is possible to see Solomon as an anti-Christ, as well as a type of Christ; like Saul, he was both a type of Christ, and also the very opposite of the true Christ. This point is really brought out in Is. 53:11, where the true Messiah is described as being "satisfied" with the travail or labour of his soul, and will thereby bring forth many children. The Hebrew words used occur in close proximity in several passages in Ecclesiastes, where Solomon speaks of how all his "travail" or "labour" has not "satisfied" him, and that it is all the more vain because his children may well not appreciate his labour and will likely squander it (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:3). Likewise the 'Babylon' system of Revelation, replete with its feature of 666, is described in terms which unmistakably apply to Solomon's Kingdom. This feature of Solomon- being both a type of Christ and yet also the very opposite of the true Christ- reflects the tragic duality which we will observe at such length in our later studies.

In Ecc. 2:18,19 he laments that his labours will achieve nothing; doubtless alluding back to his words in Prov. 5:10, where he says that the Gentile wife will make the young Israelite's labours meaningless. Sin never satisfies. "Hell and destruction are never satisfied, and the eyes of man are never satisfied" (Prov. 27:20 RV), Solomon wrote in his youth; and then in old age, he came to basically the same conclusion, having spent his life working back to the truth that he had been taught in his youth (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8). And there are many men and women who have done the same. We all tend to be empirical learners; and yet this is the great power of God's word, that through it we need not have to learn everything through our failures; but we can receive His Truth, trust it, and simply live by it. Otherwise we shall be like Solomon…

Ecc 4:9 Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour- Despite having 1000 wives and every relationship he fancied, Solomon complains in :8 of the existential loneliness which faced him. He wishes for just one good friend, and surely he has in view the Genesis language of one man and one woman, two people, being joined as one by God. He hankers too late for just one wife. But instead of repenting for his unbridled lust and moving forward in God's grace, he just hankers for what he cannot now have. The good reward for the labour of the two people would refer to children which the two of them have raised (Ps. 127:3).

Koheleth often alludes to early Genesis, and here we have another example- to Gen. 2:18, "It is not good that the man should be alone", and the "labour" refers to the curse of how man would labour with sweat until he returns to dust. But he considers this as an example of "vanity under the sun" (:7). Whatever blessings there are in life, even ones from God, and no matter how Divine wisdom might make life more endurable, all is dwarfed beneath the shadow of death as the ultimate, final end. Paul really does have koheleth in mind when he writes that we are most miserable, if in this life only we have hope in Christ with no perspective of resurrection.

Ecc 4:10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls, and doesn't have another to lift him up-
Solomon felt alone in his wealth (:8), and seems to accept he has fallen in some sense. Perhaps he means spiritually; and he complains he has nobody to help him up. He had married hundreds of Gentile women, despite the warning that they would turn away his heart. And yet instead of repenting and asking for God to "lift him up", as David asked (s.w. Ps. 41:10; 113:7), he just continues complaining that he has nobody to lift him up.

Ecc 4:11 Again, if two lie together, then they have warmth; but how can one keep warm alone?-
Solomon's whining that he didn't have a single wife, as a result of his polygamy, is now starting to sound pathetic and irritating. Poor Solomon is cold because he has no wife to lie next to him. He has become bitter with them all, and is unlike his father David, who in his old age was kept warm by Abishag lying with him (1 Kings 1:1-4). But Solomon seems to allude to this and lament that in his old age, he didn't have anyone to do this for him.

Ecc 4:12 If a man prevails against one who is alone, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken-
Solomon still has himself in view, as the one left existentially alone because of his wealth (see on :8). And now in :13 he again has himself in view; Ecclesiastes truly is Solomon's autobiography and lament over his own old age. The sense in this verse seems to be that Solomon felt weak and alone, and had nobody supporting him. Just one other would make two of them, and even better would be just one more, making a threefold cord.

Ecc 4:13 Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who doesn't know how to receive admonition any more-
Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or instruction coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

Ecclesiastes is in many ways Solomon's self-examination; and it was accurate. He indicates that the temple had actually made him stumble, and that his numerous sacrifices had been the sacrifices of a fool, rather than the wise man he had appeared to be (Ecc. 5:1); and surely he was casting a sideways glance at himself when he spoke of the wise child (cp. Solomon initially, 1

Kings 3:7) being grea ter than the old and foolish king who would no longer be admonished (Ecc. 4:13; even though Solomon had advisers, 1 Kings 12:6). Yet he chose to do absolutely nothing about this; once again, his accurate spiritual knowledge had no real practical influence upon him. For he had urged in Prov. 15:22 the need to take admonishment from others.

Ecc 4:14 For out of prison he came forth to be king; yes, even in his kingdom he was born poor-
He writes here of catastrophe overtaking the obstinate old king who will learn nothing. Revolution sweeps him away and brings to the throne a young claimant who has been kept in prison (cp. Jeroboam in Egypt). In spite of his rank the new monarch has grown up in relative poverty; and in the end, "all the living", the people of the land, at first serve with the first king but later forget him. This was Solomon's fear, his fantasy… so piercingly accurate in his self-understanding.

LXX "because he also that was in his kingdom has become poor" implies that the new king would arise because of the poverty of the people in the kingdom. Ordinary people in Solomon's later reign were enslaved to him and beaten by him (1 Kings 12:11). Solomon so precisely understands the situation in his own kingdom, and how therefore a new king will arise. This is a feature of Ecclesiastes; Solomon so well understands his position, but refuses to do anything about it. Again we see that understanding of "truth" alone will not save, but rather drive into depression and nihilism unless it is personalized and believed. And this is seen in so many in Protestant groups devoted to 'finding Bible truth'.

Ecc 4:15 I saw all the living who walk under the sun, that they were with the youth, the other, who succeeded him-
Solomon's premonitions about the successful revolt of Jeroboam were correct, but he exaggerates them hugely into almost apocalyptic scales, with "all the living under the sun" following this "youth". He was only young compared to Solomon. Solomon had never entertained much hope of the future Messianic kingdom promised to David, seeing his kingdom as that promised Kingdom of God. And the result was that he starts to have deeply irrational fears about the future of his own kingdom. These fears and even accurate imaginations reflect his lack of faith in the Kingdom of God.

Ecc 4:16 There was no end of all the people, even of all them over whom he was- yet those who come after shall not rejoice in him. Surely this also is vanity and a chasing after wind-
To rejoice in a person was to politically follow or support them (Is. 8:6). Solomon sees the new king as having apparently endless support from people, and yet this too would fade away- as all things do. Again, Solomon's premonitions were so accurate.

Hezekiah had traded 15 years of personal peace for his descendants being eunuchs in captivity, and his people going into exile in Babylon. He knew full well that those who came after him would not rejoice in him. But he considered death to be so final that even that was but vanity. And seeking to have a good name after death was also a mere chasing after wind. We see here how totally limited were his horizons, bounded by his belief that death was the final limit and boundary to human existence. The tragedy is that he need not have seen life like that.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 5

Ecc 5:1 Guard your steps when you go to God's house; for to draw near to listen is better than to give the sacrifice of fools, for they don't know that they do evil-
The following verses are badly translated; the translators seem to want to give the impression that koheleth was a righteous man giving good advice about worshipping God. I suggest rather that here we have cynicism about worship. Ecclesiastes is in many ways Solomon's self-examination; and it was accurate. He indicates here that the temple had actually made him stumble [he therefore warns others not to stumble when they go into God's house], and that his numerous sacrifices had been the sacrifices of a fool, rather than the wise man he had appeared to be. The same phrase 'going into God's house' is used of Hezekiah going into the temple with the Assyrian letter. Both Solomon and Hezekiah are recorded as having offered huge numbers of sacrifices; but now he realizes that he would have done better to personally listen to Divine instruction than offer them all as a fool. He should have 'drawn near', an idiom for offering sacrifice, with an obedient and open ear rather than with thousands of animals. He analyzes so clearly where he had gone wrong, he sees it all; but does nothing about it, refusing to personalize the truths he perceived. Surely he was casting a sideways glance at himself when he spoke of the wise child (cp. Solomon initially, 1 Kings 3:7) being greater than the old and foolish king who would
no longer be admonished (Ecc. 4:13; even though Solomon had advisers, 1 Kings 12:6). Yet he chose to do absolutely nothing about this; once again, his accurate spiritual knowledge had no real practical influence upon him. 'Guarding the steps' could be an allusion to the practice of removing footwear when entering a holy place; although this seems an irrelevant exhortation. So I suggest it is parallel with 'drawing near' in offering sacrifice. And Solomon is saying that the use of the temple for huge scarifies, as he had done at its dedication, was not the right thing; rather would be it be better to be obedient. But Solomon wasn't obedient, so we conclude again that he has penetrating insight into his own failures and weaknesses, but refused to personalize and act upon that insight. This is a human feature so true to observed reality in spiritual life. This chapter appears to be Solomon's critique of the temple cult he had started.

It's possible to read :1,2 as Hezekiah / Solomon warning men not to as it were mess with God, because He doesn't suffer fools gladly. Better to be very cautious with Him, lest you get into trouble. Recognize He exists but don't make any vows, don't get too close, because He's likely to then judge you. Keep Him at arm's length; exactly the view of postmodernism today, who cannot bring themselves to profess atheism but at least self classify as agnostics. Such a tragically far cry from Hezekiah's pleading with God to give him some more life, and then being so humbly grateful when God responded. This idea of keeping God at a distance is perhaps why the author uses *elohim* and not the Yahweh Name when talking about God. He is not in covenant relationship with Yahweh.

Ecc 5:2 Don't be rash with your mouth, and don't let your heart be hasty to utter anything before God-
As :1 is Solomon's self criticism regarding the temple, I suggest that this talk about the danger of vows is also Solomon looking back at himself. Indeed I am seeking to demonstrate in this commentary that all of Ecclesiastes is Solomon's autobiography and reflections about himself. Hasty oaths might be a sideways stab back at Saul, who

enforced such a hasty oath about not eating honey. Solomon throughout Proverbs is always alluding to the individuals who had stood against David his father, and that bitterness and perceived need to knock down potential opposition remained with him all his days. For he is now writing this in his old age. But the oath in view is I suggest that of David regarding the building of the temple, which Solomon fulfilled (Ps. 132:2). This allows us to interpret these verses in context. The criticism of the temple in :1 leads on to this criticism of oath taking in :2. The context is then seamless; whereas other interpretations tend to make these verses out of context with each other.

In the Hezekiah context, this may be Hezekiah regretting his oath to God after his healing, to just walk quietly all his days singing praise to Yahweh in the temple.

For God is in heaven, and you on earth-

Descriptions of God's dwelling place clearly indicate that He has a personal location: "God is in heaven" (Ecc. 5:2); "For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the LORD viewed the earth" (Ps. 102:19); "Hear in heaven your dwelling place" (1 Kings 8:39). Yet more specifically than this, we read that God has a "throne" (2 Chron. 9:8; Ps. 11:4; Is. 6:1; 66:1). Such language is hard to apply to an undefined essence which exists somewhere in heavenly realms. God is spoken of as "coming down" when He manifests Himself. This suggests a heavenly location of God. It is impossible to understand the idea of 'God manifestation' without appreciating the personal nature of God.

But I suggest that Solomon is again talking about God tongue in cheek, with some level of sarcasm; for he was writing this when his heart had turned away from God (1 Kings 11:3). I suggest we are reading here Solomon's regret that David had taken the oath about building the temple, because he is now rejecting the temple cult. He built "houses" of worship for the gods of his wives, and worshipped them instead of Yahweh (1 Kings 11:4-8), worshipping in those temples rather than in Yahweh's temple. So we can understand his reflections in Ecc. 5 as meaning that he was regretting David had vowed to build the temple, leaving him to fulfil it; and his references to Yahweh dwelling in the temple are therefore to be read as sarcastic. .

Therefore let your words be few-

The context is of oaths, so the idea is, keep the words you say before God very few. The idea is, 'don't make oaths'. Not few in the sense that we don't pray for very long, but few in terms of their simplicity and directness. The Lord warned us against the complicated prayer forms of the Pharisees; and asked us to *mean* our words of 'yes' and 'no' rather than use more sophisticated assurances.

Ecc 5:3 For as a dream comes with a multitude of cares, so a fool's speech with a multitude of words-

I have argued throughout that Ecclesiastes is Solomon's self reflection, a kind of autobiography. It is also a rejection and renunciation of his faith, because he wrote it at the end of his life, when his heart had been turned aside from God (1 Kings 11:3). If we enquire what reference a "dream" may have to Solomon's historical life, we naturally think of the dream at the start of his life when he was offered whatever he wanted, and he chose wisdom (1 Kings 3:5). Several times in Ecclesiastes he appears to regret that choice, as he considers there to be no ultimate advantage to wisdom or going God's way because death ends it all, and God, Solomon thinks, cannot resurrect the dead to judgment (Ecc. 3:22). And so in Ecc. 5:3 Solomon seems to be saying that that dream was simply self induced, an outcome of his "multitude of cares", and the "multitude of words" of wisdom he had written in response to it was but "a fool's

speech". Like many who have had the direct involvement of God in their lives in youth, he came to rationalize it as nothing at all Divine, considering his dream had just been some Freudian reflection of his own internal "cares". And this kind of rationalizing of the Divine over time is absolutely true to observed experience in those who turn away from God.

Ecc 5:4 When you vow a vow to God, don't defer to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay that which you vow-
As noted on :2, Solomon's writings (especially in Proverbs) are full of allusion to historical incidents which condemn the enemies of the line of David, or justify David. He may have in view David's vow to build the temple (Ps. 132:2), which God in fact made to be deferred until Solomon fulfilled it. Even in old age, Solomon was still bent on justifying his father David and fighting the battles of yesterday, as so many. I suggested on :1-3 that Solomon is here rejecting the temple cult, but he justifies his building of the temple on the grounds that David had made a vow to God about it, and so Solomon had had no option but to fulfil it.

Ecc 5:5 It is better that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay-
This continues Solomon's criticism of his father's vow to build the temple, and is justifying his building of it. He had to make such a statement, because as noted on :2, Solomon built "houses" of worship for the gods of his wives, and worshipped them instead of Yahweh (1 Kings 11:4-8), worshipping in those temples rather than in Yahweh's temple. So here in his old age, having made that change, he is justifying why he had built a temple for Yahweh in the first place, although he had at this point ceased using it himself.

Ecc 5:6 Don't allow your mouth to lead you into sin. Don't protest before the messenger that this was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?-
The "messenger" is the word for "angel", but is used of the priests before whom David had apparently taken the vow to build the temple in Ps. 132:2. Solomon implies that the entire plan of building a temple for Yahweh "was a mistake", but David, and he too at the time, had feared God's wrath if he didn't fulfil the vow. He is justifying how he had forsaken Yahweh's temple for the temples he had built nearby for the gods of his wives. He is saying that the temple of Yahweh had been a "sin" and "mistake", but he is justifying in his autobiography why he had built it. Likewise as explained on Ecc. 8:16 he again laments his wasting time and effort building Yahweh's temple. He uses the same word in Ecc. 10:5 to describe his own "mistake" or "error" as the ruler.

However there was in Judaism the idea that a specific Angel dwelt in the temple and oversaw it, and that is not without Biblical support. The idea was that the presence of Yahweh in the temple was through an Angel, which in Ezekiel's time departed from the temple. Hezekiah had had dealings with this one Angel before, when it went out and slew the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers about to take Jerusalem and slay Hezekiah. But now he reasons that it's best to keep at arm's length from the Angel and not provoke him, as he was prone to lash out against God's people for the slightest legal infringement of the Mosaic law. How tragic.

Koheleth's concern was that the work of a man's hands would be destroyed by God because of some minor infringement of Divine law. He was trying to avoid this,

to hide from God. Whereas the response of Isaiah was that God's people who engaged with Him would "long enjoy [eternally] the work of their hands" (Is. 65:22).

Ecc 5:7 For in the multitude of dreams there are vanities, as well as in many words: but you must fear God-
The criticism of "many words" in Ecc. 5:7 and 6:11 seems a reference to his own writing down of the wisdom God had given him, codifying it into books such as the compilation we have in the book of Proverbs (Ecc. 12:10,12). He associates the "many words" with "dreams", perhaps an intensive plural for "a great dream". It was as a result of the dream of 1 Kings 3:5 that he was given the "many words" of wisdom which he now considered unhelpful and irrelevant because death meant that there was no particular ultimate advantage of wisdom over folly; wisdom was at best profitable in this life in some short term sense. And he therefore associates "many words" with folly (Ecc. 10:14). He considers he had been foolish by preaching and believing those many words of Divine wisdom. Now, for him, the true wisdom was in idolatry and not Yahweh worship in His temple. For he had forsaken worshipping at Yahweh's temple and instead worshipped in the idol temples he had built nearby (1 Kings 11:4-8). So "But you must fear God!" can be read as sarcasm, seeing he had forsaken God.

The idea is, Don't listen to your dreams but rather fear God, be frightened of Him, in the sense of the preceding verse- be fearful of Him, because He can lash out and destroy you for the slightest infringement, seeing He doesn't suffer fools gladly. All this is quite a different God to how we see Him acting in the Bible, and in our own lives. God does suffer fools like us. This could be Solomon now doubting whether his dream at Gibeon, and the subsequent gift of wisdom , was in fact valid or merely a random dream. It could also be Hezekiah considering that his relationship with God through the visions of Isaiah was all no more than confused dreaming and not reality.

Ecc 5:8 If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent taking away of justice and righteousness in a district, don't marvel at the matter: for one official is eyed by a higher one; and there are officials over them-
The "oppression" in view was that by Solomon. "Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish" (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them (1 Kings 12:11). He came to whip his people (1 Kings 12:14), treating them as he thought fools should be treated (Prov.26:3)- suggesting that he came to see himself as the only wise man, the only one truly in touch with reality, and therefore despising everyone else. 1 Kings 5:13-16 reveals that Solomon had 153,000 full time and 90,000 part time male servants. Israel's complaint that Solomon had whipped them implies that he treated them like slaves, with himself as the slave-driver. 600,000 adults came out of Egypt (Ex.12:37), and assuming the population only rose slightly over the next 550 years, we have the picture of an Israel where almost half the males (i.e. probably the majority of the working population) were pressganged into slavery to a despotic King Solomon.

Solomon seems to be saying that if anyone complained about his slave drivers, they were to remember that there was a hierarchy of control above them which ended in one man- himself. He is playing God here, as do all who abuse others, appropriating Divine language to himself.

He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that "I returned and

considered all the oppression that are done under the sun [by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way]; but they had no comforter" (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed. He even seems to say that there is nothing to be surprised at in the poor being oppressed, because the whole hierarchy of officialdom above them do the same (Ecc. 5:2). He saw his sin as inevitable, as part of his participation in humanity- he didn't own up to his own desperate need for grace. Yet he also knew that "man lords it over man [cp. Solomon's oppression of the people] to his own hurt" (Ecc. 8:9 RSV).

These abuses are similar to those Isaiah accused Hezekiah's Judah of, in Is. 1-35. But despite that, by grace God saved them from Assyria. As the Rabbis interpret it [Rashi]: "If you see that they oppress the poor and deprive [them of] justice, and you see charity coming toward the city, [i.e.] that the Holy One, Blessed Is He, lavishes goodness upon them and does not mete out retribution upon them, do not wonder about the will of the Omnipresent, for so is His custom, to be slow to anger". Isaiah's response is that oppression is not inevitable and is a sin (Is. 59:13) , the oppressed were to be set free (Is. 58:7) and Israel's Hope was to be free from oppression, "it shall not come near you" (Is. 54:14) in the Kingdom. The same Hebrew word is used.

This is relevant to Hezekiah because their leaders judged for bribes at his time (Mic. 3:11). He has no concept of future judgment, and laments that in this life there is no justice in courts, as he does also in Ecc. 3:16. Here he sees the whole pyramid of the justice system as being corrupt right through. Hence the inspired editor concludes the book with the good news that there is in fact judgment to come for absolutely everything (Ecc. 12:14). Without the perspective of Divine judgment at the end, present injustice weighs heavily upon the human soul, as we see in today's society. But when people say they are "glad that justice was done", there are left multiple unanswered issues, and their 'gladness' is in fact only cosmetic. Because for justice to be fully done requires the Divine hand.

"Don't marvel at the matter [of abuse]" is another example of Hezekiah arguing that sin is inevitable and should not be much of a shock to people. He is saying that if you see corruption at a lower level, don't be surprised, because the entire hierarchy of human society is corrupt- and you can do nothing about it. This is very different to Isaiah's perspective, which is to call for urgent repentance from such corruption rather than just accepting such a status quo, on the basis that sin is inevitable.

Ecc 5:9 Moreover the profit of the earth is for all. The king profits from the field- "But the advantage of a country consists always in a king given to the arable land". This could be Solomon's self justification for his interest in agriculture which he spoke of in Ecc. 2.

He said that a King "who maketh himself servant to the cultivated field" brings profit to the land (Ecc. 5:9 RVmg.)- as if he was justifying his zealous commitment to agriculture and considering the people of God to be so blessed by his presence amongst them. The mere possession of wisdom, of intellectual truth, can so easily lead us to this kind of empty self-congratulation. It was really Solomon's self-justification.

"Even the wild land when cultivated has a king" (Ecc. 5:9, Lukyn Williams' translation) seems to be justifying the bringing of newly cultivated land under Solomon's immediate taxation; Solomon is merely describing a state of misrule by him without drawing any conclusions (so L.G. Sargent concludes, *Ecclesiastes* p. 49).

He analyzes his sins so well, as do many imprisoned criminals. But still without repentance. And yet we each have the potential for this schizophrenia within us; we are, as Paul so strikingly describes, two different people within us, fighting for mastery of the soul (Rom. 7).

Ecc 5:10 He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity-
This is yet another piece of self-realization which doesn't seem to have resulted in motivating Solomon to grab hold on his inner being and shake himself. The lack of "satisfaction" is a major theme in the descriptions of condemnation for those who break the covenant (s.w. Lev. 26:26). And it is the principle we must live by today; that the only satisfaction is in the things of God's Kingdom. Even in this life, the eye is not "satisfied" with seeing or wealth (s.w. Prov. 27:20; Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10). And those who seek such satisfaction from those things will find that dissatisfaction is the lead characteristic of their condemnation (Ps. 59:15). Tragically Solomon knew the truth of all this but lived otherwise; just as so many do who give lip service to the idea that the things of the flesh cannot satisfy.

It is possible to see Solomon as an anti-Christ, as well as a type of Christ; like Saul, he was both a type of Christ, and also the very opposite of the true Christ. This point is really brought out in Is. 53:11, where the true Messiah is described as being "satisfied" with the travail or labour of his soul, and will thereby bring forth many children. The Hebrew words used occur in close proximity in several passages in Ecclesiastes, where Solomon speaks of how all his "travail" or "labour" has not "satisfied" him, and that it is all the more vain because his children may well not appreciate his labour and will likely squander it (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:3). Likewise the 'Babylon' system of Revelation, replete with its feature of 666, is described in terms which unmistakably apply to Solomon's Kingdom. This feature of Solomon- being both a type of Christ and yet also the very opposite of the true Christ- reflects the tragic duality which we will observe at such length in our later studies.

That man is not "satisfied" is a major theme with koheleth (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:3). But Isaiah's response is that it is the sinner who is not satisfied (Is. 9:20), and it is Messiah who will be satisfied by the labour / travail of His soul (Is. 53:11), as will be the righteous who are saved by Him during the Kingdom (Is. 58:11; 66:11 "the Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your soul").

5:11 When goods increase, those who eat them are increased; and what advantage is there to its owner, except to feast on them with his eyes?-
"He that loveth silver (as Solomon did, Ecc. 2:8; 1 Kings 10:21-29) shall not be satisfied with silver (as he wasn't- see Ecc. 2); nor he that loveth abundance (s.w. used about the abundance of Solomon's wives, 2 Chron. 11:23) with increase. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them (cp. the large numbers at his table, 1 Kings 4:27)" (Ecc. 5:10,11). The Hebrew word translated "not be satisfied" occurs around 25 times in the Proverbs, with Solomon warning of how the way of the flesh couldn't satisfy. Solomon said all this with an eye on himself. He laments how when wealth is increased, "they are increased that eat them" (Ecc. 5:11 AV)- and yet he prided himself on how many people sat at his table eating his food, how many courtiers he had… He preached it to others, he felt deeply the truth of it, but he saw no personal way out of it. All he had was the accurate knowledge of his situation, but

no real motivation to change- like the alcoholic or drug abuser who knows every aspect of the harm of his habit.

This sounds similar to the descriptions of Hezekiah's abundance of wealth after the Assyrian defeat.

Ecc 5:12 The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not allow him to sleep-
This references Solomon's own insomnia, a characteristic which surfaces again in his description of his own old age in Ecc. 12:4. He complains at the effect of his own wealth and avarice. If he had accepted that his wealth was a gift from God by grace, in response to his choice of wisdom, then he would not have had all this regret about being wealthy.

Ecc 5:13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: wealth kept by its owner to his harm-
Again Solomon has himself in view; see on :12. He felt he had been harmed by wealth, as many old wealthy people do as they look back on their broken families and ruined personal lives. "Harm" is the word for "evil". Solomon feels that not being able to take wealth beyond the grave is "evil" (Ecc. 4:8; 5:13; 6:2). If Solomon had instead humbled himself to accept that his wealth was a gift from God by grace, in response to his choice of wisdom, then he would not have had all this regret about being wealthy. Perhaps the real force of all this is the word "kept". Wealth is to be used for others during our lifetimes, not "kept". Otherwise we will end up with the angst of Solomon about how that wealth will be used after us.

This is Hezekiah's reflection that his wealth would be seen by him but would be taken to Babylon and his son would therefore not enjoy it. As Isaiah had said.

The idea of the Hebrew may be that a man saved his wealth against the day of harm / evil, but that day came and took away his wealth, and he had nothing left to leave his son as an inheritance. I suggest on :15 that the allusion may be to Job.

Ecc 5:14 Those riches perish by misfortune, and if he has fathered a son, there is nothing in his hand-
Again this is true to observed reality; at the end of their lives, the wealthy often regret that they are passing on wealth to a son who is not going to use it appropriately. This was clearly Solomon's fear for Rehoboam, as witnessed several times in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. It is all an outcome of the inevitable truth expressed in :15, that we cannot personally take wealth with us beyond the grave. The hoarding of personal wealth always invites the fear as to what shall happen if misfortune takes it from us; hence GNB "and then lose it all in some bad deal and end up with nothing left to pass on to their children".

Ecc 5:15 As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked shall he go again as he came, and shall take nothing for his labour, which he may carry away in his hand-
This inability to take personal wealth beyond the grave is "evil" (:16) for Solomon. But he is raging against what is God's plan, the nature of things instituted by God in order to drive us to Him, and generosity towards Him in this life in the perspective of eternal life and service in His future Kingdom. That is the only perspective which makes any sense and enables us to live with wealth without it being a cause of endless

angst to us. Solomon appears to be almost quoting Job's conclusion in Job 1:21; but Job goes on to say that because of this feature of the human condition, entering and exiting life naked, "blessed be the name of Yahweh". But Solomon had turned away from Yahweh and so is left with nothing but pain as he comes to this realization. And idolatry gave him no satisfactory explanation for it either. This verse is quoted in 1 Tim. 6:7, and the surrounding context of 1 Tim. 6:5-10 is an exhortation not to be like Solomon at this point. Solomon is consistently read in a negative light in the New Testament, and never as an example of repentance or faith.

The wish to be a miscarried foetus in Ecc. 6:3 is exactly the feeling of Job (Job 3:16). Already Job 1:21 "Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked I shall return" has been alluded to here in Ecc. 5:15. But Job had sure hope of resurrection, whereas koheleth would not be led by his feelings to that conclusion and hope. Just as he alludes to the curse in Eden but not the promise of hope made in Eden, so he dwells upon the depressive phases of Job and not the hope Job expresses.

Is. 49:4 dismisses the argument that labour is in vain: "But I thought, “I have worked in vain; I have expended my energy for absolutely nothing. But the LORD will vindicate me; my God will reward me". Likewise Is. 55:2 "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness". God's word and its promised fulfilment is the answer to man's vain existence: "The promise that I make does not return to me, having accomplished nothing ["in vain']. No, it is realized as I desire and is fulfilled as I intend" (Is. 55:11). Labour will not be in vain in the Kingdom, nor will man labour for others or just to keep himself alive: "My chosen will long enjoy the work of their hands. They will not labor in vain nor give birth for calamity; for they are the offspring of Yahweh’s blessed and their descendants with them" (Is. 65:22,23).

Isaiah also seems to dialogue back with the claims that a man comes from the womb, clueless as to what went on there (Ecc. 11:5), and then dies and shall be forgotten. He several times states that it is Yahweh who formed His people in the womb, and because He is eternal, He will eternally have a parental bond and concern for them and will lead them through to life eternal, just as He brought them to physical life from the womb (Is. 44:2,24; 46:3; 49:1,5,15).

Ecc 5:16 This also is a grievous evil, that in all points as he came, so shall he go. And what profit does he have who labours for the wind?-

See on :15. The language here is similar to that in Mal. 3:16, where Judah lament that there is no profit in obeying God. Perhaps Malachi is alluding to Solomon's attitude here as the characteristic of God's condemned, rejected people. The fact we can't take wealth with us is only a grievous evil for those like Solomon who don't understand wealth within the context of it being God's gift, to be used for Him.

"What profit...?" is a major theme in Ecclesiastes and is alluded to in 1 Cor. 15, where Paul asks "What advantage...?" is there if there is no future resurrection of the body.

Ecc 5:17 All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath-

This again is Solomon's description of his self perception. He was frustrated and angry as he faced death and final sickness; and he feels that this is in fact how he has always been, eating his sumptuous meals in the darkness of depression. And this again is absolutely true to observed experience; the feelings of old age depression are extrapolated by the sufferer and assumed to have been how their entire lives have

been, whether or not that was the case. He comments again in Ecc. 6:4 that his whole life has begun and ended in darkness.

The reality of death meant to Solomon that any apparent sweetness to life ends because of the problem of eternal death. Solomon refuses any idea of resurrection or victory over death. The essence of the purpose and achievement of God through His Son was understood by Abraham, Job, David and many others. But Solomon steadfastly refused it. And he seems to now be kicking over the traces of his earlier glorification of his father David. For David has used the same words in glorying in that fact the darkness shines as the day to Yahweh (Ps. 139:12). Solomon uses the term here for how men live their lives in "days of darkness" but in Ecc. 11:8 he uses this term of death. He sees life as being lived in the same unconscious spirit of death; he has no conception of God's light and life breaking in to human life right now.

Koheleth sees darkness as inevitable. Man by nature lives in it and then dies in eternal darkness (Ecc. 5:17; 6:4). Isaiah's response is that God's light from Zion can burst into that darkness: "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night... Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee... the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light" (Is. 59:9,10; 60:1,2,19).

The allusion is to the curse in Eden, just as Ecc. 3:20 alludes "to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). There are many allusions to the curse in Ecclesiastes, especially in the verses which speak of man's labour being in vain and just to satisfy his appetite / need to eat. Especially Ecc. 5:17 "All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath". But Genesis 3 held out the great Hope of redemption from the curse through Messiah. But the koheleth doesn't want to factor that in. Although he surely knew Gen. 3:15 as well as he knew Gen. 3:19. But he wallows in the curse rather than the long term blessing of Eden restored in the Kingdom.

Micah, a prophet contemporary with Hezekiah, seems to deconstruct this by stating "When I sit in darkness, Yahweh will be a light to me" (Mic. 7:8). But for Hezekiah, he saw only the darkness. "Frustrated" is literally 'to have much sorrow'. Paul seems to allude here: "They that will be (i.e. set their hearts on being) rich, pierce themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:6). But he advocates another way to live, whereas Hezekiah just mopes in the curse of living a secular life. "Sickness and wrath" may refer to the anger of a man who realizes his time is coming to an end and he must die. This would fit Hezekiah very well.

In the Hezekiah context, we see how he feels he along with all men struggles with "sickness" all his days (Ecc. 5:17). And he sees as an "evil disease" the fact a foreigner, a Gentile, will consume his wealth- just as Isaiah said the Babylonians would do (Ecc. 6:2). Hezekiah had been miraculously healed of one sickness(s.w. Is. 38:9 "he had been sick, and had recovered of his sickness"), but he complains that the wealth he had chosen after it was the most evil sickness; and he now complains that his "sickness" is with him every day. He failed to have an abiding gratitude for his healing.

Ecc 5:18 Behold, that which I have seen to be good and proper is for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy good in all his labour, in which he labours under the sun, all the

days of his life which God has given him; for this is his portion-
This reference to God as the giver of life may be sarcastic; see on :19,20. For elsewhere Solomon has argued that his conclusion that man should just enjoy his life is because God lacks the ability to resurrect and judge him (Ecc. 3:22). Seeing Solomon feels he has lived in the darkness of depression because of his wealth (:17), he commends the simple labourer who at least experiences some joy as a result of his labour.

There is here an allusion to the curse upon man in Eden (Gen. 3:17), to labour in order to eat until he dies. And the Preacher is saying that this is fair enough, what can't be avoided must be endured, and the only trick is to try to enjoy the experience whilst it lasts. He sees [rightly] that being a 'high achiever' is rendered meaningless by death. This is a studied refusal of the good news implicit in Gen. 3:15 that the seed of the woman would ultimately achieve a reversal of this curse. But the Preacher is closed minded to the work of Messiah and His future Kingdom- they are the factors which can unseat his pessimistic view.

Ecc 5:19 Every man also to whom God has given riches and wealth, and has given him power to eat of it, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour- this is the gift of God-
Solomon clearly has himself in view, for he was the one to whom God gave wealth as well as the opportunity to enjoy it. He apparently recognizes this as indeed "the gift of God", but then blames God for having given him a life which therefore had no time for self reflection, because of the joy of this life which God had given him. But even this apparent gratitude to God is nuanced by Solomon's complaint in Ecc. 6:2 that he has been given wealth, but his death stops him from ultimately enjoying it. The idea that work is a "gift of God" appears to be deconstructed in the New Testament allusions to this; for they insist that the "gift of God" is the grace of salvation without human works (Eph. 2:8; Rom. 5:15; 6:23; Jn. 4:10). This suggests that as in Ecc. 2:24,26; 3:13, Solomon uses the idea of "this is the gift of God" wrongly and sarcastically.

The added days of 15 years initially appeared long, but Hezekiah now perceives the extreme brevity of life.

Ecc 5:20 For he shall not often reflect on the days of his life; because God occupies him with the joy of his heart-
The Hebrew is better "He remembers (or should remember) that the days of his life are not many". See on :19. Solomon blames his lack of self examination on God, who has given him wealth and the opportunity to indulge it in "the joy of his heart". And yet in :17 Solomon feels he has lived in the darkness of depression because of his wealth. So here he appears to be mocking God, who supposedly, so he now reasons, gives man so much joy in his heart that he never has time for self examination. I suggested on :19 that Solomon is being sarcastic about God; he is for sure wrongly accusing and representing Him. And seeing he had been given so much Divine wisdom, this is a grievous failure by him. The Hebrew could also be "God causes him to work for the enjoyment of his heart", as if any joy God gives is the result of the labour God cursed man with.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 6

Ecc 6:1 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is heavy on men-
Solomon feels that not being able to take wealth beyond the grave is "evil" (Ecc. 4:8; 5:13; 6:2). If Solomon had instead humbled himself to accept that his wealth was a gift from God by grace, in response to his choice of wisdom, then he would not have had all this regret about being wealthy and being unable to use it beyond the grave.

Ecc 6:2 a man to whom God gives riches, wealth, and honour, so that he lacks nothing for his soul of all that he desires, yet God gives him no power to eat of it, but an alien eats it. This is vanity, and it is an evil disease-
Solomon clearly has himself in view, for he was the one to whom God gave wealth, and in Ecc. 5:19 he says that God has also given him in this life the opportunity to enjoy it. He recognizes this as indeed "the gift of God", but then blames God for having given him a life which therefore had no time for self reflection, because of the joy of this life which God had given him (Ecc. 5:20). But even this apparent gratitude to God is nuanced by Solomon's complaint in Ecc. 6:2 that he has been given wealth, but his death stops him from ultimately enjoying it. He really is acting even in old age as the spoilt child he had always been. His comment that wealth is a gift from God is nuanced by his statements here, making it sarcastic. And this is far from the only place in Ecclesiastes where the author is sarcastic about God's gifts. The prospect of eternal death led him to see any gifts in this life as of very limited value and therefore also "vanity".

Truth flowed through Solomon's mouth with ease, but took no lodgment at all in his heart. Truth, absolute and pure, flows through our hands in such volume. Bible study after Bible study, chapter after chapter... But does it mean anything at all to us? Prov. 6:26 warns the young man that the Gentile woman will take his money and leave him destitute at the end. These words seem to be alluded to by Solomon years later in Ecc. 6:2, where he laments that despite his wealth and success, a Gentile would have it all after his death. He saw in later life that his warnings to the young men of Israel had been in the form of painting a picture of a typical young man who epitomized youthful folly; but now he saw that he had been making a detailed prophecy of himself.

The stranger / Gentile that would take Hezekiah's wealth was Babylon. Hezekiah had a very short time to enjoy his wealth and couldn't do so. In the Hezekiah context, we see how he feels he along with all men struggles with "sickness" all his days (Ecc. 5:17). And he sees as an "evil disease" the fact a foreigner, a Gentile, will consume his wealth- just as Isaiah said the Babylonians would do (Ecc. 6:2). Hezekiah had been miraculously healed of one disease (s.w. Is. 38:9 "he had been sick, and had recovered of his sickness"), but he complains that the wealth he had chosen after it was the most evil sickness; and he now complains that his "sickness" is with him every day. He failed to have an abiding gratitude for his healing.

Ecc 6:3 If a man fathers a hundred children, and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not filled with good, and moreover he has no burial; I say, that a stillborn child is better than he-
Having had 1000 wives, Solomon surely is the man in view, who had fathered many children and also lived a long life. But for all his wealth, and the ability to enjoy it in this life (Ecc. 5:19), he felt his soul had not been filled with good, and that he would

be despised after his death, his name covered in darkness and shame (:4). This is the meaning of the idiom of a man having no burial; it is not always to be taken literally. See on Ecc. 7:1. He knew he had oppressed his people and would be bitterly remembered for it after his death (1 Kings 12:11). He understands so well his situation; and yet refuses to repent.

Solomon concludes that despite having every material blessing, a man can still not be satisfied (s.w. Ecc. 4:8; 6:3). But in Proverbs he thinks that the righteous *do* satisfy their souls in this life (Prov. 13:25). But he thought that this would be experienced in this life, rather than in any future Kingdom of God on earth. As he got closer to death, he realized that he had not satisfied his soul despite all his wealth. And so he concluded that righteousness was vain, and turned away from Yahweh. This is what happens when we lose the perspective of the future Kingdom of God.

It is possible to see Solomon as an anti-Christ, as well as a type of Christ; like Saul, he was both a type of Christ, and also the very opposite of the true Christ. This point is really brought out in Is. 53:11, where the true Messiah is described as being "satisfied" with the travail or labour of his soul, and will thereby bring forth many children. The Hebrew words used occur in close proximity in several passages in Ecclesiastes, where Solomon speaks of how all his "travail" or "labour" has not "satisfied" him, and that it is all the more vain because his children may well not appreciate his labour and will likely squander it (Ecc. 1:8; 4:8; 5:10; 6:3). Likewise the 'Babylon' system of Revelation, replete with its feature of 666, is described in terms which unmistakably apply to Solomon's Kingdom. This feature of Solomon- being both a type of Christ and yet also the very opposite of the true Christ- reflects the tragic duality which we will observe at such length in our later studies.

Seeing the Preacher has no future hope, he considers style of burial to be quite significant. Whereas for those with Hope of the Kingdom, burial is insignificant. We note he considers that length of life and number of children are irrelevant and not really blessings because the eternal finality of death is so huge. But these are the very blessings promised for obedience to the old covenant. He therefore despises what blessings God does offer- so major does death loom in his thinking. Alternatively, "no burial" may mean 'no good burial', with people lamenting his passing and praising him for his life. Hezekiah sacrificed the future blessing of his own sons, his people, Jerusalem and the temple- for the sake of 15 years peaceful life for himself. So he knew he would not be much lamented for. When terminally ill, he lamented that he had no male heir. Now he says that even having 100 sons is meaningless seeing that death [as he wants to understand it] is final and eternal.

Hezekiah considers that it were better never to have been born, seeing life is so tragic. The Lord may allude to this when saying of Judas "It would have been better if that man had not been born" (Mt. 26:24). But Hezekiah seems to eagerly want to appropriate this ultimate curse to himself, because he just would not accept any future dimension to life.

The wish to be a miscarried foetus is exactly the feeling of Job (Job 3:16). Already Job 1:21 "Naked I came out of my mother's womb and naked I shall return" has been alluded to in Ecc. 5:15. But Job had sure hope of resurrection, whereas koheleth would not be led by his feelings to that conclusion and hope. Just as he alludes to the curse in Eden but not the promise of hope made in Eden, so he dwells upon the depressive phases of Job and not the hope Job expresses.

Ecc 6:4 for it comes in vanity, and departs in darkness, and its name is covered with darkness-

The "it" is the soul or person of :3. Solomon feels he may as well not have existed, and considers himself no better than a stillborn child (:3). In Ecc. 5:17 Solomon has complained that he had lived his whole life in the depression of darkness. He knows he will be despised after his death because of his oppression of his people (see on :3). This continues the thought of Ecc. 5:17; that he was frustrated and angry as he faced death and final sickness; and he feels that this is in fact how he has always been, eating his sumptuous meals in the darkness of depression. And this again is absolutely true to observed experience; the feelings of old age depression are extrapolated by the sufferer and assumed to have been how their entire lives have been, whether or not that was the case.

Koheleth sees darkness as inevitable. Man by nature lives in it and then dies in eternal darkness (Ecc. 5:17; 6:4). Isaiah's response is that God's light from Zion can burst into that darkness: "Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness. We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night... Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee... the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light" (Is. 59:9,10; 60:1,2,19).

Ecc 6:5 Moreover it has not seen the sun nor known it. This has rest rather than the other-

GNB: "It never sees the light of day or knows what life is like, but at least it has found rest". The reference is to the stillborn child of :3, but Solomon is saying that whether one lives just a few moments in the womb or thousands of years (:6), the reality of the "rest" of death is such that life has no meaning. Solomon's abuse of his own people, whipping them at the end (1 Kings 12:11), was a reflection of how he failed to perceive the value and meaning of his own life, and this was reflected [as it is in the behaviour of abusers today] in how he treated the lives of others. If Solomon had accepted the basic Biblical truth that life is a gift from God, as his father David had understood (Ps. 139:15), then he would have realized his need to use that life for God and not himself. And his value of the human person and the lives of others would have subsequently been transformed. The same is true of Hezekiah, who traded 15 years of personal peace for the welfare of his sons and his people.

Ecc 6:6 Yes, though he live a thousand years twice told, and yet fails to enjoy good, don't all go to one place?-

Solomon speaks in Ecclesiastes 6 of the tragedy of possessing all things but being unable to enjoy them, because fulfilling one's own natural desires one after another really isn't much of a life. And thus he came to despise the concept of eternal life because he saw no point in life itself (see on :5); "A thousand years" was likely a figure for eternity. He conceived of eternal life as being life as we now know it; and he didn't really want to live for ever as he'd fulfilled every natural desire. There's a real warning for us here. If we see the eternity of the Kingdom as a big carrot for us, it may not actually be that motivating for us in the long run of spiritual life. It is the quality and nature of that life which is surely important to us, and not the mere infinity of it. Indeed, eternal life as we now know it would be a curse rather than a blessing.

Hezekiah had been given 15 years, not so long, but he now realizes that if had been given 2000 years he would still be unhappy. Or perhaps the idea is 1000 x 1000, one million years. Long life is shown not to be the benchmark of happiness nor success. He traded eternity for 15 years but later realized that was a bad deal. He now reflects that eternity for 2000 or one million years would be an equally bad deal. For what can a man give in exchange for his soul. Probably the Lord came to that understanding from reflection upon Ecclesiastes. Even the whole world would be a bad deal. The Lord's mind went over this path in the wilderness temptations. God left Hezekiah, as He departed from Saul, after the visitors from Babylon came. To show Hezekiah what was in his heart. And here we have it all written down.

Ecc 6:7 All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled-
The appetite [Heb. 'soul'] continues the commentary upon the human person or soul which began in :3. These verses explain the sense of weariness and vanity which there is in our world. Human labour is required just to keep alive, but there is no satisfaction from it in ultimate terms. Solomon is here rejecting the whole message of the Gospel in Gen. 3. Indeed man is cursed to eat bread in the sweat of his face; but Gen. 3:15 opens up the possibility of overcoming that curse, through the Messianic seed of the woman. But Solomon had no place in his thinking for this Messianic seed, assuming he was the one. And so, like all who reject Christ, he was left labouring in the sweat of his face for a soul / appetite which can never be fulfilled without Him.

Ecc 6:8 For what advantage has the wise more than the fool? What has the poor man, who knows how to walk before the living?-
This shows how effectively he despised his wisdom; he lost sight of the Kingdom which it led to ultimately, and the God manifestation which it could enable in this life. LXX "since the poor man knows how to walk before life?". Solomon in Proverbs has consistently seen the poor as foolish, poor because they are fools. But he now thinks that the fools walk as do the "wise" and there is no real ultimate advantage of wisdom over folly. This is a specific retraction of all his wisdom as published in his anthology of his wisdom in the book of Proverbs.

Ecc 6:9 Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind-
LXX "waywardness of spirit", parallel with the wandering of desire. Again Solomon has himself in view, for in Ecc. 2 he describes how his desire wandered and he sought to fulfil those desires, be they sexual or in the desire to engage in science, agriculture, building schemes etc. Again, we note that Solomon's self criticism was so penetrating and accurate. But mere possession of knowledge, correct analysis, will not save. It is humble faith in grace which is needed in order to elicit repentance, but Solomon had none of that.

The idea may be that what you have in your hand now in present reality is better than fantasy. Hezekiah is the classic example of this- he traded 15 years of peace here and now for the unseen things of the future Kingdom, which he sees now as merely fantasy, the wandering of desire into abstract things. And that is how secular man sees the Gospel of the Kingdom. It's hard cash right now, experienced reality at this moment, that trumps any hope of future blessing.

Solomon's proverbs about not eating too much honey (Prov. 25:16) clearly mean that we shouldn't over indulge legitimate human pleasures. But his approach in Ecclesiastes was the studied opposite of this. He openly says that he indulged himself

in every human pleasure to the extreme, until it meant nothing. And yet he had warned against doing this very thing. Having stated that he sees no particular advantage of Divine wisdom, Solomon goes on to allude to his own wandering of desire (Ecc. 6:9); he had been given all a man could wish, his desire knew no bounds, and yet it wandered. This is yet another powerful challenge from Solomon; his every desire was satisfied, but still he felt that his desires were unfulfilled (Ecc. 1:8; 6:7). So much of our mental and physical energy goes into gratification of desire, even though it is heavily camouflaged beneath social respectability and achieving the norms of our community. Yet if we believe the lesson of Solomon, the only man who actually had every desire gratified, then we will shun all this- and fix our hope and every striving on Christ and his Kingdom alone.

Ecc 6:10 Whatever has been, its name was given long ago; and it is known what man is; neither can he contend with him who is mightier than he-
This continues the theme which Solomon developed at the beginning of Ecclesiastes; that all is cyclical, without ultimate progress. Nothing is new. And if there is indeed a God, then He is "mightier" than man, and so all relationship with Him is pointless, seeing that He will not allow man to take his wealth with him beyond the grave. This denial that anything radically new can appear, no deeper insight into the human condition, is another way of Solomon abrogating his previous wisdom. For that wisdom had indeed sought to explain "what man is" and to furnish new insights and understanding. Solomon seems to have in mind Job's desperate thoughts, that no man can contend with God because of His mightiness (Job 9:3). But he fails to as it were read to the end of the book, where Job repents, and is brought to the glorious realization that relationship with God is wonderfully possible, and indeed eagerly sought by God with man.

Hezekiah had reasoned with God to get another 15 years, but now he concludes that God foreknew that and so he rationalized away the wonder of intercessory prayer. This is a big theme in Ecclesiastes: "Is there a thing of which it may be said, Behold, this is new? It has been long ago, in the ages which were before us... what can the king's successor do? Just that which has been done long ago... That which is has been long ago, and that which is to be has been long ago" (Ecc. 1:10; 2:12; 3:15). Contra this, true spirituality is about "singing a new song" and living in newness of life. Is. 56:12 puts these ideas of endless repetition in the mouths of the condemned: "Let us drink wine for tomorrow will be just like today!". Ecc. 6:10 laments that there is nothing named that has not already been named. But Is. 62:2 speaks of a day when God's people shall be named by a new name that has not previously been named.

Ecc 6:11 For there are many words that create vanity. What does that profit man?-
This is said by Solomon in the context of abrogating the importance of the wisdom he has previously taught; see on :8. The "many words" would then be a reference to the many words he had written himself in codifying that wisdom. The criticism of "many words" in Ecc. 5:7 and 6:11 seems a reference to his own writing down of the wisdom God had given him, codifying it into books such as the compilation we have in the book of Proverbs (Ecc. 12:10,12). He associates the "many words" with "dreams", perhaps an intensive plural for "a great dream" (Ecc. 5:7). It was as a result of the dream of 1 Kings 3:5 that he was given the "many words" of wisdom which he now considered unhelpful and irrelevant because death meant that there was no particular ultimate advantage of wisdom over folly; wisdom was at best profitable in this life in

some short term sense. And he therefore associates "many words" with folly (Ecc. 10:14). He considers he had been foolish by preaching and believing those many words of Divine wisdom. Now, for him, the true wisdom was in idolatry and not Yahweh worship in His temple. For he had forsaken worshipping at Yahweh's temple and instead worshipped in the idol temples he had built nearby (1 Kings 11:4-8).

Again we see the theme of "profit", and note Paul's allusion to it- that indeed there is no advantage / profit in life if the dead rise not.

Ecc 6:12 For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he spends like a shadow? For who can tell a man what will be after him under the sun?-

The obvious answer is "God", but Solomon had turned away from God to idols. Surely Solomon writes this knowing that his words elicit the answer: "God". Yet he believed that God was powerless to resurrect man to judgment after his death (Ecc. 3:22), and so we can read this as deep sarcasm against God.

The allusion is to the days added by the returned shadow. Hezekiah cynically reflects that the shadow all the same comes forward. "Who can tell a man...?" recalls the complaint in Ecc. 3 that 'Who can resurrect a man to see the future?'. The answer is God, through the work of His Son.

God did not create in vain, He "did not say Seek me, in vain" (Is. 45:18,19). Isaiah has the *lack* of vanity as a major theme after Is. 40. He is as it were in dialogue with Ecclesiastes. God showed Israel new things but they refused to perceive them, "they are created now and not from the beginning" (Is. 48:6,7); this is Isaiah's counter to Hezekiah's complaint that there is no new thing. "I have not spoken in secret " (Is. 48:16) , "Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near" (Is. 55:6) answers the complaint that God is too hard to understand and is concealing Himself.

Hezekiah reasons that the pursuit of pleasure is "vanity" (Ecc. 2:1,10; 6:9), and likewise he often says that life itself is "vanity" (Ecc. 6:12; 7:15; 9:9; 11:10). So our life experience is according to what we are pursuing. If we pursue vain things, our life is vain. Herein lies the huge power of "seek first the Kingdom of God". If that is our passion, then our life likewise becomes of eternal moment. Self examination is about perceiving what are our core desires, our deepest dreams, our deepest heart wish.

Hezekiah saw the brevity of life very sharply, seeing he knew he only had 15 years left. This is why he so often speaks of human work: "all the toil that one has toiled under the sun" (7 times) or "the work that is done" (8 times), "(one's) toil" (12 times) or " all the work" (5 times). He asks what is the profit, the advantage, the gain- using accounting, business terms. He uses the idea 17 times in Ecclesiastes. And he sees, rightly, that if death is the final end- then it was all pointless, much expenditure for no end result. Surely Paul had reflected on this in 1 Cor. 15, which seems a sustained reflection on Ecclesiastes. Under Divine inspiration he wrote that "what advantage is there if the dead rise not", and our labour is NOT vanity "in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). He writes that in conclusion of his teaching about the huge significance of the Lord's resurrection, which enables ours. This alone is what makes human labour meaningful and not meaningless. It gives eternal moment to all our being and labour. Striving for a career and human achievement can be painted as very noble and satisfying. But in the hard stare of death, it all crumbles.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 7

Ecc 7:1 A good name is better than fine perfume; and the day of death better than the day of one's birth-
This is how Solomon imagines things should ideally be. But for him, he had just lamented that his name would be despised after his death, and his burial would therefore be with shame (see on Ecc. 6:3,4). And indeed, after his death the people complained of how he had so bitterly whipped and abused them (1 Kings 12:11). He accurately foresaw it all, including Rehoboam's rebellion and the division of the kingdom. But he does nothing about it.

This is yet another example of Hezekiah's cynicism now God had given him 15 years to live. He saw death as better than life, because his life was not devoted to God and he had no future hope of the Kingdom. The parallel is between having "a good name" and "the day of death". His only hope for the future was in having a good name amongst his generation in the nations around him after his death. In the Hezekiah context, we recall that he was given much precious ointment (Is. 38:2). But he sacrificed the future welfare of his sons and his people for 15 years of personal prosperity, risking leaving a bad name for himself at death. He now realizes this, but makes no repentance.

Ecc 7:2 It is better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men-
But Solomon admits he himself is as the old king who will no longer be admonished (Ecc. 4:13). But he urges others to be admonished (Ecc. 12:12), and to go to funerals instead of wedding parties [of which Solomon must have had many], so that they might "take to heart" wisdom (Ecc. 7:2), although Solomon says this was "far from me" himself (Ecc. 7:23). He preached God's truth, he accepted it as true, whilst refusing to personalize it himself. He really is a parade example of the dangers inherent in glorying in our mere possession of Divine truth.

The idea could be that if you go to a wedding, then the couple will "take this to heart" and may bless you in future. But if you go to a funeral, you will not get any blessing from the dead person. But we note the view that a funeral "is the end of all men". He has no hope beyond the grave. This was the root problem for both Solomon and Hezekiah.

And the living should take this to heart- The only other occurrence of this phrase is also in Ecclesiastes, at Ecc. 9:1 where Solomon says that the conclusions he is now giving in the book are because he has 'laid it to his heart' ("I considered in my heart [same Hebrew phrase], in order to declare all this"). Solomon says that faced with death, a wise man [he clearly has himself in view] will consider or lay life to his heart. Ecclesiastes appears to be Solomon's reflections as an old man facing death, rejecting the Divine wisdom he was given as a young man, whilst still holding on to it in some ways. His encounter with his own upcoming death is cited by him as the source of his new wave of wisdom. This spiritual biography of Solomon is recorded for our learning as a unique insight into the deepest psychology of a man who turns away from God's Truth to his own human reflections and meanderings. This is frequently how God in His wisdom teaches us- through the example of failures. This isn't negative psychology- increasingly universities now teach through 'problem based learning'.

Ecc 7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the face the heart is made good-
The idea is that going to a funeral and sorrowing is better than the laughter of a wedding feast (Ecc. 7:2,3). Yet despite realizing this on an intellectual level, Solomon personally commended mirth / laughter to himself (Ecc. 8:15), and advises removing sorrow from the heart (Ecc. 11:10). Again we see Solomon's amazing ability, indeed the ability of human nature, to comprehend truth on one level, and yet reason and live exactly and precisely and consciously the opposite.

Solomon sees wisdom as the way to wealth and "pleasure" in this life, and that is the basis for his appeal to men to be wise and accept his wisdom (Prov. 10:23). But David uses the word only of the "pleasure" of the future, restored Kingdom of God on earth (Ps. 126:2); whereas Solomon wanted it all now, just as the 'prosperity gospel' likewise does. And yet as he got older, Solomon realized that such "pleasure" from material things is not in fact pleasure, and he uses the word several times in Ecclesiastes of how pleasure in this life is vain (Ecc. 2:2; 7:3; 10:19). This approach is in fact a contradiction of his seeking after "pleasure" in Proverbs. He came to this nihilistic position because he failed to perceive that the true "pleasure" is not now, but in the future Kingdom.

Ecc 7:4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth-
He speaks of how laughter, mirth and songs are not the pursuit of the wise- and yet these are the very things he gave himself to, whilst at the same time possessing theoretical wisdom (Ecc. 7:3-5). On one hand Solomon condemns mirth (Ecc. 7:4; Prov. 20:32 LXX "If thou abandon thyself to mirth, and stretch forth thine hand in a quarrel, thou shalt be disgraced"). But this is exactly what Solomon did in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. He refused to accept his own wisdom. It was merely a teaching position, and he felt the need to empirically find its truth. he failed to personalize the wisdom he taught, and therefore turned away in the end .

Ecc 7:5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools-
But Solomon chose to surround himself with singers and every kind of music (Ecc. 2:8). He realizes that the singers were what he calls "fools", but he still indulged in it. Just as someone might openly confess that certain entertainment is foolish and unspiritual, but still indulge in it. Whilst knowing that he needed rebuke from the wise, it would seem that Solomon never accepted it. But he knew on another level that this was what he should do. This idea of knowing on one level but not another is fundamental to understanding human behaviour. We have a profound and realistic insight into it in the autobiography and piercing self analysis of Ecclesiastes.

Ecc 7:6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity-
But knowing this, Solomon commends mirth in Ecc. 8:15. On one hand Solomon condemns mirth (Ecc. 7:4,6; Prov. 20:32 LXX "If thou abandon thyself to mirth, and stretch forth thine hand in a quarrel, thou shalt be disgraced"). But this is exactly what Solomon commends in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. He refused to accept his own wisdom. It was merely a teaching position, and he felt the need to empirically find its truth. he failed to personalize the wisdom he taught, and therefore turned away in the end.

Ecc 7:7 Surely extortion makes the wise man foolish; and a bribe destroys the understanding-
"Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish" (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them (1 Kings 12:11). He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, a wise man made foolish, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that "I returned and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun [by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way]; but they had no comforter" (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed. He even seems to say that there is nothing to be surprised at in the poor being oppressed, because the whole hierarchy of officialdom above them do the same (Ecc. 5:2). He saw his sin as inevitable, as part of his participation in humanity- he didn't own up to his own desperate need for grace. Yet he also knew that "man lords it over man [cp. Solomon's oppression of the people] to his own hurt" (Ecc. 8:9 RSV).

The Hebrew for "oppression" is also translated "quarreling".

Ecc 7:8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning. The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit-
This again is an example of Solomon's piercing self examination. Indeed he was "proud in spirit" and impatient. He wanted the outcome of wisdom immediately, in this life, and has no faith expressed in any future Kingdom of God on earth, a future day of judgment or eternal recompense in it. Despite knowing that the end is better than the beginning, he was too impatient to wait for that "end", and so turned away from Yahweh to idols who apparently offered immediate gratification.

Ecc 7:9 Don't be hasty in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools-
GNB "it is foolish to harbor a grudge". It seems that Solomon is here painting an accurate picture of himself. The book of Proverbs is full of sideways swipes at his half brothers, Absalom especially. Despite all his material wealth, Solomon died an angry man full of regrets; because he had not accepted God's grace.

Ecc 7:10 Don't say, Why were the former days better than these? For you do not ask wisely about this-
Is this Solomon's cynical take on Dt. 4:32, where God challenged Israel to think of the former days and marvel at God's power displayed in them...?

The Lord recognized the essential conservatism of human nature when He observed that no matter how good the new wine, we will think that "the old is better" (Lk. 5:39), taking it as read that "the former days [are perceived to be] better than these" (Ecc. 7:10). Yes, for all our much vaunted liberalism and open mindedness, our reasonable openness to new ideas which we assume we have- we are conservatives by nature. Don't disturb me or upset my social club. The seed of the Gospel was sown in our lives so that we might bring forth fruit. Not to just be retained and to lay dormant. The Lord's judgment of the one talent man may seem unusually harsh- he who carefully preserved the talent (and the same Greek word is used later in the New Testament about the need to "preserve" the Truth). He didn't spend it on himself.

Didn't lose it. Didn't let it get dirty. Didn't forget where he buried it. But his inaction was the basis of his condemnation.

LXX "Say not, What has happened, that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire in wisdom concerning this". Yet I suggested on :9 that Solomon went to his grave with regrets, lamenting that the glory days of his father David had not continued. But they were not really glory days, only in Solomon's biased recollection.

Ecc 7:11 Wisdom is as good as an inheritance. Yes, it is more excellent for those who see the sun-

GNB "Everyone who lives ought to be wise; it is as good as receiving an inheritance". But Solomon elsewhere despises wisdom, considering it to have no ultimate advantage over folly, because of the problem of eternal death which he sees it as unable to affect. His worry about the inheritance he would leave, and whether Rehoboam would be wise, is because he realizes that wisdom cannot be passed on. The idea may be that an inheritance is no good unless it has wisdom with it. Hezekiah would have thought this about Manasseh, who inherited his vast wealth but had no wisdom.

Ecc 7:12 For wisdom is a defence, even as money is a defence; but the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it-

The comparison of wisdom with money reflects how Solomon sees wisdom as only helpful in this life, on a secular level. Hence LXX "For wisdom in its shadow is as the shadow of silver: and the excellence of the knowledge of wisdom will give life to him that has it". And many comments in Proverbs seem to highlight only the secular advantages of being wise. Solomon repeatedly complains that the wise and foolish die the same death, and so his comment that wisdom preserves life must apply only to its use in preserving secular life.

Even if we insist that "wisdom gives life" means 'eternal life' [which I doubt, as Solomon has no real belief in this, especially at the end of his life], then we can simply reflect that Solomon did not accept this as true for himself. In the end, Solomon felt that for himself, it was as well to be righteous as to be wicked, for in death there was no further difference (Ecc. 9:2,5,9). He knows judgment will come (Ecc. 11:9), at least for the young people, but he reasons as if it won't- at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (Ecc. 2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. But in Ecc. 7:12 he says that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But then again in Ecc. 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, it's benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. I don't see these different perspectives as being the difference between life in the world and life in the spiritual realm. They are all spoken *with conviction* by Solomon, which, to my mind, ruins the idea that he himself believed the Truth but was simply outlining what life is like without God. My resolution of this is that he knew and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice.

"Defence" is Heb. 'shadow'. There are so many allusions to shadows in Ecclesiastes, understandable if Hezekiah was the author, reflecting on the result of the shadow going back to give him another few years before death. He now realizes that

only wisdom can preserve life. And his life had been preserved for 15 years for other reasons, and he felt he had no hope of anything more- because he accepts that wisdom is personally "far from me".

Ecc 7:13 Consider the work of God, for who can make that straight, which He has made crooked?-
The Hebrew and also LXX understands the "crooked" as a person, "for who shall be able to straighten him whom God has made crooked?". This could continue Solomon's cynical approach that all is predetermined by God and therefore His demand to judge people is unreasonable (see on Ecc. 3:15). But Solomon may have in view the reality of death, which could not be escaped. "Made crooked" is s.w. Ecc. 12:3 about the old man being 'bowed down'. Given the context of death, the idea may be that the effects of the aging process are from God and cannot be undone by man. This would pave the way for the teaching of :14, that the nature and extent of our lives and life experiences are all controlled by God and [according to Solomon] we cannot intervene in those processes; and therefore relationship with Him is pointless. But we must remember that he wrote this in old age, as his autobiography, when he had already turned away from God. So I assume this is all said tongue in cheek about God.

In contrast to Hezekiah reasoning with God that he not die when intended, he has now retreated to the position of thinking that all is foreordained and human spiritual effort makes no difference. This was very much the spirit in which at the end of Isaiah 39 he accepts God's judgment upon him, rather than again seeking to reason with God to change that possible outcome. This is the same idea as in :14, that joy and adversity come from God on whatever days He chooses, and man cannot change that. Likewise in :15, Hezekiah reasons that being righteous or wicked is irrelevant because everything is chance dictated by a Divine hand that operates at random. This was a studied rejection of the grace shown Hezekiah by Yahweh. For his healing and Zion's deliverance from Assyria had not been random, but a conscious gift of grace. Indeed in :16 he goes further and warns against being overly righteous as the stress he imagines comes with it might destroy you before your time.

Ecc 7:14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider; yes, God has made the one side by side with the other, to the end that man should not find out anything after Him-
As explained on :13, Solomon is writing about "God" at a time when he has turned away from Him. The Hebrew here is difficult, but the idea may be that we receive from God the right amount of good and evil, so that by the end of our lives there is no need for anything to be added. This would mean that every experience in life is designed by God and is perfectly designed right to the end, so that we have been developed, at least potentially, to the point He wishes. This is true; but then Solomon mocks that truth by saying that this is so that man cannot find out about the future after death (Ecc. 3:22; 6:12; 10:14). Even at Solomon's time, the hope of resurrection from the dead and final judgment and reward in God's Kingdom upon the earth was well established. David so clearly believed it. But Solomon willfully refuses to.

Ecc 7:15 All this have I seen in my days of vanity: there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who lives long in his evildoing-
This is exactly the postmodern mindset of our world today- to have no passion, to dip

into everything in moderation, to live in the mire of mediocrity. GNB "My life has been useless, but in it I have seen everything". Experiencing / seeing things does not make life meaningful. One can travel the world sightseeing, but still life is useless unless used for God. The reasoning here is that righteousness like wisdom is pointless; a righteous man dies you whereas the wicked may live long. Solomon refuses to accept the perspective of resurrection from the dead and a final judgment with eternal consequence in God's future Kingdom. And therefore indeed righteousness appears pointless and futile. We note that Solomon stresses that this is his personal conclusion and belief. Without doubt he has personally rejected righteousness and wisdom.

Koheleth's words here directly contradict the Old Covenant's promise of long life in return for obedience. But he never uses the term "Yahweh" and reasons as if he is not in covenant with Yahweh. Hezekiah is here ignoring the wonder of the grace shown to him- that his premature death had been reversed and his days extended by grace alone.

Like Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:27), Solomon could have prolonged his days as king over Israel if he walked in the ways of David (1 Kings 3:14), which we are specifically told he did not. Seeing Solomon reigned 40 years, this promise of prolonged days surely implied supernaturally prolonged life, beyond usual human lifespans. Indeed the term is used of how the Lord Jesus "prolonged his days" eternally (Is. 53:10). Hence Solomon twice uses the word to speak of how wise rulers could prolong their reigns (Prov. 28:2,16). He surely has himself in view; but failed to realize this potential. Indeed he cynically uses the word in Ecc. 7:15; 8:12 in claiming that it is the wicked and not the obedient who have their days prolonged.

Ecc 7:16 Don't be overly righteous, neither make yourself overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself?-

This is again a kind of regret expressed by Solomon that he had asked God for wisdom, and God's commendation of his choice is thereby despised by Solomon. He has often said that wisdom is useful for this life; but he advises a life of moderation. He thinks that righteousness has no eternal reward (see on :15), and in fact too much wisdom could be self destructive. He seems to have himself in view as the parade example.

The Hebrew term for "righteous over much" occurs only elsewhere in the Proverbs, where Solomon uses it as something to be praised and respected (Prov. 28:28; 29:2,16). But now Solomon despises his desire and respect for wisdom and righteousness, considering that the way of wisdom, as he now saw it, was to be both wise and foolish, to sin a little and be righteous a little. The philosophy of 'balance' he now reached, having a little of both, was in fact how he had lived his life in practice all along. Now in his old age he tries to intellectually and spiritually justify it.

"Overly wise" is a term which occurs only once elsewhere in the Old Testament, in Ecc. 2:15, where Solomon recalls that he had made himself "more wise" by asking for wisdom. Now in his cynicism he regrets that request for wisdom which had at the time been so pleasing to God. The blasphemy of those statements in Ecclesiastes that wisdom is meaningless is hard to plumb. Deep within his heart, Solomon's attitude was that "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me (the man made wise by God); and why was I then more wise?" (Ecc. 2:15). Ecc. 7:16 is in similar vein: "Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise"- even though wisdom and righteousness are what God

desires from us above all! This despising of wisdom and the truly spiritually ambitious life was due to Solomon's lack of faith in a resurrection; he had his kingdom in this life, and he failed to see the blinding necessity of a resurrection, judgment and change of nature.

Ecc 7:17 Don't be too wicked, neither be foolish. Why should you die before your time?-
Solomon had earlier taught that the righteous / wise live long lives, and therefore the unwise have shorter lives (Prov. 9:11; 10:27). But now in Ecc. 7:15 he says this isn't true to observed reality. Long life was the promise for obedience to the old covenant (s.w. Dt. 11:21). But it is not always the case, as Job learned (s.w. Job 29:18); righteous men like David and Hezekiah felt their days had been shortened (s.w. Ps. 89:45; 102:23). And it was so with the Lord Jesus. And faithful men often lament that the wicked seem to get long life, whilst the righteous don't. The answer to that conundrum is that final blessing of long life is at the resurrection, at the last day; and not in this life. But Solomon didn't see that; he thought that long life now was the only reward. He failed to perceive the real meaning of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Koheleth's position is precisely that of postmodernist man today. And that is the vital relevance of Ecclesiastes for today. Abuse alcohol or drugs with temperate, moderate indulgence... but not too often, lest you become addicted. Be a good guy... but everything in balance, don't get too into righteousness. And he will go on in Ecc. 8 to advocate keeping a careful distance from "God".

Ecc 7:18 It is good that you should take hold of this. Yes, also from that don't withdraw your hand; for he who fears God will come forth from them all-
The "this" and "that" refer to excessive wisdom / righteousness and excessive folly (:16,17). Again Solomon appears to refer to God skeptically, suggesting that true worship of God is beyond being righteous or sinful. ESV: "It is good that you should take hold of this, and from that withhold not your hand, for the one who fears God shall come out from both of them". Solomon here explicitly preaches what he practiced in his life- the 'little of both' syndrome. "The one who fears God shall come out from both of them" could perhaps be paraphrased as meaning 'The truly spiritual person will mature beyond this simplistic understanding of sin and righteousness'. This is new age philosophy- that morality is but a paradigm which the spiritually mature have grown or [supposedly] matured out of.

As discussed on :13, Hezekiah in this section is arguing that both righteousness and sin lead to the same meaningless end. So here he advises to take hold of "this", the righteousness of :16, and also take hold also of folly (:17). But "he that fears God shall discharge himself of them all" (Heb.). I take that as absolute cynicism about God, although the translators scramble to cover over the full force of the skepticism. He's saying 'And if you fear God you get some blessing, right, isn't that the idea, and so the blessing will be to get out of this meaningless life by dying and then you won't have any more choices between righteousness and folly'.

Ecc 7:19 Wisdom is a strength to the wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city-
Solomon perhaps perceives that after him there will come many rulers in the city of Jerusalem, but they will be many because of their lack of wisdom. He likes to imagine that he as the wise man had therefore had a long reign.

Verse 20 appears to continue the theme of verses 15-20- and so verse 19 must fit in to that theme, surely. Perhaps the idea is that the truly wise are stronger than any

apparently strong people in society- in that, as taught at the end of :18, they have matured beyond living by a paradigm of sin and righteousness. Thus Solomon has effectively rejected the wisdom given him by God and come to a new 'wisdom' or a-morality. This would explain the reference to two types of wisdom in :23,24 [see notes there].

Despite the previous verses arguing that righteousness is a meaningless choice in the ultimate view of life and death, Hezekiah cannot avoid the niggle of obvious Divine truth. He has to go on to say that wisdom is of course very useful. Although we may perceive a difference in his reasoning between his view of righteousness and wisdom. Wisdom is, after all, a handy thing to have in this life. Even if, as he considers, it has no impact on the utter finality of death. The ten rulers in the city [of Jerusalem] could refer to the fact there had been ten kings in Jerusalem over Judah before Hezekiah. And he considers them all fools.

Ecc 7:20 Surely there is not a righteous man on earth, who does good and doesn't sin-

This is true but it appears to be using this truth as a justification for downgrading 'sin' to something inevitable, merely part of being human as he has argued in :15-17. See on :18. This is a far cry from the Hezekiah who gratefully thanked God for casting all his sins behind His back. He now sees sin as inevitable and not, therefore, something that should be an issue for God. And having earlier in this section argued that the choice between righteousness and folly is without eternal consequence, he now nuances that by saying that in any case, nobody is truly righteous. So, the idea of choosing righteousness is thereby purely theoretical and therefore meaningless. Hezekiah's faulty reasoning here could have been avoided had he been focused upon the future Messiah- for He would be the one righteous man on earth who did good and didn't sin.

Ecc 7:21 Also don't take heed to all words that are spoken, lest you hear your servant curse you-

Again, whilst this is true, the implication is that sin is inevitable and that morality or obedience to commandment is not something to overly worry about. See on :18. Perhaps Solomon had in view David paying too much attention to the cursing of his servant Shimei, and [as the Psalms show] beating himself up over it.

Ecc 7:22 for often your own heart knows that you yourself have likewise cursed others-

LXX "For many times he shall trespass against thee, and repeatedly shall he afflict thine heart; for thus also hast thou cursed others". Surely Solomon has in view his problems with his servant Jeroboam, whose rebellion against him was clearly very upsetting to Solomon deep within him. He considered himself omnipotent, and his servant had upset that narrative.

Ecc 7:23 All this have I proved in wisdom. I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me-

This was Solomon's problem. He admits as noted on Ecc. 10:2 that his wisdom was never in his heart, it "was far from me" as he expresses it here. The wisdom he asked for and so desired in his youth was given to him, but it was far from him personally- just as God's Truth can be far from the heart of those who find, possess, maintain and teach it today. And so he considers that his own later wisdom was greater than the

wisdom given him by God at the start. "Far" can equally well mean 'far away in time', and the Hebrew is translated elsewhere as "long ago" or "of old". He could be saying that it was a long time ago that he had asked to be wise, and now that wisdom was different to the 'wisdom' by which he had 'proved' that morality is meaningless, sin is inevitable and we can just act as we wish (:15-22; see on :19,24).

At the end of his days, he recognized that although he had loved the theory of wisdom, the image of a spiritual life, the wisdom of God had never really impacted his soul: "I said, I will be wise (referring back to his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 3); but it was far from me". His request for wisdom had only been so that he could do the job of leading Israel, living out the parental expectation of his father, whom he admits in Proverbs 4 had taught him to ask for wisdom.

Solomon admits he himself is as the old king who will no longer be admonished (Ecc. 4:13). But he urges others to be admonished (Ecc. 12:12), and to go to funerals instead of wedding parties [of which Solomon must have had many], so that they might "take to heart" wisdom (Ecc. 7:2), although Solomon says this was "for from me" himself (Ecc. 7:23). He preached God's truth, he accepted it as true, whilst refusing to personalize it himself. He really is a parade example of the dangers inherent in glorying in our mere possession of Divine truth.

Ecc 7:24 That which is, is far off and exceedingly deep-
"Far off" is s.w. :23 "far [from me]". That which is far off and unobtainable therefore refers to the wisdom which Solomon had asked for and been given in his youth; but he now says that true wisdom is unobtainable by man. He downgraded the concept of truth by saying that ultimate truth cannot be found and therefore the search for it is primitive and meaningless. All we are left to do is to exist for this brief life. This is the end result of continually downplaying 'truth'.

Who can find it out?-
David had encouraged Solomon to ask for wisdom and to seek and "find" God (1 Chron. 28:9 s.w.); and so often in Proverbs, Solomon had rejoiced that wisdom *could* be "found" (s.w. Prov. 2:5; 3:13 "happy is the man who finds wisdom"; 4:22; 8:9,12,17,35; 24:14). But now Solomon considers that ultimate wisdom cannot be "found", but rather he feels he has "found" [s.w.] the wisdom of meaninglessness by his own personal reflections (s.w. :26,27,28). Here again we see the two different types of 'wisdom' and 'finding' which Solomon has in view (see on :23).

The context of :24 is the statement in :23 that wisdom was "far from me". Again, the author cannot bring himself to describe all wisdom as bunk. He retreats to the position that there is "wisdom", but it's too difficult to find. He says the same in Ecc. 8:1 "Who knows the interpretation of a thing?", which appears to continue the theme here despite the chapter break. It's a major theme in Ecclesiastes: "Who knows?" 2:19; 3:21; 6:12; "Who can tell?" 6:12; 8:7; 10:14; "Who can find?" 7:24. The answer of course is God through the Lord Jesus. And so those who once lived active spiritual lives can retreat to a position that they have no idea what truth is, because [they say] it's too complicated to find it. There are too many options, especially in the age of information explosion. But this is an excuse. God's truth is there for the humble to easily find- if they seek it in Christ.

Ecc 7:25 I turned around, and my heart sought to know and to search out, and to seek

wisdom and the scheme of things, and to know that wickedness is stupidity, and that foolishness is madness-
This turning around is not any reference to repentance, as some like to imagine. It rather refers to the change of mind within Solomon, rejecting God's wisdom and morality for his own, as explained on the previous verses. "To seek out wisdom" must be understood in the context of the notes on :19,23,24. God had given Solomon wisdom- as a pure gift. But now he has rejected that and is trying to search out 'wisdom' for himself- and coming to wrong conclusions. So many who were given God's wisdom in their youth have made the same error.

Ecc 7:26 I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and traps, whose hands are chains. Whoever pleases God shall escape from her; but the sinner will be ensnared by her-
Solomon had over 1000 wives, and slept with whom he chose. But he laments in Prov. 30:15,19 how he lives in fear of his wives committing adultery. He mentions a particular woman and her daughters who he describes as blood sucking leaches, who have broken his heart and irritate and anger him because they are so insatiable. Solomon, the apparently powerful over women, becomes ensnared by them, as he laments here. This a clear reference back to Solomon's own entanglement. In his younger days, he had found "the hair of thine head like the purple of a king [i.e. he imagined her to be suited to him, the King of Israel, when she wasn't]; the king is held captive in the tresses thereof" (Song 7:5 RV).

Solomon was evidently fascinated by Samson. His writings contain many allusions to him. Thus he speaks of how he found "more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares, and her hands as bands ("fetters", RSV): whoso pleaseth God shall escape her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26 AV). His constant warnings about the danger of the Gentile (AV "strange") woman are all commands to learn from the example of Samson. All these passages allude to Samson (e.g. Prov. 5:20; 6:26-28; 7:21-27). Often the Proverbs allude to characters in Israel's history. The references to a wise son rejoicing his father and mother (Prov. 23:25) and saddening them by his folly shout for application to Samson. The warnings about not *looking* at a strange woman recall how Samson *saw* the Philistine girl in Timnath and the prostitute in Gaza (Jud. 14:1; 16:1).

Joshua's prophecy that those who married the surrounding women would find them "a snare and a trap for you, a scourge in your sides, and thorns in your eyes" (Josh. 23:12,13 RSV) was fulfilled in Samson's relationship with Delilah and in Solomon's experience likewise. But the similarity is such that surely Samson must have been aware of it, when he asked Delilah to tie him up with cords. Joshua's words were not too distant history and surely Samson knew them. This is Samson at his darkest. He was mixing up his sex game with Delilah with Joshua's words. Joshua had said that these women would tie up the Israelite man if they married them. Samson didn't marry her; it is possible that she was a renegade Israelite, not a Gentile; and he wanted to show that actually Samson could handle a bit of fun with Delilah without really breaking the spirit of Joshua's words. And so as he broke those bands each time to go out and kill some more Philistine warriors, he doubtless felt he was still in spiritual control.

Solomon made exactly the same mistake; he took foreign wives. And the record comments: "of the nations concerning which the Lord had said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for *surely* they will turn away your heart... and his wives turned away his heart" (1 Kings 11:1-3).

The implication is that Solomon took those wives thinking 'Well, I know the law says they will surely turn away my heart, but actually they won't, I can handle it'; and he didn't handle it. Solomon seems to have realized, in the bitterness of Ecclesiastes, that he had made the same mistake as Samson: "I find more bitter than death [i.e. it would be better to be dead than be in this position] the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her" (Ecc. 7:26). These were surely Samson's thoughts in those eyeless weeks in Gaza: better to have died than to have been snared by Gentile women. He let her snare him, conscious of the allusion to Joshua's words; and thought he could break free from the relationship at will. But in the end, he couldn't. Any form of sin is by nature addictive. The only way of dealing with it is to break completely. The Lord taught this when He spoke of the need to gouge out the eye that offends our spirituality. And He was alluding to how Samson's eyes were 'picked out' (Young), "gouged out" (Jud. 16:21 RSV). We either do it to ourselves, or the Lord will do it to us. He will have the conquest over sin in our existence, ultimately. Either we work with Him in this, and thereby remain with Him eternally; or we foolishly resist Him, and He has His way against our will, and in doing so destroys us. With a logic like this, any sacrifice is logically given. But more than logic. If we *truly love* the Lord God and His Son, the desire to give, to serve for nothing, will render this logical encouragement unnecessary.

Even in the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, written in Solomon's later life, he still uses words and phrases which have their root in his father David- e.g. his description of women as snares in Ecc. 7:26 goes back to how his father dealt with women who were a snare (1 Sam. 18:21). And the whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai (2 Sam. 19:35).

Solomon as an old man says that the man who pleases God will free himself from the snare of women, but the sinner will be taken captive by her; yet as an old man, Solomon's heart was turned away by his wives (1 Kings 11:4-7). He saw himself as the sinner, rather than the man who was personally trying to please God. The way he built idol temples for those women on mock temple mounts near Jerusalem was surely a studied statement that he saw himself as a hopeless apostate (2 Kings 23:13). Like the alcoholic or drug abuser, Solomon could analyze his problem so accurately- and yet do nothing about it. This is the utter tragedy of all spiritual failure.

Ecc 7:27 Behold, I have found this, says the Preacher, one to another, to find out the scheme-

Or as AV "Counting one by one", perhaps going through his wives. The original could imply 'experiencing one thing after another', i.e. the things he lists in chapter 2, following every whim and passion of the flesh to see where it leads. Instead of accepting God's revealed wisdom, he proudly decided to try to work it all out for himself. This is effectively what everyone does who rejects God's revealed word in the Bible.

This is a sad reflection upon his disobedience to the command of his mother in Prov. 31:29 LXX, where she hopes that her son will be the one who will say that "Many women are good wives, but you are the best of them all". This is quite contrary to the spirit of Solomon's experience in Ecc. 7:26,27, where he as it were goes through all his "many women" one by one, and can't say that a single one of them is

"good". Bathsheba clearly has in mind that Solomon would have but one wife, whom he would praise as the best of all women. He totally rejected this ideal.

Ecc 7:28 which my soul still seeks; but I have not found. One man among a thousand have I found; but I have not found a woman among all those-
Solomon's anti-women stance is a reflection of his anger with himself for having done what God had warned against- marrying many and Gentile wives. Solomon had all the instruction he could wish for; but he didn't allow it to really sink home one little bit. He hit out on the search for an ultimately satisfying woman, but out of the 1000 he had he never found one, even when he sat down and analyzed each of them. And even politically, his marriages with all those Gentile women didn't seem to achieve him the support he desired from their home countries; Egypt gave refuge to Jeroboam, Solomon's main rival (1 Kings 11:40), even though he always acquiesced to his wives and even in his very old age he still didn't destroy the idol temples he built for them (2 Kings 23:13).

David's influence was extremely strong, but it decreased over the years. Yet even at the end, Solomon's wisdom stayed with him in that some aspects of his upbringing stayed with him- he could never escape from it. When he says that he has never found a truly wise woman, but he did know one wise man he may well have had David in mind.

Ecc 7:29 Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they search for many schemes-
Solomon may still have gender in view, considering males were upright but women were scheming. The "schemes" are the snares and traps of :26. We see here how the mighty Solomon, who took whatever woman he fancied, was not in fact free. He felt himself trapped by those women, and victims of their schemes. It was hardly surprising. Any woman he slept with automatically entered his harem, being shut off from the world and hardly seeing Solomon ever again. And so there were endless "schemes" by them. This was inevitable and of his own creation. Solomon's dislike of women was perhaps akin to how the alcoholic hates alcohol.

This is one of many allusions to the curse in Eden, whereby "to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). There are many allusions to the curse in Ecclesiastes, especially in the verses which speak of man's labour being in vain and just to satisfy his appetite / need to eat. Especially Ecc. 5:17 "All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath". "God made man upright" (Ecc. 7:29), "one sinner destroys much good." (Ecc. 9:18 cp. Rom. 5:18 "for as by one man sin entered the world... so death passed upon all men"). But Genesis 3 held out the great Hope of redemption from the curse through Messiah. But the koheleth doesn't want to factor that in. Although he surely knew Gen. 3:15 as well as he knew Gen. 3:19. But he wallows in the curse rather than the long term blessing of Eden restored in the Kingdom.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 8

Ecc 8:1 Who is like the wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed-
See on :2. This may be a reflection upon how Solomon as the most famous "wise man" had a face shining with wisdom, and his face was thought to be soft and wise.

For Ecclesiastes is Solomon looking back in autobiography. But he several times admits in Ecclesiastes that now as an old man he is a hard oppressor, whipping his people (1 Kings 12:11). Indeed wisdom does make a man's face to shine, for Stephen's face shone because of his wisdom (Acts 6:10,15 clearly allude here). But Solomon's face became hard in his old age; and he realized that. He so well analyzes himself; but refuses to repent and change.

He proudly insisted: “Who is as the wise man?”, as if the possession of theoretical truth and wisdom was the ultimate possession; and he then goes on to say that this made him beyond criticism (Ecc. 8:2-4). This surely *must* be a danger for any community or individual who considers they have “the truth” and who considers the possession of it to be of the utmost importance.

"Who knows the interpretation of a thing?" would fit what koheleth elsewhere argues- that God's ways are beyond understanding. We cannot find truth, he concludes, because God has made it too hard to understand. This is wrong on so many counts. He may therefore again be mocking wisdom and the "wise man" as all the same, part of the vanity of life. He has elsewhere lamented "Why was I more wise?", and claimed that wise and foolish have the same end in eternal death. And that the luck / chance factor is so great in life, that it often trumps the possession of wisdom. What matters in reality, he suggests, is to just keep the king's command (:2), because if you don't, you will get into trouble. And he says explicitly in :17 that a wise man cannot understand God: "I saw all the work of God, that man can’t find out the work that is done under the sun, because however much a man labours to seek it out, yet he won’t find it. Yes even though a wise man thinks he can comprehend it, he won’t be able to find it". Ecclesiastes makes many allusions to the fall of man. The constant lament that man 'cannot know' alludes to the taking of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. But koheleth sarcastically laments that even that didn't give man much knowledge, and he must die as he was forbidden the fruit of the tree of life.

Every reader of Ecclesiastes notices the Hebrew word *hebel*, used thirty-eight times and translated "vapour", "breath", "wind", "meaninglessness", "emptiness", "futility" and "vanity". James alludes to this in saying that “What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” (James 4:14 ESV). But he goes on to say that therefore, we should live life unlike koheleth but in an awareness of God's involvement and our answerability to Him. *Hebel* has no single translation in English. But some versions prefer the translation "enigma" and that often 'works' in Ecclesiastes. This suggests that the pain of life is that it is an enigma, a riddle that we are unable to solve by our nature, although there may theoretically be some resolution to it. In this case, the idea that there is an answer, but God has hidden it from us so that it is unknowable, becomes a huge theme. And that is a very and persistently skeptical and incorrect presentation of God. In fact it seems that the enigma is only solved by the appreciation of grace, of the resurrection of the body, future judgment and the eternity of God's Kingdom. All things that Hezekiah and Solomon set their hearts not to accept.

Ecc 8:2 I say, Keep the king’s command! because of the oath to God-
Despite having such knowledge and wisdom with which to rule Israel (for this was the primary purpose of the gift of wisdom to him), Solomon oppressed his people (1 Kings 12:11). With evident reference to himself, he commented: “Because the king’s word hath power, who may say unto him, What doest thou?” (Ecc. 8:4 RV). It is only God who cannot be questioned in this way. But Solomon felt that because he possessed God’s wisdom, he could therefore act as God: “I counsel thee, Keep the

King's command, and that in regard of the oath of God" (Ecc. 8:2) could suggest that he thought that his commandments were in fact God's. So the possession of Truth, which we too have, can lead to an incredible arrogance, a lack of openness to others' comments upon us, and a certainty that *we* are right in all that we do and are beyond criticism. The hardness of a man is changed by true wisdom (Ecc. 8:1 RV), but knowing this, Solomon became hard hearted. He had the wisdom- but as he said, it was far from him personally.

The Hebrew could be translated to mean that "I counsel" to keep the command of a King if you can do so without breaking your oath with God. This was what Hezekiah did when he made a covenant with Assyria and Egypt, being assured by his courtiers that he was not thereby comprising the oath / covenant with Yahweh. Isaiah of course criticizes him over this, on Yahweh's behalf.

Ecc 8:3 Don't be hasty to go out of his presence. Don't persist in an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him-
Here Solomon demands absolute respect, and speaks of himself as God, doing his will, judging evil and demanding the utmost respect in his presence. This was Solomon's problem, as it is of many today; he considered that his very possession of Divine truth enabled him to play God, and he ended up acting as if he were God. Remember that he wrote all this at a time when he had turned away from Yahweh. One psychological, subconscious reason why he did so was because he was playing God himself.

Ecc 8:4 for the king's word is supreme. Who can say to him, What are you doing?-
See on :2,3. This is a sad contrast to how his father David had throughout Ps. 119 considered Yahweh's word as supreme. Only Yahweh is beyond question, and cannot be asked "What are you doing?" (Job 9:12). Solomon surely knew that scripture in Job, for the book was in existence by his time, and David often alludes to it. But he willfully appropriates it to himself. He wrote all this at a time when he had turned away from Yahweh. One psychological, subconscious reason why he did so was because he was playing God himself.

Isaiah later labours the point that God does what He wishes (:3) and none can argue with Him about what He is doing. But the author here states that the king has those attributes. Hezekiah was contemporary with Isaiah and we suspect that here he is blasphemously appropriating to himself Isaiah's words about Yahweh. He was playing God.

Ecc 8:5 Whoever keeps the commandment shall not come to harm, and his wise heart will know the time and procedure-
This appears to refer to the commandment of the king of the previous verses, not of God. GNB: "As long as you obey his commands, you are safe, and a wise person knows how and when to do it". Solomon has himself in view as the king, and he defines wisdom as unquestioning obedience to himself. His Divine wisdom remained with him, but he hijacks it to bolster his own power and authority- as many do today.

It could be argued that this is yet another example of sarcasm by koheleth, because he states plainly in :7 "he doesn't know that which will be; for who can tell him how it will be?". And he says explicitly in :17 that a wise man cannot understand God: "I saw all the work of God, that man can't find out the work that is done under the sun, because however much a man labours to seek it out, yet he won't find it. Yes even though a wise man thinks he can comprehend it, he won't be able to find it". He

has often stated that wisdom and folly produce no real difference in ultimate outcome, and chance happens to both wise and foolish. If we read :5-7 as a single statement, the idea may be that the "wise heart" will accept that he cannot know what will happen in the future. It's all too hard and beyond man (as stated on :1).

This must be balanced against the earlier statement that sin is inevitable and perfect obedience will not be achieved, so seeking it is pointless (Ecc. 7:20 "there is not a righteous man on earth, who does good and doesn't sin"). So we could read this as tongue in cheek sarcasm against the idea of obedience to commandments. Because the author argues that no man knows "the time", i.e. can attach meaning to event (:7).

Ecc 8:6 For there is a time and procedure for every purpose-
"Purpose" is "delight". David's "delight" was in God's law (Ps. 1:2 s.w.) and also in the things of the future Kingdom of God (s.w. 2 Sam. 23:5); our "delight" in those things is reflected in our attitudes to God's word. And we shall be finally judged according to our 'delights', our dominant desires (s.w. Ecc. 3:17; 8:6). The Lord Jesus was devoted to sharing Yahweh's "delight" (Is. 53:10). We shall be judged according to what are our dominant desires. But Solomon seems to be playing God here by assuming that coming before *him* as the judge of Israel was coming before God's judgment. See on :2-4.

Despite the way that Solomon as it were hijacked God's role as judge, what he says about judgment is true enough. There is indeed a present aspect to judgment. "The day of the Lord is coming, but it is even now" (Mic. 7:4 Heb.). God isn't passive to human behaviour- right now "To every matter there is a time and a judgment (LXX *krisis*)" (Ecc. 8:6 RVmg.). He perceives our actions right now as critically important. And this should highlight to us the crucial importance of life and right living today.

Each action and thought and word is *now* judged by God [even though Solomon had tried to hijack that role by playing God]; and the result will be communicated to us on the last day. There is a *krisis* (judgment) *now* for every work (Ecc. 8:5,6 LXX). Every action and moment is a crisis. In this thought alone we see the crucial importance of life and living, every moment. As cotton wool clouds drift across the sky, we can lose this sense of urgency and vitality which there ought to be about every moment we live here. But we *know* His judgments; we *know* how He judges behaviour; and therefore we should live as men and women under judgment. Each act and thought is our judgment. It has been truly observed by John Robinson: "'To every matter there is a time (*kairos*) and a judgment (*krisis*)' (Ecc. 8:6 RV margin). And each particular moment of judgment makes its contribution towards the supreme consummation towards which it is all working- the final *kairos* which is also the final *krisis*" *In The End God* (London: James Clark, 1950), p. 57.. The judgment is the final crisis. That sense of crisis must not be lost on us. And yet we have a tendency to act and speak and think as if judgment day is not going to come: "Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him [in judgment], yet judgment *is* before him", right now (Job 35:14).

Although the misery of man is heavy on him-
This misery is because Solomon considers that man doesn't know his future, and death appears final (:7).

Ecc 8:7 For he doesn't know that which will be; for who can tell him how it will be?-
This is a frequent lament by Solomon, that he doesn't know the future. He wrote this at the end of his life, and the future in view was death. And yet the promises to David and Abraham clearly offered the resurrection of the body and future eternal

inheritance of the earth. Even throughout Proverbs, Solomon sees wisdom as largely just good for this life. He has no eternal, Kingdom perspective, nor does he strongly factor in the final day of judgment. He considered himself the Messianic king, and his kingdom to be God's promised Kingdom. And now he was himself facing death, he realizes that the future is a fearful unknown.

"Who can tell him...?" of course begs the answer- God through the Lord Jesus.

Ecc 8:8 There is no man who has power over the spirit to contain the spirit; neither does he have power over the day of death. There is no discharge in war; neither shall wickedness deliver those who practice it-

The idea may be as in GNB, that death "is a battle we cannot escape; we cannot cheat our way out". Effectively this is what Solomon had been trying to do by acting as if he was somehow immortal in his playing of God (:2-4). But as he approached death, he realized how wrong he had been, and yet doesn't repent. In the context of :14, "no man" implies that no man, not even the righteous, can retain his spirit when he dies. The implication is as in Ecc. 3:21,22 that the spirit is the life force of creation which returns to God on death. And in Solomon's view, wisdom and righteousness couldn't change that. Clearly Solomon sees this life as all there is. He has no acceptance that the spirit is in fact more than the life force, for the Bible often uses the "spirit" in the sense of the character of a person, which is retained in God's memory and will be the basis of our eternal judgment (e.g. Heb. 12:23). Solomon in this sense was not a spiritual person, he failed to recognize that the spirit in the sense of our personality is of the essence, and determines our hope of eternal life in a bodily form.

We see the relevance to Hezekiah most clearly. "No man has power over the wind to retain the wind". Hezekiah sees life as the wind. He says no man has power to control the day of his death- even though he had prayed for the day of his death to be delayed, and it was. Again we see him rationalizing the wonder of Divine response to his prayer. And reasoning that the extra life he was given was actually what God intended anyway, so there was no particular grace shown him nor was the extension of life a result of his prayer being answered. The Biblical record says that it was in response to Hezekiah's prayer that the Divine word came extending his life by 15 years. "There is no discharge in that war"- even though at the time of his illness, Hezekiah was in the midst of the Assyrian war, and there was a miraculous discharge from it. Again by grace.

Ecc 8:9 All this have I seen, and applied my mind to every work that is done under the sun. There is a time in which one man has power over another to his hurt-

GNB "to suffer under him", LXX "to afflict". But Solomon was the one who afflicted the people under him (1 Kings 12:11). But he sees it as not too significant because there will be no future judgment, and death happens to all (see on :8).

"My mind" is literally "my whole heart". David spoke of seeking and praising God's grace with his "whole heart" (Ps. 9:1; 119:58; 138:1). Solomon uses the phrase, but speaks of being obedient with the "whole heart" (1 Kings 8:23; 2 Chron. 6:14) and applying the "whole heart" to the intellectual search for God (Ecc. 1:13; 8:9). There is a difference. The idea of whole hearted devotion to God was picked up by Solomon, but instead of giving the whole heart to the praise of God's grace, he instead advocated giving the whole heart to ritualistic obedience and intellectual search for God. This has been the trap fallen into by many Protestant groups whose obsession with "truth" has obscured the wonder of God's grace.

That Solomon abused his power to hurt is recognized by him elsewhere in Ecclesiastes. “Surely oppression maketh a wise man foolish” (Ecc. 7:7 RV), he commented at the end of his life- even though *right then* he was chastising the people with whips, oppressing them (1 Kings 12:11). He knew the true wisdom, he saw his reflection so accurately in the mirror, but resigned from its personal implications. He could even write that “I returned and considered all the oppression that are done under the sun [by himself!]: and behold the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power [Solomon was king and had set up the tax system in a clever and biased way]; but they had no comforter” (Ecc. 4:1; 5:8). It was a real case of spiritual schizophrenia- he sorrowed for the people he oppressed. He even seems to say that there is nothing to be surprised at in the poor being oppressed, because the whole hierarchy of officialdom above them do the same, and that chain of control ends in himself (see on Ecc. 5:2). He saw his sin as inevitable, as part of his participation in humanity- he didn’t own up to his own desperate need for grace. Yet he also knew that “man lords it over man [cp. Solomon’s oppression of the people] to his own hurt” (Ecc. 8:9 RSV). He realized that he had only hurt himself by abusing people. And yet he continued, despite his accurate and incisive self analysis.

Ecc 8:10 So I saw the wicked buried. Indeed they came also from holiness. They went and were forgotten in the city where they did this. This also is vanity-
It was all vanity to Solomon because of his observation in :14 that the righteous also die the same death as the wicked. He therefore considers that the moral teaching of righteousness has no lasting effect, and in :16 laments he had built Yahweh's temple, which he now in his old age wasn't using as instead he worshipped in the idol temples he had built nearby to it (1 Kings 3:4-8).

The Hebrew is difficult here, but AV may be closest: "I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy". The idea may be that the wicked desecrated the temple regularly by going in and out of the holy space with impunity. But still they died the same death as anyone else who lived a far less blasphemous life. So he seems to conclude that even blasphemy means nothing in the bigger picture, because death is the finality for us all.

Solomon uses the same words as his father David in Ps. 37:10: "Yes, though you look for his place, he isn’t there". Solomon in his collapse of faith considers that not finding the place of the deceased is just an example of life's vanity. David his father saw it is a triumph of good over evil and a foretaste of how things shall be eternally put right at the last day. But Solomon lost the kingdom perspective, using the words of David his father simply in a secular sense.

The reference to "holiness" could mean that even the holy were in due course forgotten in their own town, which is the theme of :14. Solomon concludes that holiness is therefore vanity because no lasting reputation is left. He clearly saw wisdom as only good for this life, and many of his Proverbs see the advantage of wisdom as getting a good name and image for ourselves in this life.

However GNB and LXX give a different slant: "And then I saw the ungodly carried into the tombs, and that out of the holy place: and they departed, and were praised in the city, because they had done thus: this also is vanity" (LXX); "Yes, I have seen the wicked buried and in their graves, but on the way back from the cemetery people praise them in the very city where they did their evil. It is useless" (GNB). Solomon's understanding was that the greatest reward was to have a good

name and reputation after death, and he laments that this is attained even by the wicked. So he sees no point in being righteous.

Often Koheleth says that good and bad will come to nothing and be forgotten as though they had never existed. But this is Hezekiah mocking Isaiah's words of Is. 23:13, that this is only the judgment of the wicked. But now Hezekiah applies to all men, because He has decided that final judgment will not come as God said it would.

Ecc 8:11 Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil-
I will suggest on :12 that :12-14 are Solomon quoting common wisdom of the time and showing it to be wrong. The GNB sees it this way. But I think the quotation may include :11. Because in :10,14 Solomon is arguing that the wicked and righteous all die the same death, and often in secular life the wicked have a better life and reputation left behind them than the righteous. Therefore, the idea that evil must be judged immediately lest people become evil is wrong and unhelpful. That seems to be Solomon's position. "Sentence" is a Persian word, found elsewhere only in Esther 1:20, which would confirm the idea that this is a quotation from another source which Solomon is disagreeing with. But the sentence against evil may refer to death; for in Ecc. 9:3 Solomon repeats the phrase "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil", blaming this on the fact they are alive and not dead. This is nihilism at its worst. Solomon blames the evil heart of man on the fact he doesn't die from the womb. This is quite wrong reasoning, and reflects how Solomon indeed "hated life".

This again could sound like the argument that sin is inevitable, and therefore all spiritual endeavour is pointless. Peter argues that God delays judgment by His grace, because He wants to bring men to repentance. But Hezekiah liked to conclude that judgment had to be now, not in the future. Because he had no real faith in God's future activities. And because he didn't see immediate judgment from God, he concluded that human sin was therefore God's fault.

Ecc 8:12 Though a sinner commits crimes a hundred times, and lives long, yet surely I know that it will be better with those who fear God, who are reverent before him-
This and :13 are not necessarily an appeal to fear God. It would contradict the general tenor of Solomon's position. And as noted on Ecc. 1:1, I suggest this is not part of any dialectical argument, whereby arguments are being given for and against faith. I think GNB is right to read :12-14 as Solomon quoting the generally accepted position that faith in God makes things work out well in the end; after all, Solomon was writing this at the end of his life, when his heart had turned away from God. So it would be surprising if at that time he professed personal faith in God. So the quotation from the accepted position goes something as in GNB: "A sinner may commit a hundred crimes and still live. Oh yes, I know what they say: "If you obey God, everything will be all right,
but it will not go well for the wicked. Their life is like a shadow and they will die young, because they do not obey God."
But this is nonsense. Look at what happens in the world: sometimes the righteous get the punishment of the wicked, and the wicked get the reward of the righteous. I say it is useless". Where Solomon really personally stands is explained in :14; he considers the righteous and wicked have the same end in death, and therefore there is no great advantage in fearing God. But, he admits, that sinning over much might result in a bad life experience, so the way of wisdom would avoid such extremes.

Ecc 8:13 But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he lengthen days like a shadow; because he doesn't fear God-
See on :12. I suggest this is a quotation from generally accepted wisdom, which Solomon denied in his old age. The next verse goes on to state that in Solomon's view, the wicked do sometimes have long lives. As discussed on Ecc. 1:1, this is not a dialectical argument, for the definition of "vanity" continues throughout this section with no clear break between the supposedly opposing sides of the argument. These verses are perhaps the strongest case for the idea that Solomon is in fact arguing for faith in God, through using dialectic or contrary arguments. But the argument doesn't hold water, for Solomon is writing this in old age when his heart has already turned away from God. And these verses are best understood as noted on :12, as a quotation of popular views about God, which Solomon is rejecting.

Ecc. 8:10-14 are an example of where on one hand the writer "knows" truth, but he says that he "sees" or observes something different. This is typical of his problem- he knows Divine truth, but sees the world through worldly eyes. That truth which he knows has not affected his worldview. Thus he "knows" that those who fear God will be blessed and the wicked punished (:12,13), but he sees / observes that the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer; or, the same thing happens to them. His comment that "This is vanity" may have Divine truth as the referent; "this", Divine truth, is vain and divorced from reality. If he had a Kingdom perspective, appreciating and giving full weight to the idea of final judgment, then this observation would not have been any burden to him.

Hezekiah did lengthen his days, and the shadow confirmed it- by 15 years. But this was by grace. The Divine judgment against him was delayed- but not because he deserved it. But now he reasons as if this was because of his righteousness. Just as he accepts the praise and congratulations for 'his' defeat of the Assyrian army, when that was achieved solely by God's grace.

Ecc 8:14 There is a vanity which is done on the earth, that there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked. Again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity-
See on :12. This is Solomon's take on the popular ideas he has just quoted in :11-13, whereby righteousness has a reward and wickedness brings punishment. He now considers it nonsense. But this arose from his refusal to see any eternal perspective. The eternal outcomes of this life are not immediate, they are articulated at the last day of judgment, and will be experienced eternally in God's future Kingdom. But Solomon didn't believe this, and so he was left with being the miserable man of 1 Cor. 15:19 who has hope only in this life. See on :15.

Ecc 8:15 Then I commended mirth, because a man has no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be joyful: for that will accompany him in his labour all the days of his life which God has given him under the sun-
This is quoted in 1 Cor. 15:32 as the position of those why deny faith in the resurrection of the body. And indeed this was exactly Solomon's problem; see on :14; Ecc. 9:7. Solomon earlier taught that going to a funeral and sorrowing is better than the laughter of a wedding feast (Ecc. 7:2,3). Yet despite realizing this on an intellectual level, Solomon personally commended mirth / laughter to himself (Ecc. 8:15), and advises removing sorrow from the heart (Ecc. 11:10). Again we see Solomon's amazing ability, indeed the ability of human nature, to comprehend truth

on one level, and yet reason and live exactly and precisely and consciously the opposite.
On one hand Solomon condemns mirth (Ecc. 7:4; Prov. 20:32 LXX "If thou abandon thyself to mirth, and stretch forth thine hand in a quarrel, thou shalt be disgraced"). But this is exactly what Solomon did in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. He refused to accept his own wisdom. It was merely a teaching position, and he felt the need to empirically find its truth. he failed to personalize the wisdom he taught, and therefore turned away in the end.

"Mirth" is the word also translated "pleasure". Don't love "pleasure" (Prov. 21:17) and Prov. 14:13 "even in mirth there is sorrow" are both s.w. "mirth" in Ecc. 2:1,2; 8:15. Solomon had to re-learn this for himself rather than accept direct Divine teaching about it. He recognized that fools love mirth (Prov. 7:4) but still he wanted it. He rejected this wisdom and only came to agree with it through doing just what Prov.14:13 condemns (Ecc. 2:2).

Ecc 8:16 When I applied my heart to know wisdom-
Solomon was given wisdom by God, he didn't reach it by any personal intellectual process. But now he has rejected that and seeks to know wisdom from his own observations and intellectual process. And that wisdom was associated with his heart turning away from God and to the nihilism of idolatry.

And to see the business that is done on the earth (for also there is that neither day nor night sees sleep with his eyes)-
In Ps. 127, instead of building the temple / house for Yahweh, Solomon is advised to let Yahweh build up his house / family as the seed of David (Ps. 127:3-5). God would give sleep to the beloved, "Jedidiah", Solomon (Ps. 127:2), and he would awake and find his house / seed built for him by God- rather than Solomon frantically building a house for God. The same phrase is only used of Solomon *not* giving sleep to his eyes in his mad addiction to works (Prov. 6:4; Ecc 8:16). Ps. 127 was "for Solomon" rather than necessarily "by" him. And it seems he refused the offer of having his house / seed built up for him, but rather chose to try to build God a house in his addiction to achieving blessing by works. But now, as in Ecc. 5:1-6, Solomon is lamenting the way he had built the temple; for he now believes that the righteous go to the same end as the wicked (:14), and so what he had once believed and upheld was vain. See on :17.

Ecc 8:17 then I saw all the work of God, that man can't find out the work that is done under the sun, because however much a man labours to seek it out, yet he won't find it. Yes even though a wise man thinks he can comprehend it, he won't be able to find it-
GNB translates :16,17: "Whenever I tried to become wise and learn what goes on in the world, I realized that you could stay awake night and day and never be able to understand what God is doing. However hard you try, you will never find out. The wise may claim to know, but they don't". As suggested on :16, this continues Solomon's abrogation of the Divine wisdom given him in his youth. Seeing that Solomon has so often called himself "the wise man", he is here effectively denying the personal truth of all the wisdom he has. He also sees that wisdom as not particularly deep, seeing it cannot save from immediate death in this life. He sees the reality of death as the trump card against wisdom. And yet as noted on :14,15, this is because he refuses to accept the doctrine of the resurrection of the body.

But it seems Solomon or Hezekiah liked to think that finding God was a far too difficult intellectual exercise to be achievable, and God had in fact made it so (Ecc. 3:11; 8:17). Because, presumably, He wants to hide Himself from His own creations. Indeed there is the implication that God is cruel to have placed a desire for eternity in man's structure, and yet make it unattainable for him. It's the same idea as the comment that what is crooked cannot be made straight (Ecc. 1:15; 7:13), especially when God has made it crooked. The argument seems to be that nobody can get totally right with God because He doesn't let them have the chance to change. But this was just a convenient excuse to not pursue relationship with God. It is also a studied denial of the possibility of future eternity, at the resurrection. And we hear it today. Isaiah, as so often, comments on this verse by saying that God does declare [Heb. 'explain'] the end from the beginning- it can be found out through His word (Is. 46:10).

Paul may allude here, when he exclaims about the unsearchable wonder of God's grace: “Oh, the depths of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Rom. 11:33). Koheleth lamented that life is vanity because you can't understand God's work. But for Paul, what is not understandable is the depth of God's saving grace. But future salvation and grace were foreign to koheleth, and so he is left just with the 'problem' that God's ways are beyond full human understanding.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 9

Ecc 9:1 For all this I laid to my heart, even to explore all this-
This continues the theme of the preceding verses, where we saw Solomon abrogating the wisdom given him by God, which he didn't reach by any personal intellectual process. But now he has rejected that, and seeks to know wisdom from his own observations explorations and intellectual process ["laid to my heart"]. And that wisdom was associated with his heart turning away from God and to the nihilism of idolatry.

Hezekiah was 'left' by God so that he would know what was really in his heart, and here we have it written down.

That the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God-
This must be associated with Solomon's conclusion in Ecc. 8:14 that there is no real advantage of the righteous over the wicked and foolish because they all die the same death. Here Solomon seems to say that righteousness is only anyway part of some predetermined behaviour and is not therefore morally culpable. The idea may be as in GNB "that God controls the actions of wise and righteous people, even their love and their hate". Secular people at the end of their lives often come to the conclusion that everything is somehow overruled by God, to the point that human behaviour is pretty much all Divinely determined and enforced. Solomon at this point had turned away from Yahweh, so he may refer to "God" in a more general sense of some higher power. But he fails to accept the basic thesis of the book of Proverbs; that human actions can be controlled, we have election, and love and hatred are choices. And thereby we are accountable for our actions and to Divine judgment. But Solomon didn't believe in this, and so it led him to conclude that human behaviour isn't that significant and is somehow all orchestrated by some higher hand than our own. See on Ecc. 11:3.

Whether it is love or hatred, man doesn’t know it; all is before them-
The idea may be, as discussed above, that love or hatred, righteousness or sin, has no

eternal consequence seeing that all die the same death. GNB "No one knows anything about what lies ahead". This is a frequent lament by Solomon, that he doesn't know the future. He wrote this at the end of his life, and the future in view was death. And yet the promises to David and Abraham clearly offered the resurrection of the body and future eternal inheritance of the earth. Even throughout Proverbs, Solomon sees wisdom as largely just good for this life. He has no eternal, Kingdom perspective, nor does he strongly factor in the final day of judgment. He considered himself the Messianic king, and his kingdom to be God's promised Kingdom. And now he was himself facing death, he realizes that the future is a fearful unknown.

Ecc 9:2 All things come alike to all. There is one event to the righteous and to the wicked; to the good, to the clean, to the unclean, to him who sacrifices, and to him who doesn't sacrifice-
Solomon is again writing autobiography. He had built the temple of Yahweh, but now at this point in old age his heart had turned away from Yahweh to idols, and he was no longer sacrificing to Yahweh but to the idols, whose temples he had built near Yahweh's (1 Kings 3:4-8). He sees no problem in his choice because he has convinced himself that sacrificers to Yahweh die the same death as those who worship idols. *Both Solomon and Hezekiah are noted for offering many sacrifices. But they conclude it was all meaningless because death is so final.*

The man who didn't offer sacrifice was Abel, and things did indeed go differently for him. It is perhaps no coincidence that the Hebrew word for "Abel" is of the same consonants as that translated "vanity" [*hebel*] so often in Ecclesiastes. There could be the implication that the outcomes for both Cain and Abel was death and therefore whether or not they sacrificed acceptably was irrelevant. This would then be another of those points in Ecclesiastes where koheleth verges upon the blasphemous.

As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath, as he who fears an oath-
GNB "one who takes an oath is no better off than one who does not". I suggested above that the first half of this verse refers to Solomon's building of Yahweh's temple but not now sacrificing in it. I noted on Ecc. 5:1-3 that Solomon there comments upon how he had built Yahweh's temple simply because David had made an oath to build it, and that oath became binding on Solomon to fulfil it. He sees the temple which he had forsaken as irrelevant because the builders and users of it would meet the same death as the idolaters. *Hezekiah had vowed to serve God quietly the rest of his days- and he now sees that oath as meaningless.*

Solomon cynically concludes that the wicked and the righteous all die the same death, and so, he concludes, there is no great advantage in righteousness (Ecc. 9:2). This contrasts with Solomon's huge emphasis in Proverbs upon the difference between the wicked and the righteous (e.g. Prov. 11:18). But it seems he got to that wrong conclusion because he assumes that the blessing for righteousness is in this life, and likewise the curses for wickedness. He totally fails to think in terms of the future judgment and eternal life of God's future kingdom. And so as he himself got older and approached death, he concluded that death means that all effort towards righteousness is therefore vain. He made the same mistake as the false teachers of 1 Cor. 15:19, who likewise considered that "hope in Christ" was only helpful for "this life", because they rejected the resurrection of the body and future judgment and reward.

In the end, Solomon felt that for himself, it was as well to be righteous as to be wicked, for in death there was no further difference (Ecc. 9:2,5,9). He knows judgment will come (Ecc. 11:9), at least for the young people, but he reasons as if it

won't- at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (Ecc. 2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. But in Ecc. 7:12 he says that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But then again in Prov. 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, it's benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. I don't see these different perspectives as being the difference between life in the world and life in the spiritual realm. They are all spoken *with conviction* by Solomon, which, to my mind, ruins the idea that he himself believed the Truth but was simply outlining what life is like without God. He advocates both ways. My resolution of this is that he knew and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice.

Ecc 9:3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one event to all: yes also, the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead-
Solomon sees death as a great evil; GNB "is as wrong as anything that happens in this world". Yet according to Genesis, death was created by God as a punishment for human sin, and the consequence of sin. Had Solomon accepted the message of resurrection of the body and future judgment, he would not have portrayed death so harshly; nor effectively charged God with abusing man by allowing death to happen. What a contrast with Paul, who earnestly desired to "depart" (Phil. 1:23), and the generally hopeful approach to death found in the faithful of the Biblical record.

This verse is to be connected with Ecc. 8:11: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil". The sentence against evil may refer to death; for in Ecc. 9:3 Solomon repeats the phrase "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil", blaming this on the fact they are alive and not dead. This is nihilism at its worst. Solomon blames the evil heart of man on the fact he doesn't die from the womb. This is quite wrong reasoning, and reflects how Solomon indeed "hated life".

Ecc 9:4 For to him who is joined with all the living there is hope; for a living dog is better than a dead lion-
A "dog" is a term repeatedly used in the Bible for the immoral. And this is the context in this chapter, arguing that righteousness or wickedness has no eternal consequence. An immoral man yet still alive is "better" than a dead lion of a man, morally and politically king of all. For Solomon refuses to accept any conception of resurrection.

In passing, it needs to be noted that the LXX uses the word *koinonio* here. We are in a sense in fellowship with the world in that we are human- we are "joined (LXX *koinonio* -fellowshipped) to all the living" (Ecc. 9:4); we are guilty in some way for the rejection of God's Son- *we* turned away from Him, and esteemed Him rejected of God (Is. 53:3,4). *But we can do nothing about being members of the human race.* We cannot exit from humanity, as we cannot exit from the body of Christ. Guilt by association, if we must use that phrase, is something we can do nothing about.

Ecc 9:5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead don't know anything, neither do they have any more a reward; for their memory is forgotten-
Solomon may mean that their memory is forgotten by men. Throughout Proverbs and

Ecclesiastes he seems to think that leaving a good memory is the best outcome that can be hoped for from living by "wisdom". But he now accepts that over the passage of time, even that will fade. He fails to accept that the memory of the righteous remains with God, and is the basis for their eternal judgment. Again we see how having a permanent, positive memorial in society was so important for Solomon. Even in his book of Proverbs, he sees the advantage of wisdom as being in that men will think well of the wise, and they progress in society. But now Solomon is struck by the reality of the fact that ultimately, memory of all the living will be forgotten as the generations pass. He fails to factor in that it is the wicked whose memory is forgotten (Ps. 49:11), but the memory of the righteous will be preserved (Ps. 112:6; Mal. 3:16). Solomon refused to accept his father's teaching on this, even though he claims to glorify him.

Hezekiah of all men knew he would die. After 15 years. *He reasons here as if because death is unconsciousness, therefore they have no more reward and will just disappear in memory. That is a studied rejection of the possibility of resurrection, even though resurrection of the body was clearly implicit in the promises in Eden, to Abraham, David etc. and was believed in by Job. Resurrection changes everything- and the Lord's resurrection enables it. Hence the huge significance of His resurrection.*

Ecc 9:6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy has perished long ago; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun-
Solomon has much to say about the evil of envy (e.g. Prov. 14:30; 23:17; 24:1,19; 27:4). But true as his condemnations of envy are, he surely has in mind the way that Ephraim envied Judah, and envied his throne (s.w. Is. 11:13). This all came to full term after his death, when Ephraim departed from Judah under Jeroboam. Again, Solomon is harnessing Divine truth to his own agenda of self justification. And we who claim to hold His truths must take warning. But as he faced death, he came to realize that all such envy is as nothing before the reality of death, which he understood as the end of life, as he had assumed this life was the time for reward and expresses no personal hope in a resurrection of the body (Ecc. 4:4; 9:6).

He considers that all the love and hatred, the good and the bad done by the righteous and wicked, is meaningless because they die the same death. Again he refuses to accept his father's understanding, that it is the wicked who only have a portion in this life (Ps. 17:14). But the righteous have an eternal portion, which God's true Israel can look forward to receiving at the last day.

Koheleth seven times repeats the idea of having your "portion" now, in the small blessings of human existence such as a happy marriage (Ecc. 9:9; 2:10,21; 3:22; 5:18; 9:6,9; 11:2). The totality [seven times] of our "portion" is petty blessing now in this brief life. Koheleth's argument is that man may as well enjoy these petty blessings, because this life is all you get and there's nothing further to come after death. But under the old covenant, the "portion" of the faithful was an inheritance of land, for eternity (Gen. 31:14; Num. 18:20). But koheleth never mentions "Yahweh". He had left covenant relationship with Him and had no hope for the future. So all he saw was kingdom now- and as he observes, it isn't much, and is dwarfed for him by the eternal finality of death. He is sure that there is no "portion" in the future for all who are dead (Ecc. 9:6). If we have the Kingdom Hope surely held in our minds, that that is our "portion", then we will not focus upon the presence nor absence of any "portion" now in life under the sun.

Ecc 9:7 Go your way- eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works-
We must remember that this was written at a time when Solomon had turned away from God. He has just been arguing that whether a man lives in righteousness or sin, in love or hatred, it makes no difference because he dies the same death. He considers God incapable of resurrecting and judging a man after death (Ecc. 3:22). So I would take this as Solomon saying sarcastically: 'Get on and enjoy your life, make your heart merry with wine, and don't worry, 'God' accepts you whatever you do'.

So the idea is as GNB: "It's all right with God". Solomon at this point had turned away from God, so we can read this as sarcasm. He has advocated eating and drinking in Ecc. 8:14,15 because he thinks that there is no ultimate judgment nor difference in outcome for the wicked and the righteous. And so now he sarcastically quips that it's OK to eat and drink, because God is good with that- He's good with anything. So Solomon liked to think. The idea of a last day of judgment and eternal consequence is clearly in the Bible as he then had it available to him. And it is engrained even in the conscience of secular man. To deny this so strenuously was therefore willful and very consciously done. And the use of sarcasm reflects that.

But the Hebrew translated “accepts” means literally to satisfy a debt, and is elsewhere translated ‘to reconcile self’. It could be that he saw works as reconciling man’s debt to God, rather than perceiving that grace is paramount. He keeps on about David his father; and yet there was a crucial difference. David perceived the need for grace as the basis of man’s reconciliation with God; whereas Solomon thought it was works. David wrote that God wants a broken heart and not thousands of sacrifices; yet Solomon offered the thousands of sacrifices, but didn’t have the contrite heart of his father.

As discussed on :18, Ecclesiastes is full of allusion to the curse in Eden. To 'eat bread' was part of the curse. Koheleth is perhaps saying that because eating bread was part of the curse, it is therefore approved by God to enjoy eating and drinking. And he wrongly implies that because of the determinism he perceives in life, all human action is somehow pre-approved by God; everything is "fine in its time" (Ecc. 3:11, AV "beautiful"). Hence the force of the final correction to all this by the inspired editor at the end of the book.

There are many allusions to Ecclesiastes in 1 Cor. 15, the classic chapter about resurrection. Because it is resurrection, and the prospect of eternity because of the Lord's resurrection, which is the ultimate answer to the nihilism of human life as so well observed in Ecclesiastes. Paul surely alludes to this verse by saying that without the prospect of resurrection, indeed we may as well take koheleth's advice and "eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die". Even worse, koheleth argues that God gets that and has in some way pre-approved that attitude.

Ecc 9:8 Let your garments be always white, and don’t let your head lack oil-
The idea is as discussed on :7, to get on and enjoy life and not to let ourselves "lack" any pleasure, because this life is all we have, and there will be no judgment from God; so Solomon thought. White garments and oil were worn to festivities, so the idea is that man may as well party every day.

Ecc 9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your life of vanity, which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity: for that is your portion in life, and in your labour in which you labour under the sun-

Elsewhere Solomon concludes that life is vain and pointless, and one may as well have been a stillborn child or never have existed. He "hated life" (Ecc. 2:17). But he concludes that one may as well live joyfully with one wife, not be righteous over much and not be overly wicked, in order to have a reasonable experience. His idea is that our "portion" is only in this life. He disregarded his father David's sense that Yahweh was his portion (Ps. 16:5 s.w.), and the huge emphasis that the eternal inheritance of the earth in the future Kingdom of God was the "portion" of the true Israel, as promised to Abraham and repeated in the Biblical record. But Solomon blacked out, as it were, all that. He saw this life as our portion and nothing more.

He exhorted to live joyfully with “the wife” (singular) of youth, knowing full well that he in his old age was a polygamist whose many wives had led him astray. This is typical of how Ecclesiastes is so packed with reflections of the contradictions within Solomon's mind. They arise because Solomon knew and perceived God’s truth, and yet felt it meant nothing to him personally. Thus he teaches truth in Ecclesiastes, but intersperses it with his own personal depression and sense that none of it really has any meaning for him personally. The themes of labour, vanity, sleep and children which are found in Ecclesiastes all occur in Psalm 127, a Psalm of or for Solomon- where the message is clearly given that unless the Lord builds the temple, all this labour is in vain. And yet knowing this Solomon *did* labour for it so hard, and then came to the conclusion that it was indeed in vain. If only he had believed the words he earlier composed and sung in Ps. 127, he needn’t have had to come to that sad conclusion.

The allusion is clearly to the curse in Eden- labouring under the sun, "until you die" being the implication. the author doesn't go on to the hope of release from that curse offered through Messiah (Gen. 3:15). Instead he appears to wallow in it, advising only to try to endure it as cheerfully as possible, not least through a good marriage.

Ecc 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in Sheol, where you are going-
Koheleth believes that the work of a man's hands is enjoyable in this life, but will not survive death. By contrast, Is. 65:22 argues that God's people will "long [eternally] enjoy the work of their hands"- *the work they did in this life for God will have eternal fruit and enjoyment*. But koheleth has no Kingdom perspective.

This comment that there is no wisdom in the grave suggests that he saw wisdom as only helpful for this life. And this is implied a number of times even in the book of Proverbs. We note that Solomon understood *sheol* as the grave, a state of unconsciousness. There is no Biblical support for the idea of "hell" as a place of conscious punishment or existence.

Much of the Preacher's message is built on the tragic finality of death being an imperative to present action. And this is true, even though Solomon meant it in the context of his wrong belief that there is no future judgment nor Kingdom of God. He has some fine images of this finality; the silver cord breaks in just one link, and the beautiful bowl of life, of this body, crashes to the dusty floor and smashes; the rope holding the bucket breaks and it plunges irretrievably into the well; and as David observed, in death we are as water spilt on the ground on a hot day, which cannot be gathered up. We are as children who have dropped their precious sweets in the dust, fraught with the realization they are spoilt for good and there are no more. They may look up to us for more, and with as much pain in our eyes as is in theirs, we turn out

our pockets to show there are no more. And so the tragedy of the human experience teaches us to live life in the Lord's service to the full, not frittering it away on the time-wasters of this world. Moses pleaded with God to make time-frittering Israel see the implications of their mortality; having eloquently spoken of the tragedy of our mortality, he concludes: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

Perhaps the Lord was speaking in a kind of soliloquy when He mused that "the night comes, when no man can work", and therefore man should walk and work while he has the light (Jn. 9:4, quoting Ecc. 9:10). He was speaking, in the context, not only of His own zeal to 'work' while He had life, but also applying this to His followers.

It's only when faced with death that we realize the crucial and wonderful importance of every hour which we've been given to live. Facing death as he thought, Job reflected upon the tragic brevity and speed of passing of human life, and the true meaning of the Hebrew word *nephesh*: "My days sprint past me like runners; I will never see them again. They glide by me like sailboats…" (Job 9:25). Life is indeed racing by; time management, and freeing our real selves from all the myriad things which compete to take up our time, becomes of vital importance once we realize this. There is only one ultimate thing worth studying, striving after, labouring for, reading about, working towards… and grasping the mortality of man inspires us in living out this understanding. TV, novels, endless surfing of the internet, engagement in pointless communication and discussion in this communication-crazy world… all this beguiles us of life itself.

Ecc 9:11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all- This continues Solomon's impression that wisdom and righteousness is of no ultimate value because the wise and foolish all die the same death. "Time and chance" may be an idiom for death. Whether wise (spiritually) or strong or swift, the same thing, "time and chance", happens to all; i. e. death. Ecc. 9:12 backs this up: "For man also knoweth not his time (i.e. of death)... as the birds that are caught in the snare (i.e. killed); so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them". The context back in :4,5 is clearly talking about the universality of death. "Chance" does not mean 'random' or uncontrolled events. The Hebrew root by contrast implies something specifically ordained- often by God. In this case, death.

Or it could continue the sense Solomon has that there are factors in life which control our behaviour and experiences, well beyond the effect of living a righteous or foolish life. "All men" in Ecc. 9:11 in the context seems to mean "all men" literally- it does in Ecc. 3:20 and other 'mortality of man' passages. But it we take "time and chance" on face value as a translation, Paul appears to deconstruct this negative take on life by noting that for the believer, "all things work together for good". "All things" therefore delivers us from any fear that we are at the whim of random "time and chance". Whereas Solomon seems to here reject his earlier wisdom of Prov. 13:15, concluding life is just a random sequence of events.

The race not being to the swift is perhaps Solomon's take on his father's swift enemy Asahel being slain due to his speed.

"Time and chance happens..." seems to be saying that success or otherwise in life is all a question of 'luck at the right moment'. He is totally devaluing moral choice, obedience, spirituality. Without God and future judgment in the equation, luck and random chance become dominant deciders in human destiny. And this leads to a totally depressive, anemic outlook on life.

Ecc 9:12 For man also doesn't know his time-
As noted on :11, the "time" in view is the time of death. This is a far cry from the Hezekiah who did know his time of death, but by grace was given extra time- so that in fact he did know the time of his death, 15 years after his terminal illness.

As the fish that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, even so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly on them-
This language of snares and entrapment was often used by Solomon's father David, asking to be saved from such snares (Ps. 141:9) and rejoicing that he and God's people had been (Ps. 124:7). But Solomon seems to be cynically commenting that all men are finally snared in death. In Proverbs, Solomon is continually alluding positively to his father's words. But now he alludes to those words cynically. He was no longer living out parental expectation, although it took him until older life to individuate. And when he did, he is revealed as having no real personal faith at all. Earlier Solomon had warned about avoiding spiritual snares (Prov. 7:23; 22:5), but finally in Ecc. 9:12 he concludes that death is the unavoidable snare; and therefore all attempts to avoid being morally snared into sin are ultimately vain. He came to this perspective because he failed to fully grasp the hope of the resurrection of the body at the last day. He thought he would have the Kingdom now, and this led to his rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom and its moral implications.

Here he says that he suffered the fate of all men in that soon he would die, he would suddenly be caught like a bird in a snare, although he knew not his time. These are the very ideas of Prov. 7:23 concerning the snaring of the simple young man by the Gentile woman: "As a bird hastes to the snare, and knows not that it is for his life". And yet he seems to rationalize this by claiming that death is a snare brought about by time and chance; he minimalized the sin of marriage out of the faith.

Ecc 9:13 I have also seen wisdom under the sun in this way, and it seemed great to me-
After the terrible statements of the previous verses, which I have shown were a negation of his father's wisdom and spiritual positions, Solomon seems to feel the need to say something positive about wisdom. But as ever, his idea is that wisdom is indeed helpful in this life, it has some advantages, but it still fails to give any lasting memorial. Because over the passage of time, the totality of death destroys all such hope of having a lasting memorial.

Ecc 9:14 There was a little city, and few men within it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it-
LXX "Suppose there was a little city" makes this hypothetical. And surely it was a hypothetical example at the time. But I have pointed out on Prov. 25:1 that Hezekiah was particularly interested in Solomon and his words. And it turned out to be a kind of morbid fascination, because he in his later life followed the same path to spiritual destruction as Solomon. The example which Solomon cites of wisdom being advantageous in this life is so relevant to the salvation of Jerusalem from the Assyrians. So relevant that we could therefore conclude that just as Hezekiah's scribes rewrote some of Solomon's Proverbs under inspiration (Prov. 25:1), so they edited this part of Ecclesiastes to make it relevant to Hezekiah's time. And the references to life as a "shadow" would be relevant to the reversal of the shadow on the sundial as the sign given to Hezekiah (Is. 38:8). Or perhaps this is an uncanny prophecy put in

the mouth of the apostate Solomon, as in Jn. 11:51. The language is all clearly relevant to this: the few men within Jerusalem (Is. 24:6; 36:8) compared to the size of the "great king" of Assyria (Is. 36:13) with his "great host" (2 Kings 18:17), who besieged Jerusalem (Is. 1:8; 37:25) with siege engines (according to the depictions on Sennacherib's prism). It seems unlikely Solomon ever experienced anything like this. But Hezekiah did.

Ecc 9:15 Now a poor wise man was found in it, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man-
The poor wise man of the Assyrian siege was presumably Isaiah. But he was not remembered with gratitude, and Jewish sources record that Hezekiah and Manasseh persecuted and murdered Isaiah; see on :16. Solomon shared the common view of his time that being a wise man was only ultimately valuable and worthy if he therefore had a memorial after his death. Hence the uninspired Book of Wisdom speaks of how "I for the sake of wisdom shall have estimation among the multitude, and honor with the elders, though I be young... By the means of her I shall obtain immortality, and leave behind me an everlasting memorial" (Wisdom 8:10-13). But Solomon is lamenting that the memory of the wise ultimately fades. And therefore wisdom is of no ultimate value because wise and foolish die the same death. So many of Solomon's Proverbs seem to stress the advantage of wisdom as being in this life.

Ecc 9:16 Then I said, Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard-
GNB "I have always said that wisdom is better than strength, but no one thinks of the poor as wise or pays any attention to what they say". As explained on :15, Solomon admits wisdom has some advantage, but not in any ultimate terms. For he says that the poor wise man earned no lasting respect for how he saved the city. Indeed, he was despised afterwards and his further words of wisdom were disregarded, just as happened to Isaiah (see on :14).

Ecc 9:17 The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the cry of him who rules among fools-
As noted on previous verses, Solomon's point in all this is that the wise man has no lasting memorial, and is only heard in quiet and obscurity. And for Solomon, wisdom is only worth anything if it leaves you with fame and a lasting memorial to yourself in the eyes of men. The problem of death, the same death for the wise and the foolish, as Solomon things, means that there is little advantage in being a "wise man". And Solomon was the preeminently wise man, thanks to the wisdom God gave him; but he now abrogates all that and sees no lasting point in it.

But he may be making historical allusions. The book of Proverbs has in view a bad ruler (s.w. Prov. 28:15; 29:2,12,26; Ecc. 9:17). And this bad ruler offers deceitful food (Prov. 23:3), which Solomon in Prov. 23 advises against eating. We need to recall that eating together was seen as a sign of fellowship and acceptance of each other within the same cause. Solomon may have in view Jeroboam, who clearly sought to usurp Solomon as king. Or he may be alluding back to the various people like Absalom and Adonijah who had feasted to celebrate their apparent usurping of David's throne. The LXX in Prov. 23:1-8 reads rather differently to the Masoretic Text, and speaks much of the evil of the ruler in view.

Ecc 9:18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good-

In the end, Solomon felt that for himself, it was as well to be righteous as to be wicked, for in death there was no further difference (Ecc. 9:2,5,9). He knows judgment will come in some form, perhaps just in this life (Ecc. 11:9), at least for the young people; but he reasons as if it won't- at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (Ecc. 2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. Here in Ecc. 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, its benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. I don't see these different perspectives as being the difference between life in the world and life in the spiritual realm. They are all spoken *with conviction* by Solomon, which, to my mind, ruins the idea that he himself believed the Truth but was simply outlining what life is like without God. My resolution of this is that he had known and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And faced with the problem of eternal death for all, as he thought, therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice.

He may even have himself in view, consciously or unconsciously, in saying that "one sinner destroys much good". All the good established by his father David, and the potentials he had had, were all undone by his sin. He knows that, perceives it, but will not repent.

The rabbis perhaps correctly interpret this verse as meaning that "when a wise man becomes a sinner, many people will abandon their pursuit of wisdom by concluding that this person's wisdom was wrong" (Rashi). This would then have particular relevance to Solomon and Hezekiah, whose collapse of faith lead to their people turning away from God.

The Hebrew can stand the translation "one sin destroys much good". This would be in line with Ecc. 10:1 "so does a little folly outweigh wisdom". The idea seems to be that wisdom isn't that great at all, because just one sin, or one sinner, can take away all the benefits of righteousness. This is a position arrived at by someone who knows nothing of the wonder of human repentance and Divine forgiveness. And even when facing terminal illness, Hezekiah doesn't show any penitence but rather just pleads what a good man he has supposedly been.

This is one of many allusions to the curse in Eden, whereby "to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). There are many allusions to the curse in Ecclesiastes, especially in the verses which speak of man's labour being in vain and just to satisfy his appetite / need to eat. Especially Ecc. 5:17 "All his days he also eats in darkness, he is frustrated, and has sickness and wrath". "God made man upright" (Ecc. 7:29), "one sinner destroys much good." (Ecc. 9:18 cp. Rom. 5:18 "for as by one man sin entered the world... so death passed upon all men"). But Genesis 3 held out the great Hope of redemption from the curse through Messiah. But the koheleth doesn't want to factor that in. Although he surely knew Gen. 3:15 as well as he knew Gen. 3:19. But he wallows in the curse rather than the long term blessing of Eden restored in the Kingdom.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 10

Ecc 10:1 Dead flies cause the oil of the perfumer to send forth an evil odour; so does a little folly outweigh wisdom and honour-

Solomon knew and warned that a little folly can destroy the man who is in reputation for wisdom and honour (Ecc. 10:1 AV). Solomon had “honour” [s.w.] to an unprecedented extent (1 Kings 3:13). But in the same book he admits that he, the man famed world-wide for wisdom, gave himself to folly (Ecc. 2:3). He knew so well the error and folly of his ways, but he could only preach the lesson but not heed it. He “saw that wisdom exceedeth folly” (2:13)- but so what... He therefore has himself in view here; just as in the preceding verse he seems to understand himself as the sinner who had undone so much good.

Ecclesiastes contains many allusions to Solomon's personal state; it is largely autobiographical. Yet in those passages, he seems to express no personal regret or desire for repentance. Instead he is quite content to just lament his own sad spiritual collapse, and rest content behind the excuse that nothing really matters.
To describe his apostacy as only a "little folly" indicates the death of Solomon's conscience, and his fantastic ability to minimalize his own errors.

In the Hezekiah context, we recall that he was given valuable perfumes and these were part of his huge wealth. But he so well perceives that this has been spoilt by his "folly" in not repenting before Isaiah, and accepting the deal of 15 years peace now in return for Judah going into captivity. He self analyzes so well, as Solomon did, seeing in himself the old and wise king who would not be admonished.

Ecc 10:2 A wise man’s heart is at his right hand, but a fool’s heart at his left-
I have suggested on :1 and :3 that Solomon has himself in view, dissecting his own spiritual collapse as he does in the preceding verses of Ecc. 9. So I suggest this too is him stating that he was not really the true "wise man" but the fool, because wisdom had been "far from me" (Ecc. 7:23). Here he puts it another way, in saying that a truly wise man has his heart at his right hand, under his control, with his wisdom in his heart. Whereas Solomon sees himself as the fool whose heart was not under his control, spiritual mindedness and psychological self discipline had not been practiced by him at all. And despite realizing that, he still doesn't repent.

The Old Testament frequently speaks of man as having two "sides" to his character; one that wished to serve God, and the other which was rebellious. Ecc. 10:2 shows how that the spiritual man is not only aware of this, but he consciously acts to control these two sides: "A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left". This kind of self-knowledge is sadly lacking in most human beings, and Solomon is admitting it had been lacking in himself. Proverbs 7,8 likewise has the picture of two women, personifying the flesh and spirit (Prov. 7:12 cp. 8:2,3). Against this Old Testament background, there developed a strong Jewish tradition that the right hand side of a man was his spiritual side, and the left hand side was the equivalent of the New Testament 'devil'. The Lord Jesus referred to this understanding when He warned: "Let not your left hand know what your right hand does" (Mt. 6:3)- implying that the good deeds of the spiritual man would be misused by the 'devil', e.g. in using them as grounds for spiritual pride.

“The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left” (Ecc. 10:2 NIV) has been understood as referring not so much to right and wrong, good and evil, as to the highest good and lesser good (cp. how the left hand can stand for simply lesser blessing rather than outright evil, e.g. Gen. 48:13-20). The fool inclines to lower commitment. The wise will always incline to the maximum, wholehearted level. And Solomon realizes that this is how he has been.

Ecc 10:3 Yes also, when the fool walks by the way, his understanding fails him, and

he says to everyone that he is a fool-
See on :1,5. The fool whose wisdom fails him in practice [when he "walks by the way"] clearly refers to Solomon. He is proclaiming through this writing we now know as the book of Ecclesiastes that he is a fool. For he has abrogated his previous Divine wisdom, and turned from Yahweh to idols. His self analysis is profoundly accurate, but it is a feature of human nature that we can self analyze correctly, but still do nothing about it. Repentance can be hid from our eyes. Solomon is such a powerful lesson to us all who have known God's wisdom.

Ecc 10:4 If the spirit of the ruler rises up against you, don't leave your place; for gentleness lays great offenses to rest-
The reference may be to David soothing Saul, and Solomon seems to twist this to mean that he as the ruler should be placated by any he happens to be angry with: "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for soothing will put an end to great offences" (LXX). He is recognizing [as explained on :1-3] that he is as foolish as Saul whom God rejected, although he had himself turned away from God at this time.

Ecc 10:5 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, the sort of error which proceeds from the ruler-
Again, Solomon's self analysis is spot on. He is the ruler from whom error proceeds. He knew that a little folly outweighs all the wisdom a man may have (Ecc. 10:1), and yet he gave himself to folly, whilst holding on to wisdom (Ecc. 1:17). A true fool is one whose wisdom fails him in practice ("when he walks by the way", 10:3); and especially is this acute when this "error… proceeds from the ruler" (10:5). It's all about Solomon himself. The same word for "error" is used by Solomon in Ecc. 5:6, where I suggested he has in view his "error" [as he now sees it] of building a temple for Yahweh, the God from whom he had now turned away. The word is usually translated "ignorance"; but even for sins of ignorance there were sacrifices prescribed. But he has no interest in repentance or putting things right. And he is blasphemously considering all his previous Divinely granted wisdom as ignorance.

Ecc 10:6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in a low place-
This again demonstrates to Solomon the pointless nature of wisdom, because fools get great dignity and respect whereas the wise don't. And for Solomon, it was all about image and externalities. He had experienced "great dignity" such as no ruler had experienced. But he realized that he had been a fool at the same time. He had not allowed wisdom to have any place in his life or personal walk (see on :1-3). And so he considered himself the parade example of how folly got great dignity, and not wisdom.

Ecc 10:7 I have seen servants on horses, and princes walking like servants on the earth-
This indicates Solomon didn't think Prov. 19:10 was true in practice: "Delight is not seemly for a fool; much less for a servant to have rule over princes". He was abrogating his former wisdom. He thought that in reality, servants do rule over princes. And he likely has in view the rebellion and future success which he foresaw of his servant Jeroboam. *In the Hezekiah context, this looks back to Hezekiah's experience at the time of the Assyrian defeat.*

Ecc 10:8 He who digs a pit may fall into it; and whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake-
It is a common theme that the wicked snare themselves, falling into their own pit, judged by their own words, rather than God specifically snaring them (e.g. Ps. 7:15; 9:15; 57:6; Prov. 26:27; 28:10; Ecc. 10:8). But Solomon appears to be using this global truth to the specific end of demonstrating that "time and chance", random bad luck, happen to people no matter how hard they work. Throughout Proverbs he had glorified hard work. But he now abrogates that wisdom by saying that even the wise, hard working citizen can hit unexpected calamity. And so, he is reasoning, wisdom and hard work are not at all what he had made them out to be; see on :10.

Ecc 10:9 Whoever carves out stones may be injured by them. Whoever splits wood may be endangered thereby-
These are more examples of the theme explained on :8; that even the wise, hard working citizen can hit unexpected calamity. And so, he is reasoning, wisdom and hard work are not at all what he had made them out to be; see on :10. The reference to the man who is endangered by splitting wood may be to how the same phrase is used of the men of Bethshemesh in 1 Sam. 6:14. They split wood and sacrificed with joy that the ark had returned to them; but then they looked inside the ark and were slain. And so, Solomon reasons, wisdom and Yahweh worship are pointless. But of course the point was that they were disobedient. The ark was indeed a blessing, but they abused it through harnessing its return to their own self interest and love of wealth, just as Solomon did.

Ecc 10:10 If the axe is blunt, and one doesn't sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but skill brings success-
See on :8. LXX "If the axe-head should fall off, then the man troubles his countenance, and he must put forth more strength: and in that case skill is of no advantage to a man". This argues that wisdom or skill is all the same limited if there isn't the right material to apply the wisdom to. And that was so true with Solomon. This theme of the limitation of wisdom continues in :11,12. AV "wisdom is profitable to direct". "Direct" is the word translated "prosper" in Ecc. 11:6, where Solomon concludes that finally we have no way to "prosper", so the advantage of wisdom is minimal.

Ecc 10:11 If the snake bites before it is charmed, then is there no profit for the charmer's tongue-
As noted on :9,10, Solomon is saying this to prove that the words of the wise, like those of the charmer's tongue, are not really that effective. Because a snake can bite you before it hears the charmer, and so there is no profit in the charmer. Just as Solomon now saw no "profit" in wisdom. The snake bite of death will come to all men, he reasoned, whether wise or foolish, and whether or not they hear the words of wisdom.

But we can note the AV: "Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a *babbler* [same word translated 'tongue'] is no better" (Ecc. 10:11). A man's words are counted as who he is; for this is the significance of our words:

"You are taken up in the lips of *talkers* [s.w. tongue]" (Is. 59:3)
"Let not an evil *speaker* [s.w. tongue] be established" (Ps. 140:11)
"You are taken up in the lips of *talkers* [s.w. tongues]" (Ez. 36:3).

The idea of Ecc. 10:11 and so often in Ecclesiastes is that no matter how wise you are, random chance event trumps all wisdom you may have. This is the idea that "there is a time for" everything. This reflects a studied refusal by Hezekiah / Solomon to accept the higher hand of providence leading to an ultimate end- future salvation in God's Kingdom.

Ecc 10:12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but a fool is swallowed by his own lips-
The LXX would continue the theme of the limited power of wisdom: "The words of a wise mouth are gracious: but the lips of a fool will swallow him up", referring to the wise being swallowed by the foolish. Solomon presses this to prove to himself that there is no advantage of wisdom over folly in this life. And he may well have himself in view, as he so often does- swallowed up, a figure of condemnation, by his own lips. Perhaps the Lord is alluding here when He taught that by our words we are condemned (Mt. 12:37).

Ecc 10:13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness-
And yet Solomon the wise man had himself turned to "folly", despite knowing it ended up with sin and mischief. And it is still true that "They start out with silly talk and end up with pure madness" (GNB). But Solomon has himself in view. He considers that the words of Divine wisdom he had taught at "the beginning" were foolishness, and now he feels that they had ended up as madness. His blasphemy is extreme. See on :14.

Ecc 10:14 A fool also multiplies words-
See on :13. The criticism of "many words" in Ecc. 5:7 seems a reference to his own writing down of the wisdom God had given him, codifying it into books such as the compilation we have in the book of Proverbs (Ecc. 12:10,12). He associates the "many words" with "dreams", perhaps an intensive plural for "a great dream". It was as a result of the dream of 1 Kings 3:5 that he was given the "many words" of wisdom which he now considered unhelpful and irrelevant because death meant that there was no particular ultimate advantage of wisdom over folly; wisdom was at best profitable in this life in some short term sense. And he therefore associates "many words" with folly (Ecc. 10:14). He considers he had been foolish by preaching and believing those many words of Divine wisdom. Now, for him, the true wisdom was in idolatry and not Yahweh worship in His temple.

Man doesn't know what will be; and that which will be after him, who can tell him?-
This is a frequent lament by Solomon, that he doesn't know the future. He wrote this at the end of his life, and the future in view was death. And yet the promises to David and Abraham clearly offered the resurrection of the body and future eternal inheritance of the earth. Even throughout Proverbs, Solomon sees wisdom as largely just good for this life. He has no eternal, Kingdom perspective, nor does he strongly factor in the final day of judgment. He considered himself the Messianic king, and his kingdom to be God's promised Kingdom. And now he was himself facing death, he realizes that the future is a fearful unknown. See on :15. Even at Solomon's time, the hope of resurrection from the dead and final judgment and reward in God's Kingdom upon the earth was well established. David so clearly believed it. But Solomon willfully refuses to.

Ecc 10:15 The labour of fools wearies every one of them; for he doesn't know how to go to the city-
Here and in :14, Solomon may have himself in view, as the one who had laboured to find wisdom (Ecc. 2:2) and had written down many words of wisdom in his Proverbs. He is considering himself to have been foolish in his love of wisdom. Perhaps GNB describes his anger with himself: "Only someone too stupid to find his way home would wear himself out with work".

Ecc 10:16 Woe to you, land, when your king is a servant, and your princes eat in the morning!-
GNB and LXX "Woe to thee, O city, whose king is young, and thy princes eat in the morning!". Ecclesiastes begins with mention of the city of Jerusalem. *This may be Hezekiah foreseeing that if was to die at 15 years after his terminal illness, then his son Manasseh would only be 12 when he became king, and this would not be a good thing.* Perhaps Solomon thinks he had been too young when he became king, and had therefore foolishly followed Divine wisdom. Or perhaps he saw clearly that his young son Rehoboam would not be a wise king, and his princely advisors would be unwise; just as indeed happened (1 Kings 12:11). Solomon saw precisely the nature of his own failures, and the fruit this would bear in the reign of his son. And his bitter references to his servant would suggest he likewise foresaw Jeroboam's rebellion. His sensitivity and understanding were impressive; but he utterly failed to personalize any of it.

Ecc 10:17 Blessed are you, land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!-
Perhaps Solomon continues his lament that he had not been the great king he might have been (see on :16). Maybe he considers that a true king must be the son of nobles; whereas he had been the son of a mere shepherd boy. He had indulged in over eating and alcohol, as he admits in Ecc. 2. Having been so obsessed with "my father David", using the phrase hundreds of times and always throughout Proverbs alluding to historical incidents which glorified David... now he was no longer living out parental expectation. I explained on Ecc. 5:1-4 that he considered his father's vow to build the temple to have been foolish. So perhaps now he is again digging back at his once beloved father David.

Or we can read this another way. Solomon was so confident that he was or would be the Messiah that he seems to have felt that he was beyond the possibility of sinning; real self-examination and the sense of the possibility of failure just didn't exist for him. He says that the land of Israel is "blessed" because her king is the son of a noble, and she will be cursed if her ruler is a servant (Ecc. 10:16,17 RVmg.). Solomon proudly presented himself as the son of King David- and he makes a clear swipe at Jeroboam, the pretender to the throne who was a servant (1 Kings 11:26). By reasoning like this, Solomon sets himself in direct opposition to the spirit of Jesus, who declared that the servant is to be the King of all. Thus Solomon's self-justification, his self-defensiveness, his lack of focus on the future Messiah, led him to miss totally the spirit of Christ. And further, it made him into some kind of anti-Christ. The record in 1 Kings 11:31-40 brings this out clearly- God assures Solomon that he and his line will reign on the throne for ever *if* he is obedient. But he then straight away seeks to kill Jeroboam who was pretending to the throne- because he didn't pay attention to the import of God's conditional promise to him. And we too

can so focus on present realities that we forget the sure promise of the Kingdom, and think that the conditional hope which we too have can only be ensured by our own politics, rather than faith and obedience.

Ecc 10:18 By slothfulness the roof sinks in; and through idleness of the hands the house leaks-
As noted on :16, it appears Solomon foresees the breakdown of his kingdom after his death; and he implies his son will be lazy, even though :15 GNB concludes that hard work is vain. Solomon may even have in view the decline of the temple, his major building project. For he had forsaken it and instead worshipped the idols in the temples he had built for them nearby to it.

Ecc 10:19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes the life glad; and money is the answer for all things-
According to Ecc. 2, these were the things Solomon had enjoyed to the ultimate degree; laughter ["mirth"], feasts, wine and money. But even wealth was not the answer for all things, as he is regretting throughout Ecclesiastes. So we can take this as him quoting secular wisdom and showing that his own miserable life proves it untrue.

Solomon had seen wisdom as the way to wealth and "pleasure" in this life [s.w. "laughter" here] , and that is the basis for his appeal to men to be wise and accept his wisdom (Prov. 10:23). But David uses the word only of the "pleasure" of the future, restored Kingdom of God on earth (Ps. 126:2); whereas Solomon wanted it all now, just as the 'prosperity gospel' likewise does. And yet as he got older, Solomon realized that such "pleasure" from material things is not in fact pleasure, and he uses the word several times in Ecclesiastes of how pleasure in this life is vain (Ecc. 2:2; 7:3; 10:19). This approach is in fact a contradiction of his seeking after "pleasure" in Proverbs. He came to this nihilistic position because he failed to perceive that the true "pleasure" is not now, but in the future Kingdom.

Ecc 10:20 Don't curse the king, no, not in your thoughts; and don't curse the rich in your bedroom: for a bird of the sky may carry your voice, and that which has wings may tell the matter-
Having here publically advertised his own folly and bad rulership of his people, he now warns solemnly against cursing him or even thinking bad of him in the heart. Even in old age, he was desperate to cling on to his power.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 11

Ecc 11:1 Cast your bread on the waters; for you shall find it after many days-
On the basis of the idea that "casting seed upon the waters is a metaphorical expression for sending merchandise across the sea to distant lands", the GNB suggests that what is in view here and in :2 appears to be justification of Solomon's involvement with Gentile nations, for he became a middleman in the horse trade: "Invest your money in foreign trade, and one of these days you will make a profit. Put your investments in several places—many places even—because you never know what kind of bad luck you are going to have in this world" (GNB). But this is also a reference to the practice in Egypt of sowing seed during the flooding of the Nile,

casting seed on the water so that it would grow into wheat on the floodplains. This distinctly Egyptian allusion reflects how Solomon has rejected Divine wisdom when his wives turned away his heart from Yahweh, and now instead he alludes to the Egyptian ideas of his wives.

I suggest however that Solomon is saying this in order to justify his view of "wisdom" as having limited advantage in this life; but only in a secular sense, and having no promise of any life that is to come.

Ecc 11:2 Give a portion to seven, yes, even to eight; for you don't know what evil will be on the earth-
The idea of being generous spirited in prosperity because it will help in the evil day is alluded to by the Lord in Lk. 16:9. But this, He says, is the wisdom of the children of this world. He clearly understood Solomon at this point as being one of them. And as mentioned on :1, Solomon is saying this in order to justify his view of "wisdom" as having limited advantage in this life; but only in a secular sense, and having no promise of any life that is to come. And the Lord's allusion to Solomon's words confirms that.

"You don't know..." confirms koheleth's view that whether you are righteous or foolish, there's good or bad luck which operates in your life regardless of your morality. He observes in :3 the [apparent] randomness in nature. Again we see a devaluing of personal spirituality, and the fact was that neither Hezekiah nor Solomon had valued this as they should've done even when they professed faith in Yahweh. His view of how to cope with the "evil" which might some day "be on the earth" was that you may as well be generous to others, because then they might come and bale you out in hard times. Trust in God is not on his agenda.

Ecc 11:3 If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth; and if a tree falls toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falls, there shall it be-
This is the kind of fatalism we observed on Ecc. 9:1. See on :6. Secular people at the end of their lives often come to the conclusion that everything is somehow overruled by God, to the point that human behaviour is pretty much all Divinely determined and enforced. Solomon fails to accept the basic thesis of the book of Proverbs; that human actions can be controlled, we have election, and love and hatred are choices. And thereby we are accountable for our actions and to Divine judgment. But Solomon didn't believe in this, and so it led him to conclude that human behaviour isn't that significant and is somehow all orchestrated by some higher hand than our own.

A tree falls in the calamity of a storm. To say it is laying to the north or toward the south is rather meaningless, because it depends from what perspective you are looking at it. We would rather expect "toward the north / south, or toward the east / west". But "toward the south, or toward the north" is an intended statement that the tree falls in the storm, and it depends how *you* look at it as the observer as to whether you see it as facing northward or southward. And this is the postmodern spirit of our age. Death, the storm, shall come; and after that, it's all just a matter of how you want to perceive things. And this was the spirit of Solomon after he cast off faith in God and a future resurrection to judgment.

Ecc 11:4 He who observes the wind won't sow; and he who regards the clouds won't reap-

This fact is being harnessed by Solomon to support his new view that the over analytical life isn't profitable; wisdom has its limits and shouldn't be taken too far. Which is, apparently, what he felt he had done. "Get on with life and enjoy it" is his message after he had personally rejected Divine wisdom. "Don't worry be happy" is the spirit of a world which has rejected the true God, and they thus replicate that of Solomon in his apostacy. This is the power of this fascinating book of Ecclesiastes; we see the spirit of our age to be that of Solomon.

The picture is of a farmer lifting his eyes to the skies, looking up to God, looking for signs in the clouds or wind as to what he should do. And, the implication is, he doesn't get any signs. God doesn't communicate. So he may as well just take a chance, and mitigate against bad luck as far as he can by harder work. This is a common conclusion by koheleth. Two are better than one on a journey or when sleeping rough at night. Likewise "a threefold cord is not easily broken" may simply mean that if three are carrying a load, and one cord snaps, then the other two cords will hopefully still bear the load. Sharpen your axe blade to save unnecessary labour and to preserve the axe (Ecc. 10:10).

Ecc 11:5 As you don't know what is the way of the wind, nor how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child; even so you don't know the work of God who does all-

Lamenting that we "don't know" is common in Proverbs. It contrasts sharply with the definite spirit and sense of clear direction which Solomon had in his book of Proverbs. As noted on :4, we see the spirit of our postmodern age in Solomon, not knowing anything much at all, scared to get too close to God and His ways lest they appear dogmatic.

This is not to say, of course, that we "know everything" in the primitive, simplistic way that some think they "know the truth" about all things. The humility of the Lord Jesus is a reflection of the humility of God His Father. He spoke of Himself as the sower, who sleeps (in His death) and then works night and day (His present Heavenly labour for us) so that the seed should bring forth fruit- "he knows not how" (Mk. 4:27, with allusion to Ecc. 11:1,5,6). Despite all things having been revealed unto Him, and the Spirit immeasurably given to Him, He had the spiritual and intellectual humility to openly recognize that our spiritual growth and ultimate salvation is a mystery to Him. It was the Father alone who gave the increase.

These words are also alluded to in the Lord's discourse with Nicodemus in Jn. 3:3-5. But the Lord's comment that Nicodemus didn't understand these things was a rebuke to him. In Jn. 3:10, He expected Nicodemus to have figured out the Old Testament's teaching about the new birth (presumably from Ps. 51:10; Is. 44:3; Ez. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26; 37:14; 39:29; Ecc. 11:5). But instead, Nicodemus for all his theoretical knowledge as "the teacher / master of Israel", just as Solomon was, didn't know them. The Lord's point is that secular man indeed "doesn't know" because these things are the way of God's Spirit. But Paul urges us towards the possibility of living "in the Spirit" and "walking in step with the Spirit". Isaiah also seems to dialogue back with the claims that a man comes from the womb (Ecc. 5:15), clueless as to what went on there (Ecc. 11:5), and then dies and shall be forgotten. He several times states that it is Yahweh who formed His people in the womb, and because He is eternal, He will eternally have a parental bond and concern for them and will lead them through to life eternal, just as He brought them to physical life from the womb (Is. 44:2,24; 46:3; 49:1,5,15).

Solomon again is making the point that whatever wisdom he had didn't really explain God's ways. He doesn't become an atheist, but his wives turned away his heart from Yahweh to idols. And he likes to justify that by saying that Yahweh cannot be understood anyway. Such excuses for walking out of relationship with God are often heard.

Ecc 11:6 In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening don't withhold your hand; for you don't know which will prosper, whether this or that, or whether they both will be equally good-
This continues the complaint of :5, that God is beyond understanding, and we are victims of some higher hand of fate or good luck; "you don't know..." anything, seems to be Solomon's point. This is the fatalism discussed on :3,5. So Solomon advises to sow in the morning and evening, as you don't know which will be more successful; but, by implication, take a break in the heat of midday. Don't work too hard, don't take life too seriously. That is his sad conclusion. Wisdom can assist a little bit, allowing us to "prosper" (Ecc. 10:10), but here Solomon concludes that finally we have no way to "prosper", so the advantage of wisdom is minimal.

Sowing when you know only some seed will end up in the "good" category recalls the Lord's parable of the sower. But His point was that we should eagerly sow in this way because the "good" category will reap life eternal in the future. But koheleth doesn't have that perspective, and so he is left wallowing in the feeling that luck and the winds of fortune are so strong that , faced with eternal death, one may as well sow without great enthusiasm.

Ecc 11:7 Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to see the sun-
Solomon qualifies his nihilism by admitting that life "under the sun" can be sweet and pleasant. But he will go in :8 to say that this sweetness of life is immediately disrupted when one thinks of the reality of death, which justifies his conclusion that he "hated life" (Ecc. 2:17) and it was better to have never been born nor experienced life (Ecc. 6:3-6). The words for "sweet" and "pleasant / good" occur together in Is. 5:20, where an apostate Judah are condemned for calling the sweet bitter and the good evil. This is alluding to what Solomon was doing, by saying that life in the end is bitter, evil and a vanity.

Ecc 11:8 Yes, if a man lives many years, let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many. All that comes is vanity-
As discussed on :7, the reality of death meant that any apparent sweetness to life ends because of the problem of eternal death. Solomon refuses any idea of resurrection or victory over death. The essence of the purpose and achievement of God through His Son was understood by Abraham, Job, David and many others. But Solomon steadfastly refused it. And he seems to now be kicking over the traces of his earlier glorification of his father David. For David has used the same words in glorying in that fact the darkness shines as the day to Yahweh (Ps. 139:12). Solomon has used the term for how men live their lives in "days of darkness" (Ecc. 5:17), and in Ecc. 11:8 he uses this term of death. He sees life as being lived in the same unconscious spirit of death; he has no conception of God's light and life breaking in to human life right now as taught so often in the Bible (e.g. Is. 29:18). *Isaiah in Is. 29:18 was arguing back with Hezekiah's position here- "and the eyes of the blind will see out of obscurity and out of darkness"; in His light we see light (Ps. 36:9).*

Ecc 11:9 Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth, and walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these things there is a God who will bring you into judgment for them-

This continues the theme of :7,8; that life indeed can be pleasant, but it is tinged by the consideration of death, and the belief that many held in Israel that God would judge man for his actions and use of life. Solomon had refused that conception. I say this because elsewhere Solomon speaks so clearly as if God will not raise a man to judgment (Ecc. 3:22), and the preceding verse 8 is clear that he considers death to be eternal darkness. He has argued that man should just get on and enjoy life; but he alludes to the way that God says He will judge those who walk in the ways of their own heart and after their own eyes (Dt. 12:8; 28:34,67; Num. 15:39; Jer. 9:14; 18:12 cp. Is. 11:3). He is specifically abrogating his earlier published wisdom that man is not to live after his own eyes and heart (Prov. 3:7; 12:15; 16:2; 21:2; 28:26; 30:12). Now, he tells people to live like this. But he acknowledges that many in Israel still believe in Israel's God Yahweh, and so he is reasoning with them on their level. He at this point had turned away from Yahweh completely, but he reminds them of their own religious position. He contrasts it with his own wisdom, which was to enjoy life but remember that eternal death comes. He contrasts this with the Israelite idea that if one lives as they wish, then they must remember God is going to judge them in the end.

It is worth noting that walking after ones own heart and eyes is often used as a kind of metaphor for idol worship (Jer. 9:14; 18:12; 23:16,17,26; Ez. 11:21; 13:17; 14:5). Solomon may be inviting the young people of Israel to join him in idolatry, and the "God" who would judge them is the god they chose to worship. Note the grammar: "*a* God" will judge them. He is again apparently having a swipe at the way his father David was famed as a man who walked not after his own heart but after the heart of Yahweh (1 Sam. 13:14).

The rich fool like Solomon effectively disbelieved the resurrection, and his words also allude to those of Solomon (Lk. 12:19 = Ecc. 2:24; 11:9). Paul also quotes Solomon's words in Ecc. 2:24 as the words of those who have no faith that there will be a resurrection (1 Cor. 15:32). So I do not think that he here has in view any belief in a resurrection to judgment at the end.

Solomon felt that for himself, it was as well to be righteous as to be wicked, for in death there was no further difference (Ecc. 9:2,5,9). We could read him here as saying that he knows judgment will come (Ecc. 11:9), at least for the young people, but he reasons as if it won't- at least not for him. He knows, but he doesn't know on the personal, experiential level. This is why there are apparently contradictory statements in Ecclesiastes. For example, the wise dies as the fool, with no more eternal remembrance than the fool (Ecc. 2:15,16). This, Solomon, says, is what he himself believes in his own heart. But in Ecc. 7:12 he says that wisdom gives life to those who have it. But then again in Prov. 9:16-18 he observes that although wisdom can help, it's benefits are easily undone, so easily as to make it useless. I don't see these different perspectives as being the difference between life in the world and life in the spiritual realm. They are all spoken *with conviction* by Solomon, which, to my mind, ruins the idea that he himself believed the Truth but was simply outlining what life is like without God. He advocates both ways. My resolution of this is that he knew and preached God's Truth, but for him personally, it meant nothing at all. And therefore in practice he advocated the life of self-enjoyment, acting *as if* all the other truth of wisdom was not operative in practice.

“For God shall bring every work into judgment” in the epilogue is commentary upon “But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Ecc. 11:9). Koheleth repeatedly states that death is the final end, and respecting God is only helpful in this life in order to preserve man from needless extra suffering. *So he sees judgment from God as only coming in this life.* If a young person does just whatever their senses tell them, this would be the equivalent of his earlier warning not to be excessively sinful or foolish- because you'll land up in trouble, And likewise, he has reasoned "And be not righteous over much". The epilogue now puts things in their proper place. All things will be brought into judgment by God- but not necessarily now. But surely at the judgment of the last day.

Ecc. 11:9 alludes to Num 15:39: "Rejoice, young man, while you are young, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment". The way of the world is to just do whatever our heart tells us, to follow our heart. But the Biblical view of the heart radically clashes with this. We are to control our heart, not do what is intuitive, and allow the heart to be regenerated. But the context of Num. 15 is that we have in that chapter a set of laws relevant to Israel's belief of the ten spies and their rejection of entering the promised land. The spies had judged after the sight of their eyes and followed their heart rather than God's leading. They had "seen" giants and they seemed in their own eyes as grasshoppers compared to them (Num. 13:32,33; 14:33).

Ecc 11:10 Therefore remove anger from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh; for youth and the dawn of life are vanity-

Perhaps the idea is as in GNB "Don't let anything worry you or cause you pain. You aren't going to be young very long". "Anger" is AV "sorrow". Solomon earlier taught that going to a funeral and sorrowing is better than the laughter of a wedding feast (Ecc. 7:2,3). Yet despite realizing this on an intellectual level, Solomon personally commended mirth / laughter to himself (Ecc. 8:15), and advises removing sorrow from the heart (Ecc. 11:10). Again we see Solomon's amazing ability, indeed the ability of human nature, to comprehend truth on one level, and yet reason and live exactly and precisely and consciously the opposite.

The tragic brevity of life means that "childhood and youth are vanity", we should quit the time wasting follies of youth or overgrown childhood (and the modern world is full of this), as well as the anger which is native to us all, and therefore "remove anger from your heart and put away evil from your flesh". The brevity of life alone is reason to stop harbouring anger and resentment. In contrast, Paul uses the mortality of man not only as an appeal to work for our creator, but to simply have faith in His existence and salvation: "We had the sentence of death in ourselves ["in our hearts we felt the sentence of death", NIV], *that* we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead" (2 Cor. 1:9). The fact we are going to die, relatively soon, and lie unconscious... drives the man who seriously believes it to faith in the God of resurrection. It seems that at a time of great physical distress, Paul was made to realize that in fact he had "the sentence of death" within him, he was under the curse of mortality, and this led him to a hopeful faith that God would preserve him from the ultimate "so great a death" as well as from the immediate problems.

ECCLESIASTES CHAPTER 12

Ecc 12:1 Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw near, when you will say, I have no pleasure in them- This repeats what he has just said in Ecc. 11:7-9. The young can enjoy life, but that enjoyment won't continue because they will get older and face death, and come like Solomon to "hate life" (Ecc. 2:17). That enjoyment of life Solomon sees as remembering their creator. "You can do the God stuff when you're young, but it won't help you when you're older. The reality of death will mean that you will go my way, to hate life". This is the context of this verse, and whilst isolated from the context it indeed reads as a worthy appeal to youth to remember their creator, the second half of the verse, and its entire context, precludes this from being the meaning Solomon intended. See on :3. *Indeed this seems another example of koheleth's sarcasm about God. As if to say 'If you remember your creator when you're young, well, you'll soon give up all that God stuff when you get to old age'.* Solomon sees the grave as man's "everlasting home" (:5). He sees no possibility of resurrection to judgment or salvation (Ecc. 3:22 "there is nothing better, than that a man should rejoice in his works; for that is his portion: for who can bring him to see what will be after him?"), all is vanity (see on :8). This therefore means that his apparent appeal to youth to believe in a creator is skeptical; he is saying that even if you believe in a creator in youth, and enjoy it, that will not save you from an eternal grave.

Or we can read this as indeed an appeal to youth to believe in a creator; although I prefer the explanation given above. But for Solomon himself, it was far from him (Ecc. 7:23). He refers to himself when he writes at the end of his life of the man whose labour is in wisdom [cp. his labouring to write out so many Proverbs], and yet it is all pointless in that he will leave it all to a fool after him- he had already seen the unspirituality of his children (Ecc. 2:21). This thinking reflects a perception that his wisdom was totally irrelevant to himself- he wrote it all down for others, but not for himself. It's as if here at the end of Ecclesiastes he chuffles that he still preaches his wisdom to the youth, although he himself has the attitude that it is all meaningless (Ecc. 12:1). This is one explanation of the paradox within Ecclesiastes- the teaching of Divine truth, whilst lamenting the pointlessness of it.

He seems to have contented himself with establishing himself as “the preacher” and his final appeal in Ecc. 12 is to youth- like so many, his view was that it was not for him personally, but the youngsters would benefit more from it. There are several passages in Ecclesiastes where Solomon is evidently half glancing at himself. He sees the error of his ways, as Achan could coolly recount his sin, but to personally do something about it is far, far from him.

We see here Solomon's personal depression: "So remember your Creator while you are still young, before those dismal days and years come when you will say, "I don't enjoy life"" (GNB). Attitudes in old age are the litmus indicator of faith. The true Christian will look forward to the day of change and resurrection. We can contrast Solomon's end with that of the Lord. Whereas those like Solomon whose kingdom was only in this life, seeing secular experience as the ultimate outcome and reward, will be deeply frustrated that their brief game is over.

Ecc 12:2 Before the sun, the light, the moon, and the stars are darkened, and the clouds return after the rain-

GNB "And the rain clouds will never pass away". This continues the impression of life under deep depression in old age (see on :1) for the man who only has this life. The hope of the resurrection of the body to eternal life in the Kingdom is indeed transforming. Especially for those brought face to face with the cessation of life as they know it. But as noted on :1, Solomon assumes that his path to depression in old age is going to be the pattern for all the young people he addresses.

What follows is a poetic description of old age, *alluding at every point to his opening statements in Ecclesiastes that he indulged all his senses and faculties*; indeed, a funeral possession, with the doors shut in the streets as man passes to his last end. "The clouds return after the rain" is so relevant to Hezekiah. The rain had come in his terminal illness, 15 years previously. But now rain clouds had returned, and he had to die. "The sun" is now "darkened"- and koheleth has been describing life "under the sun". That sun is now darkened, life under the sun is over. The idea of clouds returning after the rain [meaning, it is going to rain again a second time] is relevant to Hezekiah. He was brought to the "rain" of death and judgment, but this was delayed 15 years. But now the clouds are full of rain, and returning. The description of Hezekiah in old age in this chapter includes many connections with the descriptions of Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians. Just as Hezekiah's first illness made him the embodiment of Judah's spiritual illness, and the delay in his death matched the delay of their judgment.

Ecc 12:3 in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those who look out of the windows are darkened-
GNB interprets this for us as a picture of old age, indeed Solomon in his old age: "Then your arms, that have protected you, will tremble, and your legs, now strong, will grow weak. Your teeth will be too few to chew your food, and your eyes too dim to see clearly". As explained on :1, Solomon seems to be saying that even believing in a Divine creator in your youth won't save you from declining faculties and death. And so we could read :1 as a skeptical comment rather than an appeal to belief.

Ecc 12:4 and the doors shall be shut in the street; when the sound of the grinding is low, and one shall rise up at the voice of a bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low- Again, this all describes the insomnia of Solomon's old age: "Your ears will be deaf to the noise of the street. You will barely be able to hear the mill as it grinds or music as it plays, but even the song of a bird will wake you from sleep" (GNB).

Even in the cynicism of Ecclesiastes, written in Solomon's later life, he still uses words and phrases which have their root in his father David- e.g. his description of women as snares in Ecc. 7:26 goes back to how his father dealt with women who were a snare (1 Sam. 18:21). And the whole description of old age in Ecc. 12 is based on his father's experience with Barzillai (2 Sam. 19:35).

Ecc 12:5 yes, they shall be afraid of heights, and terrors will be in the way; and the almond tree shall blossom, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail; because man goes to his everlasting home, and the mourners go about the streets-
The description of old age continues: "You will be afraid of high places, and walking will be dangerous. Your hair will turn white; you will hardly be able to drag yourself along, and all desire will be gone. We are going to our final resting place, and then

there will be mourning in the streets" (GNB). "Desire" is clearly sexual desire; and Solomon with his 1000 wives / women had indulged sexual desire as few others. But that too must come to an end, and a man is left just with his failing body. Solomon sees the grave as man's "everlasting home". He sees no possibility of resurrection to judgment or salvation (Ecc. 3:22). This therefore means that his apparent appeal to youth to believe in a creator (:1) is skeptical; he is saying that even if you believe in a creator in youth, and enjoy it, that will not save you from an eternal grave.

But if we insist on reading Eccl. 12:1 as an appeal for the young to believe in God, he is asking the young to turn to God as in old age one has no pleasure in life and, by implication, no possibility of remembering their creator. This, presumably, was how Solomon felt about himself, that he had gotten to a point where spiritual change was impossible. And there are many elderly people who will reject the preaching of the Gospel with this kind of comment. The description of old age in Ecc. 12 seems to be alluding to how Solomon initially had a large and thriving household, with him enjoying the pleasures of women and singing maidens ("the daughters of music"), but now he realizes he doesn't have the faculties to enjoy it any more- all has gone quiet in the once bustling palace. *In the Hezekiah context, we recall his desire for his psalms to be played on stringed instruments in the temple. But now he laments that he is deaf and can't hear that.*

Ecc 12:6 before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken, or the pitcher is broken at the spring, or the wheel broken at the cistern-
GNB "the rope at the well will break, and the water jar will be shattered". The rope at the well breaks just as does a silver cord; Solomon sees himself as an earthenware jar, as well as a golden bowl. All his opulence could not finally disguise his weak humanity. No cosmetic fix of his humanity was possible, despite having tried so hard for it. And every man must come to realize this. Possibly the idea is that the slender connection between the spirit and the body is broken at death. Likewise the golden bowl contained olive oil, perhaps a symbol of the spirit of man, which flows out and is lost once the body is broken. No matter how beautiful that bowl / body once was. The spring or well was the symbol of life, but the bucket / pitcher could no longer access it.

The force of "before", which the LXX repeats in :7, is that before the finality of death there must come the depressive situation of the previous verses, the failing strength which is designed by God to try to elicit humility before Him. And yet Solomon refused even that appeal.

Ecc 12:7 and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it-
Solomon had turned away from Yahweh at this point, but he was not an atheist. Even in his nihilism he alludes to some kind of higher hand in life, and he sees the spirit as returning to God. But he believes that death is unconsciousness (Ecc. 11:8), and that therefore all is vanity (:8). But he had no personal relationship with "God", and saw Him as powerless to save from death or eternally judge human behaviour with eternal outcomes. He may here be alluding to the basic truth of Gen. 2:7. But he fails to extrapolate from it what his father David did. The fact that God "holds our soul in life", a reference to Gen. 2:7, meant that David wanted to "make the voice of his praise to be heard" (Ps. 66:8,9). This was the meaning of the basic facts of creation for David. We too must realize that the spirit / life is given by God to our bodies; it doesn't come from anywhere else. There is no reincarnation. And this is no painless

Bible fact; it demands that we live lives that are *His*, and not lived out as if our spirit / life / soul is *ours*.

Ecc 12:8 Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher. All is vanity!-
This must be remembered when we come to form an interpretation of :1. The appeal to "Remember now your Creator" in youth is in that same verse balanced against the fact that once youth is over, there will a hating of life as faculties decline and the reality of eternal death dawns upon the previously young person. It could be argued that this is the final say from the "Preacher". The epilogue to the book refers to "the Preacher" in the third person. It is therefore the inspired compiler of the book who makes the final appeal to fear God because judgment is coming. That message is quite contrary to what "the Preacher" himself says in the book- he sees any Divine judgment as being in this life, and has no particular perspective on living now for the future.

Ecc 12:9 Further, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge. Yes, he pondered, sought out, and set in order many proverbs-
I consider that :9-14 is the inspired commentary of the editor / compiler of Ecclesiastes. It is an appeal to faith, and a reflection upon the life of Solomon and the lessons to be learned from his apostacy. The compiler accepts that Solomon had been wise, and had set in order the book of Proverbs, which was Divine truth, even if Solomon in Ecclesiastes denied the truth of it.

Many interpreters and translators of Ecclesiastes clearly don't like the idea that we can have 12 chapters in the Bible which simply argue that death is final, just enjoy yourself but use wisdom even in doing that. I have no problem in reading the book like that. I fail to be impressed by the arguments that parts of it refer to life under the sun, and other parts argue for responsibility to God. A superficial case can be made for this, and the reader of an article or listener to a lecture may go away convinced. But when you then actually read the book with that view in mind, there are too many difficulties. The author repeatedly argues personally for the nihilistic view- that death is the final, eternal frontier. It is the epilogue, therefore, which provides the answer. These 12 chapters give us an insight into the mind of the man who accepts God's existence but is not in covenant relationship with Him, and we find in it the exact same mindset as in our postmodern world today. But all is changed by the epilogue, and also by the engagement with it of later scripture [the Lord, Isaiah and Paul especially]. This "end stress" is quite common in the Bible. A case is built up, a position argued- and then it is dashed by the final comment. We see this in the Lord's parables, and in the structure of the book of Job. Where many chapters are spent recording the wrong reasoning of the friends, to be crushed by Yahweh's final revelation at the end. We learn here the difference between inspiration and direct Divine revelation. Job's friends say things that aren't true, as God Himself shows at the end and as Job tries to point out in his responses, but the record of their words is inspired. Ecclesiastes is indeed unusual because the case for nihilism is built up without break and without any footnoted, corrective commentary- until the epilogue. This is why agnostic author Herman Melville called it the “truest of all books” in his novel Moby Dick. And in a sense it is true, this is how life is without covenant relationship with Yahweh; and so the editor rightly notes in :10 that what was written is indeed "words of truth" in this sense. Martin Luther encouraged that “this noble little book” should be read every day because it "firmly rejected a sentimental religiosity". No wonder it is in the canon of scripture. It is a strong argument against

postmodernism, and forces us to the conclusion that in fact everything matters, life is significant, man's search for meaning is met in Yahweh and in His Son, their final judgment and the Hope of their Kingdom.

However a case can also be made that this is still Solomon speaking and writing; finally appealing for others to believe, even if he personally didn't. Several times in Ecclesiastes, Solomon considers that he was no longer wise, and many of his statements are an effective abrogation of his earlier Divine wisdom. As this had been openly published in the anthology known as the book of Proverbs, he seems concerned to explain and justify this. "Was wise" could be read as meaning that he had once been wise, in the context of Yahweh religion; but he wasn't now.

The idea of several of Solomon's proverbs is that "the righteous" are those with "understanding", and it is this understanding which feeds and gives life to others. This is true enough; our sharing with others and influence upon them can indeed lead them to life and not to die eternally. But Solomon appears to again have his own self justification in view; for he considered that he was the preeminently righteous because he was the teacher of Israel, giving them the wisdom given him. But Solomon fell away from Yahweh, even though he says his wisdom remained with him (Ecc. 2:9), and he continued to teach others that wisdom to the end of his life (Ecc. 12:9). And so it was simply not true that teaching others makes a person righteous, as Solomon supposed often in Proverbs (e.g. Prov. 10:21).

This would mean that even in his spiritual collapse at the time of Ecclesiastes, Solomon still taught Israel true wisdom, and organized his wisdom into more accessible books (Ecc. 12:9-12), giving himself the title *koheleth* ('the preacher'). And yet he himself tried alcohol, wealth, women, indeed every addiction, in order to "see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven" (Ecc. 2:3). And yet he knew from childhood the conclusion of the matter- man's duty is to fear God and be obedient (Ecc. 12:13). He who had been given wisdom started out in a search for it… showing clearly enough that what he knew was so much theory, but never touched his own heart. Solomon taught wisdom to the youngsters, but he gave himself over to search for some kind of vague philosophical truth outside of God.

Ecc 12:10 The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written blamelessly, words of truth-

I suggested on :9 that these are the inspired words of the editor of the book. He wishes to assure us that what was written in Proverbs was indeed Divine truth. Solomon's apostacy as recorded in Ecclesiastes should not lead us to question the book of Proverbs.

If we insist that this is still Solomon writing, then the idea may be that Solomon tried hard in the book of Proverbs and here in Ecclesiastes to write things well; hence LXX "a correct writing". Although the truths he received were indeed given by Divine inspiration, he gives God no credit for that, arguing that all was written down by his own careful device. He failed to recognize the Spirit of God working through him.

Ecc 12:11 The words of the wise are like goads; and like nails well fastened are words from the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd-

The inspired editor is assuring us that the words of the wise, Solomon as the inspired wise man, are to goad us to action. Those words were given from the one shepherd, Yahweh (Gen. 49:24; Ps. 80:1; Jer. 31:10). The book of Proverbs was indeed from the

master of assemblies, Solomon, *koheleth*, but they were the words of God, the shepherd of Israel.

If we take these words as Solomon's, then we can reflect that throughout Proverbs, Solomon held God's truths in his mind and preached them; but his heart was far from them, he never personalized them, and his behaviour with women and in whipping his people was all a stellar denial of the truths which he knew and taught. It was beyond hypocrisy, beyond even narcissism, but rather a mindset which arose from assuming himself to be the Messianic son of David, and his kingdom to be the promised Kingdom of God on earth. As he came closer to death and his faculties failed, he ought to have realized his mistake, and looked forward instead to David's greater son, the Lord Jesus. But instead he simply preferred to conclude that for him, all these great ideas were bunk. He made the mistake so many make; that "truth" is truth 'for you', 'for me'; rather than accepting that Divine truth is indeed absolute and global truth for all hearts at all times.

But his wisdom remained with him, and he still taught those truths, although they were far from his own heart. In this he is a valuable warning to all who hold God's truths; his apostasy, recorded for us in such detail with a unique insight into the psychology of those who turn away. This is the value of Ecclesiastes. Just as I will discuss on the Song of Solomon how we have in those songs a unique insight into the mentality of the man who flirts with those outside the faith. And Solomon may even have been self aware of all this on some level, for he concludes Ecclesiastes by saying that his words are intended as goads; the very observation that "all is vanity" is in fact a goad to action, not lethargy or nihilism. .

Ecc 12:12 Furthermore, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh-

Solomon admits he himself is as the old king who will no longer be admonished (Ecc. 4:13). But the inspired commentator urges *us* to be admonished, not to go his path. and he warns against the overly abstract, phlegmatic and philosophical path Solomon had taken. For he will conclude by appealing for simple obedience to God's ways, rather than doing as Solomon has done in Ecclesiastes; trying to work around them through philosophy. There is "no end" of such philosophical study, just as there is "no end" of labour (Ecc. 4:8 s.w.). But for the righteous, there is an end- relationship with God, and eternity in His Kingdom.

If these are Solomon's words, then he is urging others to be admonished when he would not be himself. Just as he had urged others to go to funerals instead of wedding parties [of which Solomon must have had many], so that they might "take to heart" wisdom (Ecc. 7:2), although Solomon says this was "for from me" himself (Ecc. 7:23). He preached God's truth, he accepted it as true, whilst refusing to personalize it himself. He really is a parade example of the dangers inherent in glorying in our mere possession of Divine truth.

Solomon has so much to say about "correction" or instruction coming from the possession of wisdom (Prov. 8:10,33; 10:17; 12:1; 13:1,24; 15:5,10,32; 16:22; 19:20,27; 22:15; 23:12,13). But in the end he chastised or corrected his people by whipping them (s.w. 1 Kings 12:11,14). Solomon initially asked for wisdom in order to guide his people, but he ended up whipping / physically chastising them into conformity with his wishes rather than allowing wisdom to correct. Again, he was playing God; for it is God through His wisdom who chastises, and not man. But Solomon thought he was effectively God to his people. This is why Solomon argues that servants cannot be corrected by words (Prov. 29:19 s.w.), and a child must be

physically chastised (s.w. Prov. 19:18; 29:17 cp. Prov. 13:24; 23:13), regardless of his screams of pain. This kind of thing is a denial of his claims elsewhere that it is Divine wisdom which chastises / corrects, and such correction is from God and not man. Solomon's final description of himself as an old and foolish king who refuses to be admonished says it all (Ecc. 4:13); he admonishes others (s.w. Ecc. 12:12), but refuses to be admonished or corrected by his own wisdom. He failed to personalize it.

His complaint that there is no end of writing books could be read as another effective retraction of his book of Proverbs; for he has lamented that he had laboured so much in wisdom. The criticism of "many words" in Ecc. 5:7 seems a reference to his own writing down of the wisdom God had given him, codifying it into books such as the compilation we have in the book of Proverbs (Ecc. 12:10,12). He associates the "many words" with "dreams", perhaps an intensive plural for "a great dream". It was as a result of the dream of 1 Kings 3:5 that he was given the "many words" of wisdom which he now considered unhelpful and irrelevant because death meant that there was no particular ultimate advantage of wisdom over folly; wisdom was at best profitable in this life in some short term sense. And he therefore associates "many words" with folly (Ecc. 10:14). He considers he had been foolish by preaching and believing those many words of Divine wisdom. Now, for him, the true wisdom was in idolatry and not Yahweh worship in His temple.

Ecc 12:13 This is the end of the matter. All has been heard. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man-

I suggested on :9 that :9-14 are the inspired commentary of the editor of Ecclesiastes. He concludes with an appeal to fear God, whereas Solomon had concluded that the righteous who sacrifice to God have no advantage over those who don't, because death comes to them all (Ecc. 9:2). The implication here therefore is that there is indeed a difference; there will be a resurrection and granting of eternal outcomes to human behaviour.

"The whole duty of man" is "the whole man". What the world hungers for today is the discovery of what it means to be truly human. They admire those they see as “real”. It is through the person of Jesus Christ alone that true humanity, or realness, can be found. Ecc. 12:13 Heb. speaks of “the whole man” as the one who is totally obedient to God; and here we have a prophecy of the wholeness, the realness, of the Lord Jesus.

One of the most beautiful things to behold is a newly baptized brother or sister coming to make the things of God’s Truth their *way of life*. The daily reading of the Bible becomes a habit, firmly embedded in the daily routine of life; contact with other believers by letter or meeting means that slowly, the convert’s social network becomes focused on other Christians rather than on the world. As a result, worldly friendships and habits slowly fade away; prayer becomes a regular part of life, before meals, morning and evening; slowly, there is the courage to preach the Gospel to others. In particular, a way of thinking develops that is centered upon the Father and His Son, which subconsciously gives priority to their things rather than those of this life. The life of keeping the commandments of God becomes “the whole man” (Ecc. 12:13). These changes are the natural outcome of the new focus.

If this verse is read as the words of Solomon, then it is a major *volte face* to the spirit of the entire book of Ecclesiastes. Perhaps indeed his final conclusion is that faith, wisdom and obedience is better than unbelief and folly, indeed it is the whole duty of man- although he himself has declined it. To argue one way throughout a

book and then present a startlingly different conclusion at the end is not unknown. It is a fairly common rhetorical and philosophical device.

Perhaps we should read with emphasis upon the word "This...". Koheleth claims that the end of the matter is that man ages and is buried, and death is his "eternal home" (:5). But the epilogue challenges this by interjecting that in fact, no, there is judgment to come. And everything will be judged. That is "the end of the matter". Not simply death in this life.

Koheleth has spoken of fearing God (Ecc. 3:14; 5:7; 7:18; 8:12,13; 12:13), but in the context of his argument that to get the best out of life, you must live knowing that there's a God up there keeping an eye on things and He may lash out and punish you if you go too far (Ecc. 5:6,7 "Don't protest before the messenger that this was a mistake. Why should God be angry at your voice, and destroy the work of your hands?... you must fear God"). And going His way does have a few benefits in this life- and the name of the game is to get through this vain life with the optimal experience despite it being a bad deal because of the eternity of death. The epilogue deconstructs this by warning that we are to fear God exactly because death is not the end- there will be resurrection to judgment by Him. And we are to "fear God" in the sense of keeping His ways, and not just being so frightened of Him that we seek to hold Him at arm's length and just avoid getting into trouble with Him, as wrongly taught in Ecc. 5:6,7. For those in covenant with God [and we note koheleth avoids using the Yahweh Name], "to fear God and keep His commands" was so that "your days may be prolonged" (Dt. 6:1,2), a veiled reference to eternity. Likewise Dt. 5:29 "that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments... that it might be well with them for ever". Dt. 8:1 likewise has a hint of eternity in this context: "All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live...". Even the disobedient continuing living, so the hint of "that you may live" is 'live eternally'. To truly fear God in this context is to be in covenant relationship with Him: "The secret of the Lord (personal relationship) is with those who fear Him, And He will show them His covenant" (Ps. 25:14).

"The whole duty of man" is literally 'the whole man', and is a phrase that occurs only in Ecclesiastes. The epilogue is deconstructing them. Koheleth has argued that it's better to go to a funeral than a wedding party, because the funeral is "the end of all men", 'the whole man' (Ecc. 7:2). But the epilogue says that 'the whole man' is to *live* in obedience to God's commands. And the only time we shall fully do that, seeing that humans sin in this life, is in the eternal Kingdom to come. Koheleth concludes that "The whole man" is to achieve some pleasure in labour to eat and drink, i.e. to live out the experience of the curse with at least some pleasure (Ecc. 3:13 "every [s.w. 'the whole'] man should eat and drink, and enjoy good in all his labour"; 5:19 Heb.). That is as far as man can advance, given the finality of death and the experience of life in a fallen world, at the whim of fortune and misfortune. But the epilogue is replying that 'the whole man' is to live eternally in obedience to God's commandments, despite in this life ageing, dying and being carried in a funeral procession [the context of the epilogue in Ecc. 12].

Ecc 12:14 For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it is good, or whether it is evil-

I prefer to consider as noted on :9 that this is the inspired conclusion of the narrator. He tackles the fundamental problem in Solomon's reasoning, which has arisen out of

the book- that there would be no future judgment. And so the narrator baldly states the fundamental truth which Solomon has denied at such length.

“For God shall bring every work into judgment” in the epilogue is commentary upon “But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment” (Ecc. 11:9). But the epilogue is addressing the man we have just read of earlier in chapter 12- man at his last end, whose funeral procession is proceding through streets with window shutters at the street market kiosk closed in mourning (:4) and mourners accompanying his coffin through the streets. This man will have every work brought into judgment- at a resurrection to judgment. By contrast, Koheleth repeatedly states that death is the final end, and respecting God is only helpful in this life in order to preserve man from needless extra suffering. If a young person does just whatever their senses tell them, this would be the equivalent of his earlier warning not to be excessively sinful or foolish- because you'll land up in trouble, And likewise, he has reasoned "And be not righteous over much". The epilogue now puts things in their proper place. All things will be brought into judgment by God- but not necessarily now. But surely at the judgment of the last day. *"Every hidden thing" AV "secret thing" is surely alluded to by Paul when he writes of how the secrets of men will be judged at the Lord's return. That is what is in view here. Koheleth has no thought for the idea that hidden things will be judged eternally- but that is the essence of Divine and eternal judgment. Our secret sins will be set in the light of God's countenance (Ps. 90:8 s.w.); the same word is used about a man sinning through ignorance by touching an unclean thing, although it was "hid" from him (Lev. 5:2-4). And that is only possible because the Lord Jesus was "son of man" and can therefore judge literally all things of a man.*

If these are Solomon's words, then this is a radical denial of all he has said so far in the book. Solomon's whole basis for reasoning in Ecclesiastes is that death is man's eternal home (:5), there will be no further judgment (Ecc. 3:22 and often), and therefore one may as well live a life as happily as possible. This could be his very last minute repentance or recognition of truth, arrived at as a result of all his wayward reasoning throughout the book (see on :13). Sudden realization of truth after reasoning in error for so long is completely realistic and true to observed experience.

Or we can again conclude that Solomon comes to the right conclusion and teaches it, but it was still far from him personally. Hence there is no record of his repentance in the historical records, only that he died with his own heart turned away from Yahweh. He himself had an incredibly utilitarian view of life, wanting to see the tangible effect or "profit" of works in this life (Ecc. 3:9). I noted on Ecc. 2:17,18 that he ends up hating his life because he hates his works. The parallel between works and life meant that he was a human doing rather than a human being. He saw no ultimate profit in his works and life because he was now going to die. He had no sense at all that the works of the righteous "follow them" (Rev. 14:13), and we shall be given the eternal consequence of our works (Rev. 22:12).

But if these are indeed his words and not those of a narrator, he here concludes Ecclesiastes by admitting that this is the final truth (Ecc. 12:14), but this was not his personal belief nor how he had lived his life. He finally comes to the right conclusion, and had known it all along on some level, occasionally alluding to in his book of Proverbs; but he did not personalize it. He looked for the result of works in this life and didn't find it, and so he hated life, hated his works, and his heart turned away from God to idols. This is the kind of realization which men facing death often come to, but still they refuse to personalize it. We have all surely encountered this kind of thing. And this is our challenge; to personalize it, and live right now as if we are in

God's judgment presence, for things great and small, things public and hidden. Even what we have spoken in the ear will be shouted out (Lk. 12:3) -implying others will somehow observe our judgment, cp. Mt. 12:41. If the judgment is merely a yes/no statement which has been worked out taking our whole life into consideration, then this emphasis on every work having a time for consideration and judgment "there" is pointless. However, these verses must be considered in conjunction with those which speak of God's 'forgetting' of bad deeds on account of how people later chose to live. However, this need not mean that they are erased from God's infinite knowledge; all too often we perceive God's memory as a vast memory bank which can have our sins erased from it. But His knowledge knows no such bounds of human perception; yet He is willing not to hold those things against us, and to therefore count us as having never committed them.

I have suggested on Ecc. 3:1,17,24 that Solomon is there accusing God of being unable to resurrect and judge, and therefore his previous understanding that everything will be brought to judgment was misplaced. Solomon concludes Ecclesiastes however with an admission that this is in fact the case; all in human life will be judged finally, there will be a time of judgment for every small and great action of daily life (Ecc. 8:5,6 cp. 3:1,17,18; 12:14). In this we can take chapter 3 [and much of Ecclesiastes] as bravado, which in the face of his final death he has to admit was wrong, although he still fails to repent and accept the personal implications of this. Because all things will in some ways be judged, and are even now, *therefore* we must fear God and keep His commands (Ecc. 3:1; 12:13,14). But this is what Solomon preaches to others, especially youth (:1); but it was tragically far from him personally.

THE BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY: SONG OF SOLOMON

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CHAPTER 1

Song of Solomon 1:1 The Song of songs, which is Solomon's-
The key to understanding the Song is to appreciate that we have here a set of dialogues- Solomon to his Egyptian girlfriend, the Egyptian girl to him, words of the daughters of Jerusalem to the girl and the girl to them. And sometimes the words of her brothers who disapprove of her sleeping with Solomon and see themselves as the guardians of her virginity. Breaking up the text into these sections isn't easy, as sometimes the break can occur within a verse. The division of the text between the speakers is made yet more difficult when we consider that some of the words of Solomon may be her imagination of him praising her. I have discussed on Song 6:1,3 how Solomon as the author is thereby mocking her naivety through putting words in her mouth.

The Song begins by the daughters of Jerusalem and the Egyptian girl being in some kind of competition for Solomon; they both state their desire for him, and both of them compare his love to wine (1:2, 4). Note how the Song doesn't begin as a romance is supposed to- with the first meeting, love at first sight scene. As early as 1:2 she comments that "your lovemaking is more delightful than wine". Sex and sexual imagery and allusion fills the song, making it almost verbal pornography in places. This is all a subversion of the whole genre of romance. So the Song begins with the relationship already advanced, or with the woman inappropriately forward, and with intense rivalry between the girl and the "daughters of Jerusalem". The Egyptian justifies her darker complexion to the Jerusalem girls, and praises her own beauty: "I am black but comely, O daughters of Jerusalem" (1:5). There's evident aggression from her to them: "Don't stare at me because I am dark!" (1:6). Her despising of the Jerusalem girls is perhaps reflected in 1:6,7, where she asks Solomon: "Where do you rest your sheep during the midday heat? Tell me lest I wander around beside the flocks of your companions!". His "companions" presumably were the daughters of Jerusalem, and she didn't want to be anywhere near them. She likewise yells at them not to sexually stimulate her lover, Solomon (2:7). And I take "My beloved is *mine*" (2:16) to be the same catty kind of defensiveness. The girl is jealous of how the daughters of Jerusalem admire Solomon, not least because of his fame in Israelite circles: "your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love you" (1:3); "How rightly the young women adore you!" (1:4). "Where has your beloved gone, O most beautiful among women? Where has your beloved turned? Tell us, that we may seek him with you" (6:1) appears none less than sarcasm from the daughters.

So often there's the sense of urgency and haste- perhaps rooted in the girl's fear of competition from the daughters of Jerusalem: "Draw me after you; let us hurry! May the king bring me into his bedroom chambers!" (1:4). This would also explain the quite unabashed sexual seduction practiced by the girl- she begs Solomon to take her to his

bedroom right here at the start of the Song (1:4), and later says things like "May my beloved come into his garden and eat its delightful fruit!" (4:16). This is all inappropriate for a romance, and in ancient Israel such forwardness would have been greatly frowned upon. In Proverbs, Solomon often warns against falling for the forwardness of the Gentile immoral woman; and yet he falls for it himself.

We have here and in Ecclesiastes a unique insight into the depth psychology of the man who knows and teaches God's truth, but does the very opposite. In this lies the supreme value of the work. The Song has nothing to say about God, the covenants of promise etc. These things were far from Solomon's heart, even in youth. The language is clearly influenced by that of Egypt, which Solomon was clearly inappropriately involved with from his youth. Indeed the Song "has parallels with Mesopotamian and Egyptian love poetry". Other students suggest it is even based on the celebration of the sacred marriage of the god Tammuz and the goddess Ishtar.

Solomon clearly was aware of the tension between the Egyptian girl whom he loved, and the daughters of Jerusalem- from whom he should've been choosing a wife. The girl says she is merely a common "meadow flower from Sharon", but Solomon responds that in his eyes, "like a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the maidens" (2:1,2). He likens the Jerusalem girls to thorns- he was besotted with this Gentile. Ironically enough, Num. 33:55 had warned that the Gentiles within the land promised to Abraham would be "thorns" to Israel if they married them. And yet Solomon sees the Israelite women as "thorns" and the Gentile as a lily amongst them… . He likewise compares her to them in 6:8,9: "There may be sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and young women without number. But she is unique…". But despite this, the girl seems to always fear Solomon's attraction to the Jerusalem girls. She challenges him: "Why do you gaze upon the Perfect One [as Solomon called her] like the dance of the Mahanaim?" (6:13), the dance of the two camps / lines. She suspects there may be two camps in Solomon's mind.

It was because of the impossible tension between the Egyptian girl and the Jerusalem maidens that there's the constant theme of needing to hold meetings in secrecy, often in the countryside or mountains around Jerusalem ("in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the mountain crags, let me see your face", 2:14), and to "go away" in order to be together- e.g. 2:13 "come away my darling; my beautiful one, come away with me!". They appear to have slept together in the open air, beneath the trees: "The lush foliage is our canopied bed; the cedars are the beams of our bedroom chamber; the pines are the rafters of our bedroom" (1:16,17). The same impression of outdoors secret romance is to be found in 7:11 "Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside; let us spend the night in the villages". 2:17 and 4:6 suggest they spent a night together in the hills, and then before dawn Solomon got back to Jerusalem. 5:2 has Solomon coming to her room secretly at night, wet with the night dew. I suggest that she was

living in the harem, being prepared for her encounter with Solomon- yet she was already having sex with him and he was meeting her secretly.

She has nightmares, reflecting her fears. In chapter 3, the night after sleeping with Solomon she has a terrible vision of Solomon's kingly bed coming to Jerusalem- prepared for the daughters of Jerusalem and not her, and fiercely guarded by aggressive Israelite soldiers. Chapter 5 appears to tell of another dream she has, a nightmare actually, of how Solomon failed to turn up at a night time rendezvous in Jerusalem, and she distraught and desperate wanders around the city, is picked up by the night watchmen, but finally finds Solomon and drags him back to her mother's house [in Egypt]. I find the passage very powerful- it's so imaginable as a nightmare which a girl in her situation would have. Her deepest desire was to get Solomon back to Egypt, into her family... and thus she dreamt of it. And likewise her subconscious awareness of the tension between her and the people of Jerusalem comes out too; yet again she charges the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon.

The daughters of Jerusalem mock her for her nightmare of chapter 3 at the very end: "Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning on her beloved?" (8:5). Solomon has another woman leaning upon him... The allegorical interpretation falls down over the fact that there is no wedding scene. All we have is her nightmares of Solomon marrying the daughters of Jerusalem rather than herself. And the final scene in Song 8 where she faces the blind reality that he has married other women. Solomon wrote the Song, and ends it with him as it were having the last laugh. Her naivety, mocked by the daughters of Jerusalem, characters created by him to mock her, is revealed before all. We expect a romantic song to end with the wedding; but it doesn't. It ends with the couple parting; and this dream wedding is no more than the Egyptian girl fantasizing. The fact the wedding 'scene' or dream comes in the middle of the song rather than at the end is again a subversion of the whole genre of romance. The climax is in the wrong place. And this just indicates how unfulfilling are relationships which flout Divine principles.

Because of all this, there is a sense of on-off relationship throughout the Song. One moment she is sick of love (2:5), the next she claims Solomon had caressed her head with one hand and fingered her with the other (2:6). The very explicit language of 2:6 sits strangely if the Song is intended to be some wonderful romance building up to the climax of marriage. Another example is in 5:8, where after Solomon gives up on visiting the girl one night, she angrily tells the daughters of Jerusalem that as far as she's concerned, they can tell Solomon that she [too?] is sick of love. But when they sarcastically call her "O most beautiful of women" and enquire what she exactly loves about Solomon (5:9). she comes out with a great speech of praise for him (5:10-16). The seeking and not finding him of chapter 5 all suggests he had temporarily rejected her, after she had been lazy to open the door to him (Song of Solomon 3:2; 5:6- these passages are the basis of NT teaching about Christ’s rejection of his unworthy bride).

The girl wants to see in Solomon one as dark and Egyptian-looking as herself. Having said that she is "dark" in complexion (1:4,6), she later comments in 5:11 that to her, Solomon is also "dark" [s.w.]. She says 5:11 to the daughters of Jerusalem, as if in defence of her relationship with Solomon, and his choosing her rather than them. In the same way as he tried to see in her an Israelite woman, "O daughter of my princely people" (when she was the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh, 6:12 cp. 7:1), comparing her body parts to various geographical places in Israel (e.g. goats on Gilead, 4:1; the tower of David, 4:4; "as beautiful as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem" 6:4), so she tried to see him as an Egyptian. They were trying to see each other as who they were not... and so the relationship was doomed to failure. Right from the start, the girl feels that Solomon isn't giving her the complete passion of his love: "Oh, how I wish you would kiss me passionately! For your lovemaking is more delightful than wine" (1:2).

The Song ends without the famous final scene which we expect in a romance. The expectation of a wedding and walking off into the sunset is subverted by the concluding songs. The girl laments how she can't kiss Solomon publically or be with him without being despised; and longs to be able to take him back to her mother in Egypt (8:1,2). She utters the final warning to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon, and then breaks down with the lament that jealousy is cruel as death (8:6) and unrequited love is impossible; Solomon's true love cannot be bought by her. The daughters of Jerusalem then speak of how they have a younger sister whose breasts aren't yet developed, but they will care for her until she is ready for Solomon (8:8,9). The Egyptian girl then reminisces in the past tense: "I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers. Then I found favor in his eyes" (8:10). Solomon throughout the Songs has commented positively upon her breasts; and now she is left to lament that that is all just how it was, it's all over now. She then makes the enigmatic comment about how Solomon has a vineyard which he leases out, and yet she is a vineyard which belongs to her alone: "My vineyard, which belongs to me, is at my disposal alone". The Songs have likened her and her sexuality to a vineyard (Song 2:13,15), and her romantic meetings with Solomon appear to have sometimes been in a vineyard. Solomon spoke of her breasts as grapes (7:7). But Solomon's vineyard, she says, was associated with Baal-Hamon- Lord / husband of a multitude. She finally realized that he was a womanizer, who would go on to have over 1000 women in his life... Lord [or husband] of a multitude. Perhaps his 1000 wives and concubines lay behind her reference to the 1000 shekels that Solomon can have for his vineyard (8:12). But now she was splitting up with him, her vineyard was hers alone, her grapes were now solely at her disposal and were not his any more. The final couplet of the Song is one of bitter sarcasm, typical of the worst order of romantic breakup. Solomon says that his "companions"- the daughters of Jerusalem whom she had so hated- are listening carefully to her, as he is. And she responds by telling him to run away, whilst still calling him her "beloved"- for although jealousy is cruel as the grave, her love for him was unquenchable by many waters. Or

perhaps this too is sarcasm. So the Song ends with Solomon in rather a bad light- off to his next women, whilst the Egyptian girl walks off the scene bitterly protesting her love for him and how she's a victim of circumstance and jealousy. Yet Solomon, presumably, authored the Song. I read it therefore in the same way as I do Ecclesiastes- his jaded statement of how life has been for him, how he sought fulfilment of his human lusts but it never worked out, leaving him with a tragic sense of unfulfilment because he had not gone God's way.

The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again; he knew Divine truth, but the more he knew it, the more he lived the very opposite, failing to grasp the deeply personal relevance of truth to himself. A whole string of passages in Proverbs warn of the "strange" (AV) woman (Prov. 2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). Yet the very same word (translated "outlandish", AV) is used in Neh. 13:26 concerning the women Solomon married. The antidote to succumbing to the wicked woman was to have wisdom- according to Proverbs. And Solomon apparently had wisdom. Yet he succumbed to the wicked woman. He was writing Song of Solomon at the same time as Proverbs. The reason for this must be that Solomon didn't really have wisdom. Yet we know that he was given it in abundance. The resolution of this seems to be that Solomon asked for wisdom in order to lead Israel rather than for himself, he used that wisdom to judge Israel and to educate the surrounding nations. But none of it percolated to himself. As custodians of true doctrine- for that is what we are- we are likely to suffer from over familiarity with it. We can become so accustomed to 'handling' it, as we strengthen each other, as we preach, that the personal bearing of the Truth becomes totally lost upon us, as it was totally lost upon Solomon. And the art of the Christian life is to have the word become flesh in us, as it did in the Lord. To personalize and personally experience the truths we hold. This is why people of low literacy or IQ can make huge sacrifices for their faith in the most simple building blocks of the Gospel which they have personalized and grasped.

The allegorical view [that Solomon is as the Lord Jesus and the girl as the church] puts the coarse flatteries and language of a seducer into the lips of "Christ", which seems to me inappropriate (especially Song 6:4-10,13; 7:9). Parts of the song are little more than verbal pornography, talking of the vagina, clitoris lips etc. To argue that this speaks of the intimacy of our relationship with the Lord seems simply inappropriate. The allegorical view likes to imagine that these are love songs between two people, the lover and the beloved. But there are many other speakers: (1) the Shulamite; (2) the daughters of Jerusalem; (3) Solomon: (4) the brothers of the Shulamite; (5) the watchmen; (6) the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And no allegorical interpretation has a place for these characters. Nor an explanation for how the song ends in acrimony and relationship breakup rather than marriage and family life together.

We may well enquire why Solomon wrote this song. "Love songs" so often dwell on the theme of how a relationship started well, but ended in break up. And that's what this song is about. But Solomon also has an agenda, of presenting himself as the attractive man who had his way with women and had women fawning over him. And his agenda is clear at the end- for in the final chapter he presents this woman whom he broke up with as rude, manipulative and poncing off to look for someone else. This break up is possibly reflected in how he at a later point built a separate house for his Egyptian wife, because his temple-palace complex was too "holy" for her. Even though after her, he took many other Gentile wives. So I would argue that this argument about 'holiness' was an excuse for expelling her from the temple-palace complex. This Song, along with Ecclesiastes, is part of the spiritual insight we are given into the psychology of those who turn away from God- as a warning to us all. It is preserved for us as a kind of autopsy into Solomon's spiritual death. Read this way, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon are a unique insight into the mind of the flesh as it affects those who know God's Truth. Who wrote the Song of Solomon? Grammatically, verse 1 says that it is Solomon. But much of the Song is the dreamscape of the mind and fantasy and nightmare fears of his lover. Looking back, he read her mind. He saw the processes that were going on there. He saw his mental processes in response to hers, and how it led to disaster. He drew parallels between her and the bad Gentile woman he has described in Proverbs. He perceived how indeed he as the young Hebrew man had been drawn away to destruction. But as in Ecclesiastes he describes himself as the old and foolish king who would not be admonished, so he does nothing with the self understanding he arrives at through composing the Song of Solomon. But there is no hint of his repentance. 1 Kings 11 tells us that he died with his heart turned away by such women, away from God and unto their idols.

Pharaoh's daughter is listed as the one significant wife Solomon had, and we only read of her later- when we learn he moved her out of his palace and into a specially built house for her. So it seems logical to assume Solomon's song was about her.

The Gentile woman of Proverbs is the very picture of the Shulamite. She seeks and finds sexual partners (Prov. 7:26), just as the Shulamite does so openly in Song 1. She wanders the streets at night rather than staying at home, as the Shulamite does in her dreams. She wears sexualized clothing, speaks seductively, and is perfumed in order to sexually stimulate men (Prov. 2:16; 5:3; 7:5,9,11,12,17,21). The bad woman of Proverbs is a prostitute; and prostitutes wore veils (as Tamar in Gen. 38:14,15). Solomon's lover wears a veil (Song 4:1,3; 6:7) which the watchmen angrily pull off her to expose her for who she is (Song 5:7). The Shulamite acts like a very forward woman, if not a prostitute, and her veil may suggest that. And all this leads to the spiritual destruction of Hebrew young men (Prov. 5:5-23; 6:30-35; 7:26). The foreign women of Solomon, taken by him when a young man, led to his destruction. Yet he praises this particular foreign woman for having exactly the appearance of the bad woman he had written about and warned

against in Proverbs. He clearly thought it would not happen to him. And the Song shows how in any case, the relationship came to nothing. We note that the woman of the Song and the good wife of Proverbs are both described by Solomon as a lovely deer and graceful doe; Solomon wanted to see something spiritual and good in this bad woman. The songs are an example of self deception and seeing what we want to see, when humility to God's word would guide our thinking otherwise.

The tension with the "daughters of Jerusalem" is a major theme. Their bitter sarcasm towards the Shulamite is in about every chapter. Sarcasm is actually to be found all through the Song. Song 6:8 refers to queens, concubines and virgins. The next verse speaks of queens, concubines and "the daughters" (Song 6:9). These are surely "the daughters of Jerusalem": "There are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and virgins without number… The daughters saw her, and called her blessed; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her". Harems were comprised of virgins who were prepared for the king and once readied, they slept with him. After this, some were chosen as queens. The others, no longer virgins, were counted as "concubines" if they weren't chosen as queens. The book of Esther describes just such a harem. "The daughters of Jerusalem" would then refer to the virgins in Jerusalem who were being prepared to go and sleep with Solomon, in order for him to choose whether he wanted them as his queen or not. And they were "of Jerusalem", Hebrew women. Hence their jealousy and spirit of bitter competition against this foreigner who had come amongst them.

The Beloved

Song of Solomon 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for your lovemaking- The Hebrew suggests the emphasis is upon the "me". He is known for good love making, so she wishes he would love her. And in :3 she recognizes that all the young women love him. She presents immediately as not moral. For what decent woman seeks to attract to herself a man already involved in other relationships, and who has other women in love with him. Her tensions with those other women, the daughters of Jerusalem, will become ever more apparent as the song progresses.

That the woman should take the initiative in opening the story with a request to be kissed and talking about sex… would have been shocking in contemporary society. It is a dramatic opening to what is supposed to be a romance; immediate talk by a very forward woman of deep kissing, wine and sex. Straight away we are to be shocked; this is not going to be a romance. We are prepared for something very carnal and fleshly, and that is what the book is about. It is in fact pornography in a written form. The symbolism is persistently sexual:

• Come in to – sexual intercourse.

• Embrace – the man caressing and hugging the woman, and possibly penetrating her.
• Fountain, Spring, Well, and Water – the woman and her body.
• Fruit – yield, benefits, and food “choice fruits”- sexual satisfaction.
• Garden – the woman’s body, beautiful, pleasant, and possessed by the man.
• Gazelle or Young Stag – A virile male buck who chases down a doe.
• Hind or Doe – A female deer, and symbol for the female.
• Mountains and Hill – the high points on a woman’s body when she is lying on her back, i.e. her breasts.
• Vineyard – the woman and her body, referring to her capability to satisfy a man.

The Hebrew *dodim* specifically refers to sexual love. Song 5:1 is specific that they slept with each other. And she continues to be incredibly "forward" throughout the Songs, asking Solomon to sleep with her (Song 4:16; 7:13; 8:2). She proudly reflects: "I awakened you" (Song 8:5). This taking of the sexual initiative by the woman was an absolute deconstruction of the genre of romance songs. And she is presented as exactly the fulfilment of the loud and forward Gentile woman whom Solomon had warned against in the Proverbs. But he fell in love with her and slept with her whilst a young man, whilst writing such sober warnings against this. The purpose of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon is to give us an insight into the psychology of the person who knows God's truth who falls into sin. These books are really an insight into depth psychology. They are a spiritual autopsy on Solomon; that is their abiding value. There's nothing else quite like it in the Bible. And we who likewise know God's truth, who are also tempted to sin, find in them therefore a profound insight into our own likely psychologies and paths of temptation.

"Lovemaking" is s.w. Prov. 7:18, where the bad Gentile woman invites the young Hebrew man to sleep with her undetected by others: "I have spread my couch with carpets of tapestry, with striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let’s take our fill of loving until the morning. Let’s solace ourselves with loving". Solomon is beyond hypocritical; he appears to think that he can teach one thing and do precisely the opposite. It is beyond narcissism, but rather a kind of playing God to the extent of considering he had no possibility of personal failure and could act as he wished.

Is better than wine-
The criticism of Solomon for marrying foreign women also applies to his first marriage with the daughter of Pharaoh; *besides* marrying her, he married the others too, and the criticisms which follow are spoken in the context of both these actions. Yet Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter in his early days, before he asked for wisdom. This is another indication that Solomon did not start off well and then go wrong; right from the beginning he had this incredible

dualism in his spirituality. The Talmud (*Shabbath F, 56,2*) records that "When Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh she brought to him 1000 kinds of musical instruments, and taught him the chants to the various idols". Even when Solomon was young, he evidently loved wine (Song 1:2,4)- which was later to be something he (temporarily) abandoned himself to. He had a child by an Ammonite girl one year before he became king (1 Kings 14:21)- so his relationships with foreign women cannot be put down to mere political alliances. If the Song of Solomon is about her rather than the Egyptian woman he married, one can only say that one early error, unrepented of, paved the way for his later disasters with foreign women. The Song suggests that he met the foreigner he married whilst walking alone in the countryside- which again proves it was a love relationship rather than a political alliance. The record later describes his building of store cities in the very language used of Pharaoh's using Hebrew labour to build treasure cities (2 Chron. 8:4 cp. Ex. 1:11 Heb.). The influence of his father-in-law was deep, and lasted a long time.

Song of Solomon 1:3 Your oils have a pleasing fragrance. Your name is oil poured forth-
We are baptized into the Name of Jesus, and bear that Name in the eyes of men. The Hebrew concept of a name meant really a renown, an understanding of the person. The Bride comments that "your name is as ointment poured forth" (Song 1:3 AV), likening the name to the smell of perfume. The "scent" of a nation is likewise their reputation, the message they give out (Jer. 48:11; Hos. 14:7). We are the saviour of Christ (2 Cor. 2:16), we bear His Name, and therefore anyone carrying the Name is thereby a witness to Him.

Therefore the virgins love you-
For all her self confidence and forwardness, the girl knows she is up against strong competition from the daughters of Jerusalem. She is far from positive that she as one Gentile girl can overcome that factor. And she sees the only chance of her winning is to get Solomon right away from them, and back to Egypt (:4).

Song of Solomon 1:4 Take me away with you. Let's hurry. The king has brought me into his rooms!-
I suggested on :4 that she considered getting Solomon away to Egypt was her only chance of countering the attraction of the daughters of Jerusalem. She imagines them leaving Jerusalem together in Song 2:10, and at the end of the story, still this is her desire (Song 8:2). Nothing changed. She was as she was. And yet she fantasizes that thereby she would be Solomon's wife and therefore brought into his "chambers". But the word literally means a hiding place, and we note the desire to be taken away, to hurry as if they are under threat of discovery, rather than being on the way to a wedding. Most of their encounters which we will read of are in the open air, as their relationship is not

approved of by others. And so it may be better to read "rooms" as "hiding place", somewhere in the countryside, to which they must "hurry".

She asks Solomon to take her away, and then in her mind "The king has brought me into his rooms!". This was her fantasy; and what makes interpreting the Song of Solomon difficult is that so much of what the woman says is fantasy, and also quite a bit of Solomon's responses. As we see here, changing from talking to Solomon to speaking of him in the third person, almost the whole thing is an insight into fantasy. It is a dreamscape rather than historical reality. They were falling in love with fantasies of each other and how things could be in the future, so strongly that they conclude that this is how things would actually be. Many of the words spoken apparently to Solomon are really the woman saying these things in her mind. We wonder how much of what we read in the Song of Songs actually happened, and how much was spoken face to face; so much is fantasy in the mind of the speakers. It is an amazing psychological insight into fleshly relationships. This is a very common problem with couples in the early stages of their relationship. They fall in love with images and imaginations they have superimposed upon the object of their 'love'. And then there is bitter disappointment when it becomes apparent that these fantasies are never going to be reality. He is going to be the knight in shining armour, surrogate for her father or her older brother… she is going to be surrogate for his mother, cook like her, care for him like she did… rather than loving the person for who they actually are, with above all a spiritual bond between them. But then love includes fantasy… this is the difficulty. And all this is true in non-romantic relationships too, e.g. often a newly attended church is thought to be the wonderful, ideal community the attender always dreamt of finding, the new dwelling moved into is laden with 'ideal home' expectations… until the neighbours turn out to be awful, the roof leaks, the heating system is found to be inadequate. So much human disillusion with things and relationships is due to investing them with their own images and fantasies. *This is where the absolute Truth of Jesus Christ is so priceless. In Him alone we have Truth that will not disappoint and that will turn out more wonderful than our wildest dreams- and be experienced for eternity.*

Daughters of Jerusalem
We will be glad and rejoice in you. We will praise your love more than wine!-
The daughters of Jerusalem are immediately portrayed as not very spiritually minded either. They know all about wine, which they praised, but they praised Solomon's love for them more than that. This is tacit admission that he did "love" them as well as the Egyptian girl. As becomes apparent at the very end of the Song. "Glad and rejoice" is a phrase used multiple times in the Psalms for how we should primarily be glad and rejoice in Yahweh. But there is no spiritual aspect here in any of the characters. This is demonstrated by the inspired record using terms which are found elsewhere in scripture, and highlighting the lack of spiritual perception of them by the characters.

We can take all of :4 as the words of the Shulamite. In this case, as elsewhere, we see a parallel between "me" and "we". She accepts she is part of a group of other women also in relationship with the lover. She accepts Solomon already has a harem, the [other] virgins love him, she says; but wants to be part of it.

Love "More than wine" suggests the women find wine attractive but Solomon's love even more so. Immediately we get a low moral impression of the young women involved, as wine drinkers. There is no spirituality in them, never a mention of God in the book / relationship, no attraction to Solomon's wisdom, and no mention of God or any spiritual dimension to the relationship.

Beloved
They are right to love you-
For all her forwardness and self confidence, she recognizes that she has major competition. At this point she knows this but is 'blind' to it on another level; and as the songs develop, we see her bitterly hating Solomon for it later. So true to human relationships; we can be blind to obvious weakness, and that refusal to engage with the reality leads to relationship break up further down the line.

Song of Solomon 1:5 I am dark, but lovely, you daughters of Jerusalem, like Kadar's tents, like Solomon's curtains-
She is very confident of her own beauty, as in Song 8:10. Her claim to Solomon that she is a mere common lily (2:1) and her excuse that she worked too much outdoors is therefore fake humility in order to woo Solomon. She does herself down to him, but in her heart and in her self presentation to the daughters of Jerusalem, she claims herself to be attractive. As an Egyptian she was darker skinned than the Jerusalem girls, and dark skin also spoke of lower social class. But she insists that this is to be no barrier to her winning of Solomon uniquely for herself. She comes over as bold, self justifying to her competitors (the "daughters of Jerusalem") and ever on the initiative; she goes out looking for him (Song 3:1-5; 5:6,7), and propositions him for sex. She is the very fulfilment of Solomon's 'bad woman' of the Proverbs. "Kedar" means "black", and she likes to think that the famed curtains or tents of this Gentile place were as good as any Jerusalem made curtains (Jer. 49:28,29). She never perceives the unique nature of Jerusalem, seeing it as being as good as any other Gentile city. Yet Solomon likes to call her the Shulamite, the Jerusalem girl- counting her as who he wanted to see her as. This is the value of this book; we have a unique insight, at the level of depth psychology, into the mentality and thought processes of those who wish to go against God's clearly stated will, because they perceive everything in the light of the narrative they wish to believe and act according to. This is the same essential process going on in the minds of all manner of sexual perverts who on another hand know God's truth so well.

Song of Solomon 1:6 Don't stare at me because I am dark, because the sun has scorched me-
She is very self defensive. She says the sun has looked or stared at her, and so they shouldn't look at her askance because of her darker skin. This marked her as a Gentile, or a woman of lower social class. She comes over as anything but humble.

My mother's sons were angry with me. They made me keeper of the vineyards, but I haven't kept my own vineyard-
If her vineyard refers to her virginity or sexuality (as in :14; Song 6:11; 7:13), this **c**ould mean that her brothers were angry with her for sleeping with Solomon. Brothers were seen as guardians of their sister in sexual terms (Gen. 34; 2 Sam. 13). The Song concludes, perhaps, with her brothers considering her too young for marriage, and wanting to set her up with a more appropriate husband than Solomon (8:8,9).

And yet the Song concludes with her claiming that her vineyard is her own; and as discussed on Song 8:10-12, keeping the vineyard meant admission into Solomon's harem and keeping the women within it. The connection between this vineyard imagery at the start and end of the song must surely be given due weight. Throughout the song, the vine and its fruit is used as a symbol for her body and sexuality. On this basis we could interpret this early statement of the Shulamite as meaning that she had been the keeper of Pharaoh's harem, a job she got because her brothers were angry with her. She had not kept her own vineyard might mean that she had not been within the harem herself, she was just the madame of the establishment. Or it could be an admission she had not kept her virginity, which is why her brothers were angry with her. Again, the Song opens as an inversion of all we might expect in a collection of love songs. It begins with deep kissing, sex and wine- and the girl isn't even a virgin. She therefore felt she might be seen by Solomon as too dark skinned, as it were, for him and his harem. But Solomon is not put off by her lack of virginity but rather instead attracted by her experience. His comments that she is 'sealed up' in Song 4 would only then mean that she had been locked up to him: "A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a rock-garden locked, a spring sealed up" (Song 4:12-15).

Or we can understand this as a typical trick of 'love'. She was clearly wealthy, the daughter of royalty, judging by her foreign perfume and gold jewellery. But she is playing the 'poor little rich girl' card, asking her lover to overlook her dark skin, pretending she had a complex about it. When in fact Solomon likely found attractive a skin colour different from that of the "daughters of Jerusalem". See on Song 2:1 for another example.

Song of Solomon 1:7 Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you graze your flock, where you rest them at noon; for why should I be as one who is veiled beside the flocks

of your companions?-
"Who is veiled" can as well be rendered "one who is lost", as LXX. She complains she is just tagging along with the flocks of women companions who were following Solomon as if he were their shepherd and they the sheep; they are the "daughters of Jerusalem". He responds that she should follow their tracks to him (:8), and she will find his special love and attention (:9).

Yet she recognizes that he already has flocks of "companions". But as shepherds rested alone at noon from the midday sun, laying down to sleep somewhere, so she asks where that place is. The request to know where he feeds his flock at noon is perhaps a way of expressing her desire to find him alone and to come to him wherever that was. And with the implication that she wants to lay down next to him alone- a very bold move for a woman just opening her approach to a man. The reply of the daughters of Jerusalem in :8 is therefore mocking her- for they say that many flocks have followed Solomon wherever he is, so the Shulamite can just follow in the tracks many have followed. She wants to find him alone, but so have many others.

The references to the lover as a shepherd in Song 1:7; 6:2,3 have led some to think that the beloved is also in love with a shepherd. But this is to miss the clear connection in Hebrew thought between a king and a shepherd. David was to shepherd Israel (2 Sam. 5:2) and the seed of David likewise would be a shepherd over all Israel (Ez. 37:24).

Lover

Song of Solomon 1:8 If you don't know, most beautiful among women, follow the tracks of the sheep. Graze your young goats beside the shepherds' tents-

We note how quickly the scenes change in the song- here from palace (:4) to vineyard (:6) to desert scrubland (:8). Likewise she sees herself as being invited to fly over the land of Palestine from its highest points... all of which suggests we are invited into a dreamscape, her imaginations and fantasies, rather than being presented with a narrative of scenes that actually occurred. Her fantasies move at ease and very quickly between various locations in the countryside, Solomon's banquet house, his bedroom, her bedroom, her mother's house, the streets of Jerusalem etc. Although that isn't to say that some of the things she speaks of didn't have some actual reality.

I suggested on :7 that Solomon was not a literal shepherd, but he is here responding to the metaphor she uses in :7. Although he is indeed like a shepherd leading a flock of women, the daughters of Jerusalem, he says that she should follow their tracks to him, and she will find his special love and attention (:9). He encourages her that he finds her

the most beautiful amongst all those other women or sheep. She is to come near to his tent, and graze her goats there- perhaps some sexual reference.

"Beautiful woman" is the term used by Solomon in Prov. 11:22 "Like a gold ring in a pig's snout, so is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion". It is the term sarcastically used about her by Israelite competitors (Song 5:9; 6:1). Seeing Solomon's wives were idolaters, they lacked discretion; and yet Solomon loved them and married them. He behaved with women completely opposite to his own teachings. And we have in the Song an invaluable exploration of the psychology and mental processes behind this feature of human nature.

Song of Solomon 1:9 I have compared you, my love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots- Heb. "I count you as...". Again we have an insight into the psychology of a man in love. He sees her as... whatever. He is in love with an image of his own creation, rather than her character. The Song of Solomon is the record of Solomon's romance with Pharaoh's daughter. Of course, this was an explicit breach of the crystal clear commandment not to marry women from Egypt. He should have admired neither the horses nor the women of Egypt; yet he begins his Song with an unashamed breach of the command not to desire either of these things. The unashamedness of Solomon coupled with his spirituality indicates that at this time he was genuinely convinced that what he was doing was deeply spiritual; when in fact it was completely carnal. He totally ignored his own advice about choosing a spiritual woman as a wife. And worse, he encourages her that although he is like a shepherd leading a flock of women, the daughters of Jerusalem, she is in fact his one special one. She is a beautiful mare, in his eyes, amongst all Pharaoh's chariot horses. He thus likens the daughters of Jerusalem to Pharaoh's chariot horses- which were destroyed at the Red Sea. But Solomon doesn't care about this obvious negative connection. See on Song 2:2, where he likens her to a lily amongst the thorns of the daughters of Jerusalem. See on Song 2:12.

But the Hebrew is feminine, a mare, a female horse. Chariots were pulled by male horses, stallions. He is likening her to a female horse harnessed to Pharaoh's chariots, with the other stallions interested in her. Mares were sometimes put amongst the stallions pulling a chariot to inspire the stallions to pull and run faster. Indeed the GNB interprets just like this: "You, my love, excite men as a mare excites the stallions of Pharaoh's chariots". The imagery presupposes her familiarity with Pharaoh's horses, hinting at her Egyptian origin. This may be his response to her comment that all the [other] virgins love Solomon, and she wants to as well. His response is that all the male stallions will also all be interested in her. So the song opens with the strong hint that neither are committed to monogamous relationship. He was fine with this to the end, but the final scenes show her deeply upset that he in fact has other women in his life.

Song of Solomon 1:10 Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels-
She loves him because of his ointment, and he loves her because of her jewellery (Song 1:2,3,10; 4:4). He says that deep kissing with her gives the same after effect as drinking enough wine that you talk in your sleep afterwards (Song of Solomon 7:9). It's all very human and carnal, based upon the external and not the internal. But this is what Solomon was like. He sees wisdom, even in Proverbs and certainly in Ecclesiastes, as only helpful in that it gives a person a good name and image in this life.

The woman wears expensive jewellery. The style of jewellery and adornment described is distinctly Egyptian. She is no shepherd girl, but a princess- the daughter of Pharaoh. She is specifically called "daughter of the prince" (Song 7:1). She was no peasant girl. Egypt turned against Solomon, harbouring his adversaries even from the time of David and then attacking Judah just five years after Solomon's death, ransacking the temple-palace complex. The relationship with this girl was unwise in every sense, and quite possibly she was sent to Jerusalem by her father in order to lure Solomon into the relationship.

Song of Solomon 1:11 We will make you earrings of gold, with studs of silver-
The speaker of :11 is unclear. Possibly the daughters of Jerusalem are saying that they would have the job of making the earrings of gold that would need to be paid for her dowry- we recall those given for Rebekah. The "we" make us think it could be the daughters of Jerusalem, and they make similar sarcastic comments on the woman's jewellery in chapter 8. Quite possibly they are sarcastically saying that they could make her look even finer, by adding some things to her- specifically by adding the Hebrew borders [Heb.] on her clothes. The Song is shot through with allusion to the Law and tabernacle rituals; he speaks of making her borders [NEV "earrings"] on her clothes, probably alluding to the borders of blue to be worn by the faithful Israelite. Solomon wanted her to look externally like a spiritual woman, and he was going to make her one; many a preacher, teacher, husband, wife, father, mother, child, boyfriend has had to learn the impossibility of this. He wanted to see her as a spiritual woman, and eventually he became persuaded that she was just this. See on Song 3:10.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 1:12 While the king sat at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance-
The girl is not a shepherd girl, she is a prince's daughter from Egypt (Song 7:1), and so she has access to the Jerusalem palace and sees the king sitting at his table. She seems

to be secretly boasting that after being intimate with each other, the smell of her perfume can be smelt exuding from him. When she was just one of the many young women being prepared in the harem for their night to sleep with Solomon, after which he would decide whether she became a wife or a concubine.

Nard [Heb.] was the perfume of the wealthy; we recall the extreme cost of the card in Mk. 14:5. This wealthy outsider of different skin colour was surely a Gentile princess, hence her wealth. The spices of Song 4:13,14 which the Shulamite uses in her perfumes are largely not native to Israel. Again we have the impression of a wealthy foreign princess. Such spices had to be imported by Solomon (1 Kings 10:10); nard / spikenard came from India and was not native to Israel. But they are listed together with the fruit of the "incense tree" (Song 4:13), and incense usually has connotations of idolatry. Solomon's wives offered pagan incense to their gods (1 Kings 11:8 "his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed to their gods"). She smelt like pagan incense- and Solomon loved it.

Song of Solomon 1:13 My beloved is to me a sachet of myrrh, that lies between my breasts-
AV "lies all night" implies they had slept together already at this early stage. Again we note that the entire genre of romance is subverted, consciously so. Sex and marriage are not the climax of the romance, but rather it all starts with inappropriate intimacy. "Is to me" here and in :14 could as well be rendered "is mine"- she is claiming that she has Solomon's heart, and he is not therefore 'theirs'. Love, or lust, or plain obsession with 'getting' Solomon on some level, has blinded her to the fact he has other women already. This idea of "me", "mine…", is a common one with the woman. The whole song opens with her desiring him to kiss *me*, and I mentioned that the Hebrew suggests 'me rather than you / others'. She can hardly express her ownership of Solomon without some defensive or snide comment about the competitors amongst the daughters of Jerusalem.

Song of Solomon 1:14 My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi-
She again seems to associate vineyards with her breasts or sexuality (:13; see on :6). She seems to associate Solomon as a person with the aphrodisiacs she was using. In this we see her complete focus upon the external, seeing Solomon as a person as only as good as the aphrodisiacs. This collapsing of identity between the person and the external illustrates the degree to which the issue of character and spirituality is so sadly absent in the relationship.

Lover

Song of Solomon 1:15 Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are doves-
Solomon sees her as a dove (also Song 5:2), and she then says that he has dove's eyes (Song 5:12). They tend to praise each other in the same language. Indeed this is an accurate record of a romance. But the praise is all of externalities, no attention is paid to the character, and there is absolutely no spiritual dimension to the relationship. This says so much about Solomon. This lack of attention to true spirituality means that his love of Divine wisdom at the time was purely of an intellectual, theoretical nature. And this is the warning for us. For he was writing this love song in his youth when he married foreign women, and it was then that he received Divine wisdom and wrote it up in the book of Proverbs. Or more accurately, he is writing up this Song as a description of his feelings for her in his youth.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 1:16 Behold, you are beautiful, my beloved, yes, pleasant; and our couch is verdant-
The "verdant" bed they would sleep on may be assumed to be of leaves, in the open air bower they would construct in :17. The Gentile woman invites Solomon, the young Hebrew male, to her bed in the same way as the woman he warns against in Prov. 7:17 "I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon". The Proverbs so frequently refer to the dangers of the house of the Gentile woman; yet the Song shows the Egyptian girl dearly wishing that Solomon would come with her into her bed.
And Solomon, just like the foolish young man he wrote about, went right ahead down the road to spiritual disaster he so often warned others about. He warns the young man of the dangers of the Egyptian woman who perfumes her bed with myrrh (Prov. 7:16,17)- and then falls for just such a woman (Ps. 45:8).

The young woman has just introduced herself to Solomon, he likes her- and straight away starts talking of their bed. She pushes herself upon him, and he falls for her. The whole thing breathes superficially and sensuality. It really recalls the classic scene of the pushy, forward young woman who pushes herself upon the young, handsome wealthy man. They soon talk and do sex, and then break up in acrimony.

Lover

Song of Solomon 1:17 The beams of our house are cedars. Our rafters are firs-
The house can be taken as a bower made of cedar and fir trees, the location of their tryst in the countryside. This continues the idea of :16. So whilst Solomon was still

building the temple of cedars and firs, he was making a bower out of such trees in which to secretly sleep with his Egyptian, Gentile girlfriend. This is more that duplicitous hypocrisy, it is the behaviour of a man who has not at all personalized God's truths for himself. The path to this tryst has been hinted at in :7,8. That the king of Israel should need to act in this deceptive manner has much to say about him. He was worried about his image, and wished to give an appearance of interest in the daughters of Jerusalem. Or it could be that Solomon alludes to the house of the forest of Lebanon, Solomon's summer house, which was constructed of so much cedar that it would have required literally the felling of a forest in Lebanon. In which case, this is an invitation to her to come and sleep with him in his summer house beneath the famed "paneled ceilings" (LXX, NEV "rafters").

If these words are the woman's, then she may be fantasizing about a house that Solomon will build for her and the materials used to make it. Solomon did indeed build a house for his Egyptian wife and the use of cedar was typical of his building style as recorded in 1 Kings.

CHAPTER 2

Song of Solomon 2:1 Beloved
I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys-
We can understand this as a typical trick of 'love'. She was clearly wealthy, the daughter of royalty, judging by her foreign perfume and gold jewellery. But she is playing the 'poor little rich girl' card, asking her lover to overlook her dark skin, pretending she had a complex about it; pretending she had a low self image as just a common rose, when she has just told the daughters of Jerusalem that she is in fact uniquely beautiful. When in fact Solomon likely found attractive a skin colour different from that of the "daughters of Jerusalem". See on Song 1:6 for another example. The Egyptian girl doesn't rate these common flowers; her lack of confidence in the face of the opposition from the daughters of Jerusalem is expressed again (see on Song 1:3,4), and comes to a climax at the end when she breaks up with Solomon, effectively saying "I knew it would end like this". And yet they are the flowers which are to adorn the restored Israel in the Kingdom of God (Is. 35:1,2; Hos. 14:6-8). Her every word shows her to be spiritually out of step with God's ways and viewpoints. She now feels unworthy of him; just an ordinary common nothing special flower. This kind of oscillation of confidence is true to observed experience of the "in love" period of relationship. The Songs have every reason to believe them to be a record of an actual relationship Solomon had.

Chapter 1 has closed with the couple in Solomon's palace, but now she seems despondent and considers herself just a common lily. Her dislike of the city life was not because she was a country girl- she was a "prince's daughter", daughter of Pharaoh (Song 7:1). She didn't like it because the 'daughters of Jerusalem' were there, her

competitors.

It can be no accident that the Lord contrasts the lily favourably with Solomon in all his glory- as if He saw even this unspiritual Gentile girl as far better than Solomon. This is one of many NT allusions which present Solomon unfavourably.

Lover

Song of Solomon 2:2 As a lily among thorns, so is my darling among the daughters-
Solomon comforts her that he sees her as unique and special. And she, one of many women in his harem, dumbly believes him. This is what is hard to believe in love- that I am unique and special. And this is our difficulty in accepting the love of Christ for us. But Solomon negatively compares the daughters of Jerusalem to thorns, with all their associations with condemnation; just as he did in essence as noted on Song 1:9. Solomon addresses her obsession about "the daughters of Jerusalem" by saying that he sees them as thorns and her as a lily. He likens the Jerusalem girls to thorns- he was besotted with this Gentile. Ironically enough, Num. 33:55 had warned that the Gentiles within the land promised to Abraham would be "thorns" to Israel if they married them. And yet Solomon sees the Israelite women as "thorns" and the Gentile as a lily amongst them... Thorns are invariably connected with spiritual weakness and rejection; it was as if Solomon was saying that he found the daughter of Pharaoh spiritually more attractive than the Jewish girls. This is the basis for the sarcastic comments and tensions between Solomon's girl and the daughters of Jerusalem. And she went along with how he wanted to see her: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys"; even though her heart was far away in Egypt, she described herself in Jewish terms because that was how he saw her; he calls her his "sister" (Song 4:9), as if she was actually Jewish- whereas she wanted him to be her Egyptian "brother". The relationship was doomed from the start.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 2:3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, his fruit was sweet to my taste-
As Solomon considers her the most beautiful amongst all the other women / flowers, so she responds by implying she has plenty of other men but he is the most attractive to her "among the sons"; like a single apple tree that bears fruit amongst the fruitless trees of a forest. She likens him to the apple tree, which is not a native of Palestine and may have been uncommon there at the time. She likes to see him as somehow not solidly Hebrew, just as he likes to see her as Israelite by comparing her to locations in Israel.

They were both in love with a false image of the other which they had in their minds. This happens so often. The illicit nature of their relationship, the opposition they both had [she from her brothers, he from the daughters of Jerusalem] heightened the intensity of their passion and commitment- for a time. But there was no lasting cement in their relationship, because it was not based on spirit and truth.

It's hard to imagine what was actually going on in this part of the woman's speech. She speaks of meeting Solomon as a pleasant tree in the forest, then of being with Solomon publically at the banquet house, with a banner of his stated love over her, the ultimate answer to the daughters of Jerusalem whose competition she so feared; and then she is fantasizing about him arousing her with his right hand whilst having his left arm under her head, and then in :8 she hears the voice of Solomon indicating he is running across the mountains towards her. We surely cannot read all these things as descriptions of what actually happened in a short space of time; rather are they her fantasies, her imaginations of her idealized lover- see on :16. If we understand her words as largely the fantasy of imagination, then her whole speeches appear far less confused than if we try to read them as literal statements of what actually happened between the couple.

Song of Solomon 2:4 He brought me to the banquet hall. His banner over me is love-
Seeing their relationship was illicit, and they met outdoors, this appears to be the exaggerated imagery of the love poem. I suggested on Song 1:4 that the "chambers" to which he brought her was an open air bivouac or bower made from tree branches where they made love and drunk wine. And again here she speaks of him bringing her... to a banquet hall, in their imaginations, the open air bower, where they made love.

But "banquet hall" can indeed mean a "house of wine" (RVmg.). Solomon later turned to alcohol for a while (Ecc. 2:3)- yet his girlfriend says that Solomon took her to the house of wine whilst still young. The seeds of failure were there early on- he preached against wine in Proverbs, and yet still drunk himself.

It is quite possible that this house of wine or banquet room was the building which later developed into "the house of the forest of Lebanon", Solomon's grandiose summer house.

Song of Solomon 2:5 Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples; for I am faint with love-
She may be saying that she is so in heat for him, that he must give her his apples / raisins. Clearly this is sexual imagery, and the songs are little short of verbal pornography. The desire for such illicit fruit (for they were not married) in an open air situation recalls the sin of Adam and Eve. Again we have the sense of an open air tryst. "Refresh me" can also be "make my bed" (s.w. Job 17:13 "made my bed"). In this case

she is spreading an alluring couch before her would be lover, just as the wicked Gentile woman of Prov. 7:16. And Solomon falls for her, assuming all his truths of wisdom are somehow not binding upon him personally.

The Song of Solomon really isn't the idyllic love song some have made it out to be. Constantly there is fear and contradiction within it; the unsatisfactory ending is but a continuation of a theme of uncertainty and difficulty in the relationship. Throughout the song there are constant interjections of doubt and misunderstanding, and anticlimaxes between the height of love's expression and the depths of doubt. We expect the Song to feature a romance that blossoms into marriage and the consummation; but all we have is a constant struggle in the relationship, and it all ends in a quite unsatisfactory and unfulfilled way. The sense of lovesickness reflects the unsatisfying nature of it all (Song 2:5, 15,16). She asks him to turn and go away, and then seeks him desperately (Song of Solomon 2:17; 3:1)- having earlier rejoiced at the news of his coming (2:8).

Song of Solomon 2:6 His left hand is under my head. His right hand embraces me-
In fantasy or reality, they were having sex. And the Lord teaches that in this area, the thought is anyway counted as the act.

Song of Solomon 2:7 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, or by the hinds of the field, that you not stir up, nor stimulate love, until it so desires-

The sentence is left unended and yet begins with an adjuration. We can conclude that we are supposed to end the sentence with a curse for disobeying the adjuration: "I put you under oath, daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the does of the field, if you stir up or arouse love before it is willing, [may you be cursed]". "Until it so desires" refers to "love". The translations that offer "until she desires" are simply reflecting the fact that the Hebrew noun for "love" is feminine. "Until it please / so desire" could mean "until our love is satisfied"; "That you disturb not, nor interrupt our love, until it be satiated". The interruption and distraction of the daughters of Jerusalem is referred to when she complains that the foxes are spoiling the vineyards of the couple.

An oath was typically taken in the name of God in Israel (Dt. 6:13; Josh. 9:18; 2 Chron. 15:14). But again, this woman is portrayed as lacking any spirituality or relationship with God. Her sarcasm turns to angry defence when she warns the Jerusalem girls not to stir up "my love"- i.e. 'Hands off my Solomon!'. In turn, they ask her where Solomon has "turned aside" so that they can come and seek him with her (Song of Solomon 6:1), using a word elsewhere associated with 'turning aside' in apostasy to other gods. They in their turn sarcastically comment to her: "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest

among women… that we may seek him with thee?" (Song 6:1 AV), quoting Solomon's terms of endearment back to her.

It is no coincidence that she calls Solomon a roe and hind in :9. Surely her implication is that the daughters of Jerusalem should get on with their own boyfriends, and not stimulate Solomon away from her.

Song of Solomon 2:8 The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes, leaping on the mountains, skipping on the hills-
This is the language of fantasy; and is the basis for her nightmare in chapter 3, when she imagines Solomon coming in glory on a carriage / bed- but it was prepared for the daughters of Jerusalem, and not her. I suggest that we have here an absolutely credible insight into the mental processes of a girl in her situation. It really happened. And Solomon is writing this Song correctly psychoanalyzing her thoughts and what had happened.

Song of Solomon 2:9 My beloved is like a roe or a young hart. Behold, he stands behind our wall! He looks in at the windows. He glances through the lattice-
"Windows… lattice" are literally "gaps". The idea is that they are separated by a stone wall in which there are gaps through which they can look at each other. Again there is a sense of separation between them, and only having their relationship as it were through the gaps. Again, the imagery is unfortunate because a broken down stone wall with gaps is a Biblical picture of the spiritually broken down state of Israel (Is. 5:5; Ez. 13:5,10). But these lovers cared nothing for such concerns. She was locked up in the harem, under guard, but Solomon was coming to have a secret chat with her and to admire her… or so she liked to fantasize.

If we read still as "windows" and "lattice", then again we have the impression of furtiveness, secrecy and a concealed relationship. It's as if he comes to her home as she is looking out for him through the closed window blinds and says 'It's all clear, come with me now, let's dash' (:10). And then at the end of it she has to tell him to "flee" back home at daybreak (:17). Note she is in a "hiding place" (:14) from which Solomon calls her out. The obvious question 'Why all the secrecy?' is clearly because the relationship was illicit and mismatched.

Solomon in Prov. 7:6 likens himself to a wise man looking out through his lattice window and noticing a man going astray with a woman. But the precise figure is used in Song 2:9 for how his illicit, paganic Gentile girlfriend found his doing this to be so attractive, if not somehow erotic. The connection shows how totally confused Solomon was in his personal spirituality.

Song of Solomon 2:10 My beloved spoke and said to me, Rise up, my love, my beautiful one, and come away-
This is reported speech- her hopes of what her lover would say, her fantasy about his words rather than reality. See on :16. For she had decided at the start that the only way out of the problem with the daughters of Jerusalem was to get Solomon to agree to leave Jerusalem and Israel (Song 1:4). Her heart was in her home in Egypt, and she wanted to get Solomon there. She is presented as the very opposite of Ruth's attitude.

But these may be Solomon's words. By contrast, instead of running off to Egypt with her, he wants to take her on a tour of Israel (as in Song 4:8), enthusing about the sights, speaking of them as the things of "*our* land". He wanted her to be an Israelite, and he spoke to her as if she was, assuming that he could psychologically and spiritually dominate her so that he could have a little of both- his own carnal fulfilment coupled with spiritual satisfaction. How many times has this been worked out in the experience of a spiritual brother enthusing about the beauty of the Truth and spiritual Israel to an Egyptian girl, who only superficially shares his enthusiasm, longing in her heart to have him with her in Egypt.

Song of Solomon 2:11 for, behold, the winter is past. The rain is over and gone-
The romance happened in the spring, the time when Solomon should have been keeping Passover to remember his deliverance from Egypt. But at that very time, he was getting involved with an Egyptian girl.

Song of Solomon 2:12 The flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land-
The turtledove is a migratory bird which returns to Israel in April; this confirms that this romance is happening in the spring (:11), the time when Solomon should have been keeping Passover to remember his deliverance from Egypt. "The time of the singing" may refer to the Passover feast, and rejoicing in the destruction of Egypt's chariots which Solomon so admired (Song 1:9). But at that very time, he was getting involved with an Egyptian girl.

Song of Solomon 2:13 The fig tree ripens her green figs. The vines are in blossom. They give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come away-
Again we see her wanting Solomon to "come away" from the scene in Jerusalem where the daughters of Jerusalem would always be his competitors (Song 1:4). She has fantasized about him agreeing to this in :10. And so it will ever be in the marriage of believer and unbeliever; the unbeliever will always want to get the believer to "come away" to Egypt. And so it happened with Solomon's heart, finally.

I am not a fan of trying to interpret the Song as an allegory of Christ and His church. But the blossoming of the fig tree is associated with the soon coming of the bridegroom, possibly alluded to by the Lord in His Olivet prophecy. However we must face the problem that the girl wishes Solomon to "come away" not to Yahweh but to Egypt and her idols.

Lover

Song of Solomon 2:14 My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places of the mountainside; let me see your face. Let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely-
I suggested on :9 that they are on different sides of a broken down stone wall, playing peek a boo through the many gaps in it. "Face" is plural, and could be translated "sights", as if he is asking to see her body in a sexual sense. "Let me see your form" is a fair translation; and he asks for her to undress for him in a hidden place outdoors. Again we see the stressed, secretive nature of the romance. And we note this is all a case of premarital sex.

The desire to 'see your face' and the reference to being hid in a cleft of the rock is very much the language of Moses desiring to see God's face whilst hid in a cleft of the rock. The point is, that Solomon's desire for his illicit girlfriend should've been instead redirected into a desire to meet God in the spirit of Moses. This is one of many indirect allusions in the Song to spiritual things, but always to point out that those allusions were utterly missed by Solomon and his lover.

Song of Solomon 2:15 Catch foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards; for our vineyards are in blossom-
I explained on Song 1:6 that the vineyards are representative of her sexuality, which we learn there was guarded by her brothers. It is possible that this verse is in fact her brothers speaking, or her fear of their attempts to catch a "fox" like Solomon from spoiling her vineyard / virginity- which she wants to give him. Or it could be that she sees the 'foxes' spoiling "our" vineyard as the daughters of Jerusalem. The Lord called Herod a fox, so we can conclude that a fox was a derogatory term for a person. Always the love scenes are less than ideal in reality. The vineyards of Solomon and this woman are spoilt by foxes... As Ecclesiastes laments, going the way of the flesh never leads to true satisfaction.

Keil suggests this is "A vine-dresser's ditty". If we don't accept this is the voice of the brothers, then this could be a cry to the foxes to 'clear off'. But why the fear of foxes? Perhaps this is another call for the potential observers, those who would spoil their tryst, to go away- just as the girl shouts such things in her own mind at the 'daughters of

Jerusalem'. Their meeting places were in the countryside, and Solomon sees her work as his- he speaks as if they are joint vineyard keepers in 'their' vineyard where they meet. These rural locations for their meetings explain the many rural allusions in the song. She was a "prince's daughter" with whom Solomon secretly met in the countryside. This to my mind is a more fulfilling explanation than the suggestion that the rural allusions mean she was a simple country peasant whom he had fallen in love with.

There is an undoubted connection between the record of Samson *catching* the *foxes* and using them to destroy *vineyards* (Jud. 15:4,5) and Song 2:15, where Solomon suggests that he and his girl go and catch the foxes that destroy the vineyards. This seems an allusion to Samson, although this Biblical allusion (as noted on :14) puts Solomon in a poor light, comparing him to the sexually out of control Samson, who was destroyed for his infatuation with Gentile women. Both Solomon and his Gentile girlfriend owned vineyards (Song 1:6; 8:11,12), and both were concerned that the fruit would not be damaged (Song 2:13,15; 6:11; 7:12). However, the implication from the allusion was also that in fact Solomon was in the position of the Philistines, worrying about the effect of Samson's foxes. See on Ecc. 7:26

Beloved

Song of Solomon 2:16 My beloved is mine, and I am his-
Solomon had at least 1000 women in his life and got involved with many of them at the start of his reign- it was her wishful thinking that he had eyes for her only, and those fears were expressed in her angry and aggressive comments to the "daughters of Jerusalem" whom she rightfully feared were her competitors- see on:7. As noted on :3 and :13, much of this relationship was based around being in love with an image of the other, in love with an expectation and imagination, an idealization of the other, rather than with the other as they really were. For all her self confidence and scheming, she is also presented as an utter fool in believing that she was really Solomon's "only one". The simple truth of true love is that the beloved is loved for who they are. We all struggle with this, and this is why we find it hard to believe that the Lord Jesus so loves me- despite seeing me as I am.

He browses among the lilies-
Lilies are representative of the girl's body in a sexual sense (Song 4:5; 7:3; 6:2). But "lilies" plural could mean that she here acknowledges that he is likely at this point sleeping with other "lilies", browsing amongst them. We noted in Song 1 that she fully accepts that others love Solomon. She has nightmares about the situation until in Song 8 she finally tells him to keep his "thousand" and she will keep her vineyard for herself, and they part in acrimony. This is all so psychologically credible. A woman falls in love

with a polygamist, believing his unique protestations of love for her- but can't maintain acceptance of that position.

Song of Solomon 2:17 Until the day is cool, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bether-
The coolness of the day is the evening. When "the shadows flee away" therefore, does not denote dispersion of the shades of night by the rising sun, but the disappearance of the shadows when the sun sets. She is asking him to finish browsing amongst other women (:16) and return to her that evening for sex. Or we could interpret that there is always the hint of secrecy, of spending the night together in secret and then running away at dawn. This heightened the sense of immediate attraction, but reflected how the relationship could never ultimately work. And her urging of him to just run away is to be understood in the context of her desire for Solomon to run away from the Jerusalem scene, and come with her to Egypt (see on :10,13; Song 1:4). There is no place known as "Bether". The word can mean "division" or according to some readings, "incense". She saw Jerusalem or Israel as surrounded by mountains, and she wants Solomon to leap over them with her and get away. And perhaps she has the idea of getting him to offer incense in such high places. He is out of step with this idea, instead asking her to jump over mountains and to him in Jerusalem (see on Song 4:8). Always the couple are presented as fundamentally out of step with each other. Or we can take Bether [Heb. *bater*] as meaning 'cleavage' and referring to her breasts, which she likens to 'mountains', as Solomon calls them in Song 4:5,6, just as she boasts of them as 'towers' in Song 8. She is hardly modest, and here again the allegorical approach breaks down.

CHAPTER 3

Song of Solomon 3:1 By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but I didn't find him-
The twice repeated theme of seeking but not finding is the language of condemnation. All the time we get hints in the language used that this Gentile woman is not of God at all, and is the pathway to condemnation. Just as Solomon had warned in Prov. 7. Having slept with him the night before (Song 2;16,17), she now has a nightmare about him having left her. And indeed this is absolutely psychologically likely. Her dream or nightmare reflected her deepest fears. The Hebrew means "nights" in the plural, as if this nightmare was a regular occurrence.

Song of Solomon 3:2 I will get up now, and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I will seek him whom my soul loves. I sought him, but I didn't find him-
Her dream reflects the way she **slipped out of the harem, dodging the guards / watchmen, and** walked the streets of Jerusalem whilst he was confined in the palace.

Her mother moved to Jerusalem from Egypt, but it wasn't possible for Solomon and her to easily be together in that house (Song 3:4; 8:2). Again [as noted on Song 2:14,15] we have an allusion to spiritual things, but out of context. Jeremiah on God's behalf ran through the streets and squares of Jerusalem to search for men who would love God in truth (Jer. 5:1). But she runs through the same streets and squares looking to turn a man away from God.

The language here recalls Solomon's own warning in Proverbs 7 about the Gentile prostitute who will lead the Israelite male astray: "her feet never stay at home;
now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks". She also says that "I have perfumed my bed
with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon"- the very things used by the Shulamite (Song 4:13,14).

Song of Solomon 3:3 The watchmen who go about the city found me; I asked, Have you seen him whom my soul loves?-

Her difficulty with "the watchmen" [also in 5:7] and their anger with her is understandable if she was in the "house of the women", guarded within the harem- and yet had escaped from it to have a tryst with the king for whom she was being prepared. No wonder she was in conflict with the "daughters of Jerusalem" within the harem. They were being prepared as Esther was to sleep with the king and for him to decide whether they would become one of his queens, or be sent to the house of the concubines. But during the preparation period, she was sneaking out and sleeping with the king.

Constantly she fears the opposition of the people of Jerusalem. Later in this chapter she has another nightmare of Solomon's kingly bed prepared not for her but for the daughters of Jerusalem, and protected by Israelite soldiers. The implication would be that Solomon's marriages to Gentile women were not popular with Israel, and this contributed to the resentment against Solomon at the end of his life (1 Kings 12:11). We note that although she comes over as forward and manipulative, she seems to love Solomon from her "soul" (also in :4), although that love was based upon being in love with an image of a man rather than reality, and was totally based upon externalities.

Song of Solomon 3:4 I had scarcely passed from them, when I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, into the room of her who conceived me-
She repeats this in Song 8:2 "I would have lead you into my mother's house". She expresses here her fantasy of getting Solomon to come to Egypt with her. Even in the time of David, when the Edomites were subdued, Pharaoh was very open to supporting the enemies of Israel: "Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen" (1 Kings

11:18,19). This is why Solomon's marriage to his daughter at the start of his reign, not so long after Hadad's establishment in Egypt, was foolhardy. At best it put his wife in an impossibly compromised position of conflicting loyalties, which we sense beginning even during their romance as recorded in the Song of Solomon. For there she so wishes that she and Solomon could live together in Egypt, and decide wholeheartedly for the sake of their romance to be Egyptians and live there in her homeland. Solomon had married Pharaoh's daughter, and so Hadad may have ended up related to Solomon by marriage. This would have put Solomon's wife in an impossible position of conflicted loyalties. That may be one reason Solomon moved her out of the palace area and built her a separate house. See further on 1 Kings 11:21 for Solomon's unwisdom in marrying into Pharaoh's family at this time.

Again we have to note that this is her fantasy, her dream: "I would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house". And dreams do speak of our inner deepest psychological longings. She would only be happy if she caught him and brought him to her mother's house in Egypt. This was her dream. We recall how Isaac brings his wife Rebekah into his mother's tent to consummate the marriage (Gen. 24:67). She did indeed 'catch' him as Solomon himself admitted, he was caught by her beauty. The Hebrew means that she 'laid hold of him' and wouldn't let him go- exactly as the bad woman in Proverbs whom Solomon had written of. Now, writing up this Song, Solomon is perceiving that this is what had happened to him. Her subconscious desire was to bring him to her family home back in Egypt. This was going to be an impossible romance, because Solomon was king of Israel- and his lover had a fantasy to bring him to her family home down in Egypt. And so many relationships start with this impossible conflict of positions.

There is some historical evidence that in Egypt, discussions about marriage were held in the mother's house. Her deepest psychological positions, as reflected in this dream, were that she would get Solomon away from his mother, who had warned him against women like her in Prov. 31, and into the house of her and not his mother. She says she will not let him go. Perhaps despite the break up of the relationship at the end of the book, they did in fact marry, and Solomon laments that her hands were as bands (Ecc. 7:26) and his relationship with her was a being caught in a net.

She was the fulfilment of what Solomon had written at the same time in Prov. 7:27: "Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the rooms of death". Solomon's wisdom was given to him as a young man, and the book of Proverbs appears to be collections of the various statements of that wisdom. But about the same time, he also got involved with multiple Gentile women who led him astray from God and to idolatry. And now in later life Solomon is writing up the story- for we must keep reminding ourselves that he was the author of this book, now understanding what was going on in her mind and putting those thoughts into her dream which he now describes and imputes to her. The very

warnings he gives against the adulteress and Gentile woman were ignored by him; he became the young man who went wrong with women. His girlfriend speaks in the very language of the Gentile woman of Proverbs: "I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house... into her chamber" (Song 3:4 AV). Compare this with "She caught him... come not near the door of her house... her house... the chambers of death" (Prov. 7:13,27; 5:8). We see here the warning for all time; that we can know God's ways in theory, whilst disobeying them in practice, absolutely to the letter. Indeed it may be so that the more we know them, the more strongly we are tempted by our nature to break them. As we mature spiritually, drawing ever closer to the Kingdom, the stakes as it were rise.

Yet Solomon was aware, at least theoretically, of the foolish path he was going down. God had inspired him with the wisdom of Prov. 2:16,17, which warned that wisdom would save a man from the Gentile woman who made a covenant with the God of Israel in her youth (in order to marry an Israelite, by implication), but soon forgot it. This was exactly the case of Solomon; yet he just couldn't see the personal relevance of his own wisdom to himself. Solomon could write of the folly of the ruler who oppressed the poor (Prov. 22:16)- and yet do just that very thing. The Proverbs so frequently refer to the dangers of the house of the Gentile woman; yet the Song shows the Egyptian girl dearly wishing that Solomon would come with her into her house. And Solomon, just like the foolish young man he wrote about, went right ahead down the road to spiritual disaster he so often warned others about. He warns the young man of the dangers of the Egyptian woman who perfumes her bed with myrrh (Prov. 7:16,17)- and then falls for just such a woman (Ps. 45:8). This woman he warns of appears to want to serve Yahweh, and presents herself in the very language of the tabernacle (Prov. 7:14,16,17). And yet Solomon goes and falls for just such a woman. One can only conclude that the more true spiritual knowledge we have, the more prone we are to do the very opposite.

Song of Solomon 3:5 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and the hinds of the field, that you not stir up, nor stimulate love, until he so desires-
An oath was typically taken in the name of God in Israel (Dt. 6:13; Josh. 9:18; 2 Chron. 15:14). But again, this woman is portrayed as lacking any spirituality or relationship with God. She seems terrified that the daughters of Jerusalem would sexually attract Solomon, and this fear leads to her further nightmare which follows. Yet it has been argued that 'do not stir up love' means effectively “Do not disturb our lovemaking”; hence TEV "Don't interrupt us now!".

Song of Solomon 3:6 Who is this who comes up from the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all spices of the merchant?-

Again the imagery of pillars of smoke coming from the desert towards Jerusalem (:1) is the prophetic image for judgment coming. There is always the hint that this relationship leads to condemnation. The spices brought by merchants connect with the merchant trading of Solomon which resulted in these things being brought to him. Clearly this is Solomon in all his God given glory.

The Hebrew is 'Whose [feminine, 'for whom'] is this…?', enquiring for whom is this carriage paved with love. The speaker here could be the daughters of Jerusalem or a narrator. The language of perfume confirms that a female figure is in view, emerging from the desert. The spices or "powders of the merchant" speaks of the women in the harem who had been prepared with powders. It is… another woman, or in fact women, who are coming to marry Solomon. I suggest these words are the teasing of the daughters of Jerusalem. It is part of the beloved's dream, or nightmare. She dreams that she sees Solomon's marriage procession… but not for her, but, for the daughters of Jerusalem. This was her deepest fear, expressed in her dream, that actually Solomon would marry other women. Yet in chapter 1 we read of her fully acceptant, so she thinks, that she is going to be one of a number of wives. But her deepest fear is now revealed as being that he would marry other women.

Solomon's procession is described as approaching from a distance, initially just dust clouds on the horizon, with premonitions of danger- thanks to the mention of the soldiers guarding it. But getting closer the details become apparent. And the description climaxes in the statement that the marriage litter is paved with love… for… the daughters of Jerusalem! The whole scene speaks of how the Shulamite progressively comes to understand that Solomon is in fact also in love with the daughters of Jerusalem and will marry them too. Only in Song 8 do we see the Shulamite facing reality and walking out of the relationship, with the daughters of Jerusalem jeering her. They jeer her with the same question “Who is this coming up from the wilderness?” (Song 8:5).

Song of Solomon 3:7 Behold, it is Solomon’s carriage! Sixty mighty men are around it, of the mighty men of Israel-
AV "Behold his bed, which is Solomon’s!". She knows his bed, she has slept with him on it… and here, in her nightmare and the kaleidoscope of images which dreams have, she sees it again… protected by the harem guards, prepared for other women. "Carriage" is also "bed". She has been having a secret open air tryst with Solomon on a bed made from leaves under a bower of tree branches. And now she sees with some shock (:6,7) a kingly bed coming toward her… but not for her to sleep with him in. It is for the daughters of Jerusalem (:10)! This continues her vision of fear which she has on her bed at night (:1). The relationship is full of such distrust and fear that the daughters of Jerusalem will finally get Solomon, and she will not.

Song of Solomon 3:8 They all handle the sword, and are expert in war. Every man has his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night-
This nightmare (:1) of Solomon's bed advancing as a carriage [hence the confusion in the translations between "bed" and "carriage"] was guarded by Israel's best soldiers. They feared something might happen at night; and at night she had slept with Solomon and they had parted from each other at dawn (Song 2:17). Her nightmare reflects her deepest fears; that the men of Israel were against her relationship with Solomon, and fiercely guarded his kingly bed for the daughters of Jerusalem, and intended to keep her away from it. These men are another form of the night watchmen patrolling Jerusalem at night, whom she imagines had caught her.

Dreams are a kaleidoscope of images. She has just dreamt of the watchmen around the harem walls catching her (:3). And now she sees them guarding Solomon's bed and the women he is going to marry in this wedding. The whole thing is a dreamscape, constructed by Solomon the author, as an insight into the mind of his ex. And he was likely not far wrong.

Song of Solomon 3:9 King Solomon made himself a carriage of the wood of Lebanon-
"Carriage" can also be "bed" as AV. The Egyptian word here used suggests that Solomon really had a relationship with this woman and spoke to her in terms she understood. This failed, illicit romance really happened. For these are the thoughts of the girl in her nightmare (:1). Solomon "made himself" many things (Ecc. 2:4-8). That he had made his own wedding bed is therefore unsurprising. The Shulamite had earlier fantasized of Solomon building a house for her from the wood of Lebanon (Song 1:16). Now she realizes, with shock ['Who is this coming to a wedding... it's Solomon!'], that he had built something of wood from Lebanon for her rivals, the daughters of Jerusalem.

Song of Solomon 3:10 He made its pillars of silver, its bottom of gold, its seat of purple, its midst being paved with love-
Typical of dreams, she sees the bed-in-a-carriage in great detail. "Bottom" can be "canopy", and "seat" can be "cushions"; the silver pillars hold up a canopy over the bed. Solomon's half brother Absalom had slept with David's wives beneath such a canopy, and so the Shulamite in her nightmare is imagining Solomon being prepared for sex with the women he is marrying, in a public way. "He made..." pillars with silver, gold and purple recalls the language of how Solomon made the temple (1 Kings 7:6-8). He admits in Ecc. 2 that he loved making things. His apparent zeal for building the temple was really just an expression of his own native temperament and character type, rather than particular love for God's work. And we must analyze our own service of God to see if we aren't doing the same thing, just serving Him in ways which are convenient and

reinforce our own native personality type. Such service is not the service of sacrifice and carrying a cross which is required.

The bed is described in the language of the tabernacle; made of wood, but covered with gold and surrounded by silver pillars, with a mercy seat of purple (3:9,10 Heb.). He persuaded himself that his marriage to this woman was some kind of expression of spirituality. The bed was made from cedar brought from Lebanon- and yet the same wood was used for the temple (Song 3:9). Such was his dualism. The Song is shot through with allusion to the Law and tabernacle rituals; he speaks of making her borders on her clothes (Song 1:11), probably alluding to the borders of blue to be worn by the faithful Israelite. Solomon wanted her to be a spiritual woman, and he was going to make her one; many a preacher, teacher, husband, wife, father, mother, child, boyfriend has had to learn the impossibility of this. He wanted to see her as a spiritual woman, and eventually he became persuaded that she was just this.

For the daughters of Jerusalem-
The plural "daughters" would suggest Solomon's wedding was in fact to several women at once. Those accepted as "wives" would have been married a few at a time and that is what's described here. I suggested on :7 that this is a nightmare she has on her bed (:1), having slept with Solomon on a bed of leaves in the open air. Now she imagines him having made a luxurious bed… but not for her. For the daughters of Jerusalem, her rivals! There is always the tension with the daughters of Jerusalem, who can be understood as Solomon's Jewish wives, or those who were his Jewish harem. In Song 2 she wants to bring him into her mother's bedroom in Egypt, but this is contrasted in the next Song with Solomon's bed in Jerusalem, prepared for the "daughters of Jerusalem" (3:4,10) whom he should have married. Then, with this bed in the background, he tells her how he especially loves *her* (Song 4:1), trying to persuade her that her fears have no basis in reality.

Song of Solomon 3:11 Go forth, you daughters of Zion, and see king Solomon, with the crown with which his mother has crowned him in the day of his weddings, in the day of the gladness of his heart-
In Prov. 31 Bathsheba lays the law down with him about his girlfriends, about not marrying Gentiles, and about not drinking, yet here we see Bathsheba with all her motherly pride crowning Solomon on the day of engagement to his wives. Note the plural "weddings". Like David, Bathsheba taught Solomon the principles with great enthusiasm, but she allowed parental pride to make her dismiss the possibility that her son was seriously going astray. But in this nightmare, the Egyptian

girl imagines Bathsheba approving Solomon's marriages to the daughters of Zion / Jerusalem

Or perhaps here we have the girl sarcastically commenting to the Jerusalem girls: “Go forth, O you daughters of Jerusalem, and behold king Solomon”, and goes on to mock the crown his mother Bathsheba had made for him, wishing instead that he would be under the influence of *her* mother (Song 3:11,4). Her sarcasm turns to angry defence at times, e.g. when she warns the Jerusalem girls not to stir up “my love” (Song of Solomon 2:7)- i.e. ‘Hands off my Solomon!’. In turn, they ask her where Solomon has “turned aside” so that they can come and seek him with her (Song of Solomon 6:1), using a word elsewhere associated with ‘turning aside’ in apostasy to other gods. They in their turn sarcastically comment to her: “Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women... that we may seek him with thee?” (Song of Solomon 6:1), quoting Solomon’s terms of endearment back to her.

"Weddings" [LXX "espousals"] stands out as a plural. The picture [perhaps, the nightmare of the Shulamite] is of Solomon marrying or getting engaged to many women at once, apparently with his mother's approval. These wives were apparently the daughters of Jerusalem, for the litter is paved with love for them (:10). All this was a nightmare experience for the Egyptian bride... Her worst nightmare was that Solomon would in the end prefer the local women to herself. Hence her desire to make him love the things of Egypt...

Again we see the kaleidoscope of images typical of dreams. She has fantasized of bringing Solomon down to *her* mother's house in Egypt; now she sees [in her nightmare] *his* mother crowning him with a wedding crown as he marries other women in a mass wedding.

CHAPTER 4

Song of Solomon 4:1

Lover
Behold, you are beautiful, my love. Behold, you are beautiful. Your eyes are doves behind your veil-
Although :1-7 are Solomon praising the Shulamite, there is still the possibility that these are her fantasies- imagining him praising her. It has been observed that such praising of bride and groom by each other was common in high profile weddings at the time; the parties sung or recited a *wasf* praising the beauty of the bride or groom. This still happens in some cultures today, notably Persian culture. So we must entertain the

possibility that this is still the woman imagining Solomon praising her, reassuring herself of his love for her after the nightmare of Song 3.

Parts of the Song are very sexually explicit once the fairly obvious allusions are figured out. He's describing the vaginal lips of his girlfriend, his intended spouse (Song 4:1,3,8 etc.); and he has seen "behind your veil", the symbol of her virginity. And yet he glorifies all this in his song. Quite clearly, Solomon was guilty of fornication with the one whom he wished to marry, although the ending of the Song seems to imply the relationship somehow broke up. And this was all right at the beginning of his reign. He seems to have assumed that if *he* thought his behaviour was OK, then it was. It's rather like how he declared the middle court to be "holy" and a kind of extended altar (2 Chron. 7:7)- he doesn't ask God if God would sanctify it, he just decides what is holy and what isn't- Solomon played God, and it led him into sin and loss of faith in God.

I noted on Song 1:1 that the Shulamite acts as a prostitute, and there are many connections between her and the bad woman of Proverbs who is a prostitute. Prostitutes wore veils (as Tamar in Gen. 38:14,15, and this is the sense of Song 1:7 ISV "Why should I be considered a veiled woman beside the flocks of your companions?"). Solomon's lover wears a veil (Song 4:1,3; 6:7) which the watchmen angrily pull off her to expose her for who she is (Song 5:7). The Shulamite acts like a very forward woman, if not a prostitute, and her veil may suggest that.

Solomon's various descriptions of the Shulamite throughout the Song paint her in the very language used to describe the "Daughters of Zion/ Jerusalem" in Is. 3:18-23: "The Lord will take away from the daughters of Jerusalem everything they are so proud of—the ornaments they wear on their ankles, on their heads, on their necks... their veils... the rings they wear on their fingers and in their noses; all their fine robes, gowns, cloaks... their revealing garments, their linen handkerchiefs, and the scarves and long veils they wear on their heads. Instead of using perfumes, they will stink... instead of having beautiful hair, they will be bald; instead of fine clothes, they will be dressed in rags; their beauty will be turned to shame!". We notice that their veils are twice mentioned; and the Shulamite's revealing veil is likewise twice observed by Solomon. Likewise her perfumes are often mentioned, just as they are in the description of the daughters of Jerusalem in Is. 3. Clearly the Shulamite has been prepared in the harem just as the daughters of Jerusalem. The clear parallels between them show that she was in one sense, one of them. Although a darker skinned foreigner and "prince's daughter" from another land. We are hereby confirmed in understanding her as a member of the harem of "daughters of Jerusalem" being prepared for their night with Solomon which would decide whether they would become a queen or be rejected to the status of concubine.

Your hair is as a flock of goats, that descend from Mount Gilead-

Weddings and pre-wedding celebrations typically featured the bridegroom praising the bride or writing a poem about her beauty. That is what we have here. "Budde says mount Gilead is the S. portion of the range called now the Belqa, which is mostly pasture land. It lies within view of Judah and Jerusalem". She has her hair down, a sign she was sexually available. Time and again the imagery of the song is distinctly sexually selective and without appropriate modesty in the contemporary culture. And Solomon clearly likes it. Throughout the Song, Solomon describes her in Jewish terms, he likens her to many well-known places in Israel: the Heshbon fish pools, the tower of Lebanon etc., seeing the way her hair draped over her breasts as reminiscent of how Mount Gilead looked (Song 4:1,4). He wanted to see her as an Israelite girl, and so that was how she appeared to him. She even uses similar language in praise of him (Song 1:14).

Song of Solomon 4:2 Your teeth are like a newly shorn flock, which have come up from the washing, where every one of them has twins. None is bereaved among them-
Without dental science, missing teeth would have been common in those days, even in youth. But she apparently had none missing. Here and :3 "your mouth is lovely" suggests they had already been involved in deep kissing.

Song of Solomon 4:3 Your lips are like scarlet thread. Your mouth is lovely. Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind your veil-
When Solomon describes her painted lips as being like a thread of scarlet, he uses two Hebrew words which only occur together in Josh. 2:18, describing how the Gentile harlot Rahab hung the scarlet thread outside her home in order to bring about the salvation of her mother and her family. The people of Jericho may well have understood this scarlet thread or rope as a sign of prostitution. Solomon wanted to justify his Egyptian girlfriend by comparing her to Gentile Rahab. And such sophistry goes on at the beginning of every relationship that leads to a marriage out of the Faith.

Song of Solomon 4:4 Your neck is like David's tower built for an armoury, whereon a thousand shields hang, all the shields of the mighty men-
Solomon had made shields of gold which he hung for display on a tower (1 Kings 10:16,17). The idea is that David's tower was built in terraces, and this is how her neck appeared, with her ornaments hanging on the string of her necklace likened to shields. Solomon may be alluding to his 1000 other wives; he is trying to convince her that she is better than them all. She loves him because of his ointment, and he loves her because of her jewellery (Song of Solomon 1:2,3,10; 4:4). It's all very human and carnal, based upon the external and not the internal. But this is what Solomon was like. He sees wisdom, even in Proverbs and certainly in Ecclesiastes, as only helpful in that it gives a person a good name and image in this life.

"David's tower" is "The tower of the flock, the stronghold of Zion" (Mic. 4:8), the tower from which David surveyed the flock of his people (the tower by the king's high house of Neh. 3:25). It was the practice of the time to hang shields upon such towers (as in Ez. 27:11), and David sees her neck and coins upon it as like his tower.

Egyptian women wore their dowry coins on their necks, and long necks were thought to be sexual. If she has her dowry displayed like that, she was betrothed to another man. Just as she opens the Song by saying that she has not kept her own vineyard, and her brothers were angry with her because of it. She struts her immorality. But Solomon finds this sexually attractive.

Song of Solomon 4:5 Your two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe, which feed among the lilies-
In verses 1 and 3 Solomon has mentioned her veil, but clearly the rest of her body is exposed, quite possibly she is naked apart from her veil. In this case, the veil is being used as sexualized clothing rather than as any form of modesty and screening of the female body from male view. We see again how spiritual things are being subverted for carnal, sexual pleasure.

Breasts as twins means Solomon considered them, after much observation, to be perfectly identical- apparently something he found attractive. Clearly he had at this point explored her naked body, although not married to her. "The lilies" is likewise a sexual allusion; see on Song 2:16. He was ravished with this Egyptian girl, especially with her breasts (Song 4:5; 7:3). Yet at the same time he could confidently exhort in Prov. 5:18-20 AV: "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe (Song of Solomon language); let her breasts satisfy thee... be thou ravished always with her love... And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange (i.e. Gentile) woman?". How, indeed? But 999 women later, it was a different story for Solomon. Solomon writes in Prov. 5:18-20 as if it is of course unthinkable that he should have been ravished by a Gentile woman; but he had been. Beyond mere hypocrisy, this reveals how Solomon saw himself as somehow beyond his own wisdom and a free moral agent. This is a common temptation for those who think that mere possession of God's truth will somehow of itself justify them.

Song of Solomon 4:6 Until the day is cool, and the shadows flee away, I will go to the mountain of myrrh, to the hill of frankincense-
The myrrh and frankincense were being used as aphrodisiacs, which had their desired effect upon Solomon (:16). And yet they are the language of the temple sacrifices. At the very time Solomon was building the temple and establishing the temple cult, he was using the very same items in his illicit relationship with this Egyptian woman. The mountain and hill are parallel with her breasts (:5), and Solomon promises to make love to her all night "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away".

Song of Solomon 4:7 You are all beautiful, my love. There is no spot in you-
This last phrase is alluded to in the New Testament concerning the spotless nature of the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:27). But upon this has been built the quite unsustainable position that the entire Song is an allegory of the relationship between Christ and His bride. This is simply not sustainable; the sexual allusions, and the final breakup of the relationship after the unsatisfactory tensions between the two of them all shout out against such an approach. The New Testament quotes the Old Testament in the style of its day; whereby words or verses from scripture were applied out of context to situations. It is simply not true that every New Testament quotation of the Old reveals that the surrounding context of the quotation is also relevant to the New Testament context. Going through all the quotations and allusions, it is obvious that this is just not the case. And it seems to me that this idea that the Song is an allegory is a desperate attempt to whitewash Solomon, despite the clear Biblical condemnations of him.

As he sees her as so entirely beautiful, so she sees him (Song 4:7; 5:16). This mutuality of praise is indeed part of the "in love" period. But it was all a matter of external observation of each other, and because of that, the relationship fell apart.

"No spot" is the language of the sacrifices which were to be "without blemish". Perhaps Solomon hints that she is acceptable to God- but that was only his judgment and not God's.

Song of Solomon 4:8 Come with me from Lebanon, my bride, with me from Lebanon. Look from the top of Amana, from the top of Senir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards-
The Song is largely a dreamscape, and invitations to come here or go there cannot be taken literally. This reference to Lebanon must be seen in the context of how the Song describes the entire land of Israel, over which the Shulamite was to become queen. From Damascus and mount Lebanon in the north to En Gedi in the south, and from Gilead and Heshbon of Moab in the east to Mount Carmel in the west (Song 1:14; 4:1,8; 6:5; 7:5,6).

The Song has several references to Solomon and the woman as it were leaping around the country of Israel. This is not to be taken literally, it is part of the dreamscape. She dreams of Solomon giving her an aerial view of Israel, dancing upon its highest mountain peaks, looking down upon what was to become her land if she married Solomon. Doubtless her father Pharaoh had this intention in mind as an outcome of the marriage. So it is out of context to insist that "Come with me from Lebanon" implies the girl was in Lebanon literally. Solomon is saying he will take the girl out from the mountain dens of lions and leopards which seem so inaccessible; perhaps implying

that although it may seem impossible for her to get out of the inaccessible harem, he will all the same magically get her out.

These northern mountain ranges, forming the northern border of the land, were famed for their inaccessibility. Perhaps the idea is that although so much was against their relationship, Solomon vows to somehow get her from the most inaccessible point… into his kingly bed in Jerusalem. This is perhaps his answer to her desire that he be like a mountain deer, and jump over the mountains of division, out of Jerusalem and back with her to Egypt (see on Song 2:17).

Or we can understand that Solomon takes her on a tour of Israel, enthusing about the sights, speaking of them as the things of "*our* land" (Song of Solomon 2:10-13). He wanted her to be an Israelite, and he spoke to her as if she was, assuming that he could psychologically and spiritually dominate her so that he could have a little of both- his own carnal fulfilment coupled with spiritual satisfaction. How many times has this been worked out in the experience of a spiritual brother enthusing about the beauty of the Truth and spiritual Israel to an Egyptian girl, who only superficially shares his enthusiasm, longing in her heart to have him with her in Egypt.

Song of Solomon 4:9 You have ravished my heart, my sister, my bride-
Even though her heart was far away in Egypt, she described herself in Jewish terms because that was how he saw her; he calls her his "sister", as if she was actually Jewish- whereas she wanted him to be her Egyptian “brother”. The relationship was doomed from the start. We note that "sister" is a term of endearment used in Egyptian love poetry. Solomon clearly was well versed in the thinking and language of Egypt. Everything points to him being spiritually rotten from his youth.

The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. He warned the typical young man about being captivated by the eyelids of the Gentile woman (Prov. 6:25); yet it was the eyes of Miss Egypt that he openly admitted stole his heart (Song 4:9; 6:5).

You have ravished my heart with one of your eyes, with one chain of your neck-
In Prov. 25:11,12, especially in the LXX, Solomon likens wise words to beautiful jewellery and necklaces; they are (LXX) set "in a necklace of sardius". But Solomon was blown away by the jewellery of his illicit Gentile girlfriend; he looked on the external, rather than on the internal, despite teaching the value and beauty of the internal. "The necklace you are wearing has stolen my heart" (Song 4:9 GNB). And indeed gentile women did steal his heart away from Yahweh.

The general contrast with Solomon's warnings is marked. Thus Prov. 5:19 "A loving doe and a graceful deer- let her breasts satisfy you at all times. Be captivated always with

her love". The idea is "don't be ravished with the breasts of a Gentile and don't have many wives; be content with your first wife". But Solomon was (Song 4:9; 7:3), and he had many wives; he totally refused to see the personal relevance of the truth and wisdom he taught.

Despite his ravishment with Pharaoh's daughter as outlined in the Song, she never fulfilled him; indeed, none of his women did. In the Song he speaks of how he was ravished with this Egyptian girl, especially with her breasts (Song 2:7; 3:5; 4:9; 8:14). Alluding to this he could confidently exhort in Prov. 5:18-20 AV: "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe (Song of Solomon language); let her breasts satisfy thee... be thou ravished always with her love... And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange (i.e. Gentile) woman?". How, indeed? But 999 women later, it was a different story for Solomon. Solomon writes in Prov. 5:18-20 as if it is of course unthinkable that he should have been ravished by a Gentile woman; but he had been. He spoke to others with absolutely no thought as to whether his words had an application to himself. Effectively he was kidding himself, on a deeply internal level, that he hadn't married out of the faith. The obviousness of all this is in order to drum the warning home to us. How tragic that Solomon should go on to comment that such a person would die for want of instruction (Prov. 5:23). Solomon had all the instruction he could wish for; but he didn't allow it to really sink home one little bit. He hit out on the search for an ultimately satisfying woman, but out of the 1000 he had he never found one (Ecc. 7:28), even when he sat down and analyzed each of them. And even politically, his marriages with all those Gentile women didn't seem to achieve him the support he desired from their home countries; Egypt gave refuge to Jeroboam, Solomon's main rival (1 Kings 11:40), even though he always acquiesced to his wives and even in his very old age he still didn't destroy the idol temples he built for them (2 Kings 23:13).

Song of Solomon 4:10 How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much better is your love than wine! The fragrance of your perfumes than all kinds of spices!-
His praise of her is her praise of him in Song 1:2,3. There is a mutuality in the falling in love process, and we see it clearly expressed here. The whole document has every indication that it is indeed a real, historical description of an actual relationship Solomon had.

Here Solomon does the very opposite of what he says in Prov. 27:16; for here he also uses the word for "oil" or "perfumes" about the perfume of his illicit Gentile girlfriend, which he found so attractive. Yet in Prov. 27:16 he warns that a bad woman has such oil; but he falls for her. He utterly failed to personalize his wisdom, it flowed through his

mouth and mind without taking any personal lodgment within him. And we must be warned by this ability of human nature.

"Spices" occur often in the Song (Song 4:10,14,16; 5:13; 6:2 and see on Song 8:14). The same word is used in Esther 2:10 of how the virgins in the house of the women, awaiting their night with the king, were prepared with "spices".

Song of Solomon 4:11 Your lips, my bride, drip like the honeycomb. Honey and milk are under your tongue. The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon-
The strange woman has words like a honeycomb (Prov. 5:3); the same words are used: "The lips of the strange [Gentile] woman drop honey". And this is exactly how Solomon found his woman's words (Song 4:11). He refused his own wisdom of Prov. 7:21: "With the flattering her lips, she seduced him". Solomon in Prov. 7:5 argues as if mere intellectual assent to the truths he was teaching would keep a man safe from sexual temptation and the flattery of bad women. But Solomon himself possessed all this truth and failed miserably in this area. The Hebrew literally refers to the smoothness of her lips; and Solomon admired the smoothness of the lips of his illicit Gentile girlfriend (s.w. Song 4:3,11; 7:9). Again we see Solomon doing the exact opposite of the wisdom and theoretical truth he was blessed with.

Song of Solomon 4:12 A locked up garden is my sister, my bride-
I discussed on Song 1:6 how these figures of being closed up may mean she was so far closed to Solomon, but not a virgin. And yet he has in the previous verses been talking of sex with her and she appears to be naked before him as he praises her. So he may be rejoicing that she is a closed garden to every other man apart from himself- when he himself was a polygamist.

AV "my sister, my spouse". Solomon's assumption that he was Messiah, the promised seed of David, presumably led him to assume that he was likewise the promised seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. No less that four times he calls his Egyptian girlfriend "my sister, my spouse" (Song 4:9,10,12; 5:1). This repeated emphasis seems to me to be an allusion to the way in which the patriarchs called their wives their sisters (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11). And yet clearly enough, these incidents were lapses of faith for which they were rebuked. Yet Solomon didn't want to see it like that; they did it, therefore he could. David his father had horses and many wives; therefore he could. His sense of morality, of right and wrong, was controlled by the precedents set by his worthy ancestors. And so often we see this in supposedly Christian lives- the weak elements of our fathers we tend to feel are perfectly acceptable for us too. We do just what Paul says we should not do- we compare ourselves amongst and against ourselves, rather than against the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 10:12).

A locked up spring, a sealed fountain-
The imagery of water, well and cistern in a sexual context is found on Solomon's lips in Prov. 5:15,18 about the ideal, spiritually minded, Hebrew wife. He likens her both to the wicked Gentile woman of Prov. 7 and also to the idea Hebrew woman of Prov. 5. He wants to see in her a little of both; and that desire for a little of both was his destruction. Just as he calls her his "sister", counting her as a Hebrew when she clearly was not. Having written all that, he now uses these terms about his illicit Gentile girlfriend. Solomon saw her as a “paradise”, a garden with rivers and exotic fruits, surrounded by a wall- exactly the language of Eden. And she was a fount of “living waters” (Song 4:12,13,15 RVmg.), the language of Messiah. He saw her as the Kingdom / Eden personified. And yet her response to being described in this way is inappropriate- for she invites him to come and eat the fruit of the garden (4:16), exactly after the pattern of Eve destroying Adam. Yet Solomon didn’t want to see this connection; she was the Kingdom to him, just as so many have felt that having their new partner means that *nothing*, not even the Kingdom, is meaningful any more. Although he had slept with her, he considers her locked up and sealed. Again we see how Solomon was in love with an image of this woman which he had in his own mind, and which just didn't correspond to reality.

Song of Solomon 4:13 Your shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with precious fruits: henna with spikenard plants-
The non Hebrew word here used for "orchard" suggests that Solomon really had a relationship with this woman and spoke to her in terms she understood. This failed, illicit romance really happened. Her "shoots" and "fruits" are clearly allusions to her sexuality.

Song of Solomon 4:14 spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree; myrrh and aloes, with all the best spices-
He presents her as the garden of Eden. And yet he totally fails to take the allusion further, and perceive that by breaking divine law in 'eating' of her in sex, he was setting himself up for a catastrophic fall which would affect not only him but all Israel. The spices of Song 4:13,14 which the Shulamite uses in her perfumes are largely not native to Israel. Again we have the impression of a wealthy foreign princess. Such spices had to be imported by Solomon (1 Kings 10:10). But they are listed together with the fruit of the "incense tree" (Song 4:13), and incense usually has connotations of idolatry. She smelt like pagan incense- and Solomon loved it. Solomon's wives offered pagan incense to their gods (1 Kings 11:8 "his foreign wives, who burnt incense and sacrificed to their gods"). See on "nard" Song 1:12.

Song of Solomon 4:15 a fountain of gardens, a spring of living waters, flowing streams from Lebanon-
It seems likely that Solomon wrote down his inspired Proverbs (a result of the wisdom God gave him) and the Song about the same time. In Proverbs he uses the figure of a well of living water to describe spiritual words and thinking (Prov. 10:11; 13:14; 14:27; 16:22). Yet this is the very figure which he uses concerning his worldly bride (Song of Solomon 4:15). He wanted to see her how she wasn't. He sees her as the garden of Eden, and yet 'eats' in her in defiance of Divine law.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 4:16 Awake, north wind; and come, you south! Blow on my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and taste his precious fruits-
This is an open invitation to Solomon to have sex with her. She sees herself as a living aphrodisiac. She doesn't wish to be a closed garden to him (:14). She is the very fulfilment of the bad Gentile woman of Prov. 7, and yet Solomon refuses to see the connections. He was the young man being led astray, and down to the grave by this woman. She likens her body to her garden which she says is now his; and this is the backdrop for her final statements at the end of the Song that her vineyard is now hers alone, Solomon can have 1000 [women], but her vineyard is now hers and closed to him. This abrupt ending of the Song is surely enough evidence that this is not at all a 'romance for eternity' nor an allegory of the love of Christ and the church.

CHAPTER 5

Song of Solomon 5:1

Lover
I have come into my garden-
As noted on Song 4:16, this clearly means that he accepted her invitation to sleep with her. The garden is the girl, as made clear in Song 4:15 where he calls her a garden with fountains in it, and she responds by asking him to enter the garden and eat from it. His entry into her is therefore undoubtedly an allusion to sexual entry into her, even though they are unmarried. They have sex before marriage and the whole thing is so sensual and carnal- a major difficult for the allegorical, "Christ and the church" approach.

My sister, my bride-
AV "my sister, my spouse". Solomon's assumption that he was Messiah, the promised seed of David, presumably led him to assume that he was likewise the promised seed of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. No less that four times he calls his Egyptian girlfriend "my sister, my spouse" (Song 4:9,10,12; 5:1). This repeated emphasis seems to me to be an allusion to the way in which the patriarchs called their wives their sisters (Gen. 12:10-20; 20:1-18; 26:6-11). And yet clearly enough, these incidents were lapses of faith for which they were rebuked. Yet Solomon didn't want to see it like that; they did it, therefore he could. David his father had horses and many wives; therefore he could. His sense of morality, of right and wrong, was controlled by the precedents set by his worthy ancestors. And so often we see this in supposedly Christian lives- the weak elements of our fathers we tend to feel are perfectly acceptable for us too. We do just what Paul says we should not do- we compare ourselves amongst and against ourselves, rather than against the Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 10:12).

The idea of a wife who is also a sister is one of many allusions in the Song to Adam and Eve in Eden. He sees her as Eve and she invites him to eat her fruit, which he eagerly does. He wants a little of both, the blessings of Eden and also the forbidden fruit.

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, beloved-
The idea may be that they hear some voice urging them as friends and lovers to feast and get drunk on love. For clearly Solomon has entered the closed garden of the previous verses, and they are having sex.

The invitation to drink abundantly is yet another indication of an inappropriate liking of wine in the Song. "Beloved" is plural in: "Eat, friends! Drink, yes, drink abundantly, beloved". Friends and lovers are being invited to also eat and drink as Solomon has just done. Perhaps this phrase is a voice which comes to the Shulamite in her nightmare; at this voice, she awakes (:2) and recounts her nightmare. After Solomon congratulates himself on sex with her, she hears a voice that invites other lovers to do likewise. In this we see the voice of her inner complex about the fact that Solomon is a polygamist and in fact has sex with other women apart from her.

Song of Solomon 5:2 Beloved
I was asleep, but my heart was awake-
After the sex of :1, she again has a nightmare that he has left her, as she does in chapter 3. This is true to life; it is psychologically inevitable that a woman in her situation, with so many reasons to fear she will lose him, will have such nightmares. And her dream reflects her own complex about sex. Solomon has knocked on her closed door, and she hasn't opened to him. She fears that he wanted sex but she didn't give it to him. She fears that she had somehow failed him in the sex they just had (see on :1).

It is the voice of my beloved who knocks-
See on :12 for "dove". At the same time as Solomon was having this romance, at the start of his reign, he was writing up his Proverbs; including Prov. 8:34: "Blessed is the

man who hears me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my door posts". This may be an intentional contrast with the bad woman of Prov. 7, who tempts men to furtively enter the doors and gates of her house at night. And Solomon failed in this; for the Song of Solomon speaks of the "gates" of his illicit Gentile girlfriend (Song 7:13), outside which Solomon waited secretly at night (Song 5:2,4). He does precisely what he condemns and warns others against. He failed to personalize wisdom, apparently thinking that mere possession of such Divine truths was enough to justify him, regardless of personal behaviour.

Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my hair with the dampness of the night-
She imagines that he calls her "my undefiled", ignoring the fact she had admitted to not keeping her own vineyard / virginity. He sees her as "undefiled" even though he has just slept with her and she is no longer a closed garden (Song 4:16; 5;1). They both create images of each other which are simply not true to reality, and fall in love with those images rather than reality. In the dream, Solomon has been out all night. We continue to get the impression of the secret, illicit nature of their relationship, unable to be seen in public together (Song 8:1).

Song of Solomon 5:3 I have taken off my robe. Indeed, must I put it on? I have washed my feet. Indeed, must I defile them?-
She is asleep and doesn't want to go and open the door immediately, because she has no attractive robe on, and by walking over the dirt floor to the door, her feet would become dirty. She is aware that Solomon's praise of her has often been of her external adornment with jewellery and clothing, and she fears to be seen by him without them. This is typical of the whole nature of their relationship.

Song of Solomon 5:4 My beloved thrust his hand in through the latch opening. My heart pounded for him-
He apparently spoke or called to her at this time (:6) but she made no response because she was obsessed with putting on her make up. It was this focus upon externalities which cost her the relationship at that point. Her nightmare reveals the inner truth of the situation and relationship, which unconsciously she recognized. The language of Solomon thrusting in his hand through a keyhole is clearly sexual. She imagines him fingering her and her body responding as in :5. But she feels she hasn't responded to this as she should have done and therefore he had left her. In her nightmare, she is feeling guilt over sexual inadequacy.

Song of Solomon 5:5 I rose up to open for my beloved. My hands dripped with myrrh, my fingers with liquid myrrh, on the handles of the lock-

The scene is true to psychological reality. She fears being seen by him without her attractive clothing and makeup on; but then her love for him gets the better of her. She has begun painting herself with myrrh, but with the liquid still dripping off her fingers, she goes to the door and fumbles with the lock with her slippery fingers. But it is too late. He's gone (:6). The whole scene looks forward to the New Testament pictures of the unworthy not opening immediately to the Lord Jesus when He knocks on their door at His return. Like the foolish virgins, they want time to prepare, rather than trusting in His love and realizing that no amount of external religious preparation can qualify them for Him. Although I deny that the Song is an allegory of Christ and His bride, at this point I would say that this particular scene is indeed used as a parabolic representation of the reaction of the unworthy to the Lord's return. Unless we respond to His coming immediately, then we will not find Him (Lk. 12:36). The immediacy of our response will be a function of our faith in His love for us, and our love for Him- as well as our understanding that we cannot make ourselves acceptable to Him by mere external appearance and cosmetic adornment.

Song of Solomon 5:6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had left-
Presumably because he feared being spotted by the night watchmen on patrol. We get the impression a curfew was in place in the city. There is always the sense of fear that they would be caught together (Song 8:1). See on :5. R.V. "My soul had failed me when he spake". This situation is made sense of by understanding she was in the house of the women, being prepared to meet Solomon, when he was meeting her secretly and already sleeping with her. He was indeed obsessed with her to have done that.

He had gone away. My heart went out when he spoke. I looked for him, but I didn't find him. I called him, but he didn't answer-
Notice the sequence here:

While she sleeps at night, the bridegroom comes and knocks [unworthy virgins sleeping instead of being awake; the Lord Jesus comes; Lk. 12:36 uses the same figure, of the Lord's return being like a knock]

She replies that she's not dressed properly, makes excuses about her feet, she can't come and open [the unworthy don't respond immediately]

He tries to open the door from the outside, putting his hand through the latch-hole [by grace, after the pattern of Lot being encouraged to leave Sodom when he hesitated, the Lord will be patient even with sleepy virgins in His desire for their salvation]

Her heart is moved with desire for him [the rejected still call Jesus 'Lord, Lord'; they love Him emotionally]

She starts dressing herself up, and then is overtaken by desire and rushes to the door, her hands dripping all kinds of perfume and make up over the lock as she opens it [cp. the virgins going to buy oil, the unworthy trying to prepare themselves all too late, not trusting that their Lord loves them as they are at the moment of His coming]

But he's gone , he withdraws himself [all too late, the door is shut, He never knew them]

Her soul fails [the shock of rejection]

She seeks him but doesn't find him, calls but he doesn't answer [Prov. 1:28; the rejected call, but aren't answered; they seek the Lord early, but don't find Him. Hos. 5:6 is likewise relevant: "They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the LORD; but they shall not find him; he hath withdrawn himself from them"].

She feels tired of her relationship with him ("sick of love").

She is persecuted by the world around her ["condemned with the world"]

The basic point is that if we don't immediately respond to the Lord's knock, we show ourselves to not love Him enough. If we don't open immediately, it's as if we didn't open at all. The Lord wants us as we are, bleary eyed and without our make up, but with a basic overriding love of Him , and faith in the depth of His love, which will lead us to immediately go out to meet Him . This will be the ultimate and crucial divide- between those who believe in the Lord's love for us, who have known the humanly unknowable love of Christ; and those who think they need to prepare themselves to make themselves good enough for Him. Solomon called to the girl through the keyhole: "...my undefiled...". But she doesn't want to immediately come to Him because she doesn't want to meet him with 'defiled' feet (Song 5:2,3). She couldn't believe his words, that in his eyes, she was undefiled. And the enormity of the passion of Christ for us is likewise so hard for us to accept. In Song 3:1 we find the girl again at night, dreaming of having Solomon with her. But when one night he does actually come, she doesn't go to meet him immediately. And there's a warning for us. Like Israel we may 'desire the day of the Lord', study prophecy about it, write about it, enthuse about it. But when He comes, to what end will it be to us? Will we in a moment drop everything and go to Him, believing that He loves us just as we are? Or will we run off to buy oil, slap make up on...? The tragedy of Solomon's girl was that she started putting her make up on, and then her heart smote her and she opened the door, her hands dropping perfume all over the bolt (Song 5:5 RV). She finally realized that he had loved her for who she was, how she was. But it was tragically too late. He'd gone. We need to learn that lesson now, to know the love of Christ... so that in that moment when we know for sure 'He's back!', we will without hesitation go to Him with that perfect / mature love, that casts out fear.

Song of Solomon 5:7 The watchmen who go about the city found me. They beat me.

They bruised me. The keepers of the walls took my cloak away from me-
Her difficulty with "the watchmen" and their anger with her is understandable if she was in the "house of the women", guarded within the harem- and yet had escaped from it to have a tryst with the king for whom she was being prepared. "The walls" may be the walls of the harem house rather than of Jerusalem. Walls are used in a more figurative sense in Song 8:10 "I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers". The keepers of the walls were therefore the guards of the harem and of the virginity of the candidates within it. And she had sneaked out of it to sleep with the king for whom she was being formally prepared.

The word for "cloak" is only used about the inappropriate clothing of Jerusalem's wanton women (Is. 3:23). She had previously met these men in her previous dream of Song 3, and it's as if they had then given her a warning. But now they beat and bruised her. She lives in constant fear that soldiers guard Solomon's bed from her, and the night watchmen are after her. AV "took away my veil from me" could imply that these men raped her. Then we would read "bruised" in the sense of rape as in Ez. 23:3,8.

I noted on Song 1:1 that the Shulamite acts as a prostitute, and there are many connections between her and the bad woman of Proverbs who is a prostitute. Prostitutes wore veils (as Tamar in Gen. 38:14,15, and this is the sense of Song 1:7 ISV "Why should I be considered a veiled woman beside the flocks of your companions?"). Solomon's lover wears a veil (Song 4:1,3; 6:7) which the watchmen angrily pull off her to expose her for who she is (Song 5:7). The Shulamite acts like a very forward woman, if not a prostitute, and her veil may suggest that.

Song of Solomon 5:8 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you find my beloved, that you tell him that I am faint with love-
Her worst nightmare on that night of losing her beloved is that she would then bump into the daughters of Jerusalem, in her bedraggled and bruised state (:7). And so it happens in her dream. Her words here could be read as saying that she is "sick of love" (AV), that she is over it, it's all too much for her, and they need not fear her competition any more. Or, it can be read as "fain**t** with love", as if she defiantly tells them that he is still her beloved, and she is passionately in love with him. The ambiguity is perhaps intentional, to show us the understandable but contradictory feelings within her.

Daughters of Jerusalem

Song of Solomon 5:9 How is your beloved better than another beloved, you fairest among women? How is your beloved better than another beloved, that you so adjure

us?-
The daughters of Jerusalem mock her as "fairest among women", repeating Solomon's term of endearment to her. They were clearly aware of his relationship with her. And there she was, without her make up, bruised and bedraggled after being raped (see on :7). So they are being deeply sarcastic. The daughters of Jerusalem seem to be implying she has other "beloveds" and they mock her claims to see anything uniquely wonderful in her beloved Solomon; bear in mind that his Hebrew name meant "beloved". "What kind of a love is your love?" (Heb.) suggests them mocking her belief that she is foolish to think she and Solomon have a unique relationship. Or "What is your beloved before another (beloved)?" may suggest she has had other men before [as she admits when she says she hasn't kept her own vineyard] and will go on to love other men [as she seems to say she will at the end of Song 8, declaring her vineyard as her own to give to others and she wafts away].

Beloved

Song of Solomon 5:10 My beloved is white and ruddy. The best among ten thousand-
David had been described as the chiefest among ten thousand (2 Sam. 18:3), and yet this is how Solomon's illegal girlfriend describes him. He had clearly told her all about his father David- and she evidently pleased Solomon by describing him as being like his father, even though she probably had never known David. He sought a wife who would be a surrogate parent rather than a help-meet. Perhaps she has in view Solomon's 1000 wives. She may imply that he is better and more worthy than them all, and she is his special one. So she naively believes; for all her manipulation and hard headed self confidence, she is a fool to believe this.

We must continually remember that Solomon is the author of the Song. Here he is putting words in the Shulamite's mouth. She describes him as if he is an erotic statue, everything about him is perfect. Whilst this may indeed have been how she saw him, there lacks not vanity in Solomon constructing these descriptions of himself. We note how few verbs there are in her description of him in :10-17. It's all about external appearances, things, nouns, not who the person was or what they did. Solomon describes her likewise in Song 7:2-8.

NEV "best" translates the word for 'banner'- he has the greatest banner among 10,000. She has earlier boasted that "his banner" [s.w.] over me is love" (Song 2:4). Even if Solomon had 10,000 women, she likes to think that his banner for her was the greatest. We see again an insight into human psychology when 'in love'. The most obvious realities- in this case, that he had many other women whom he loved- are recognized but not really engaged with, because of the narrative believed. Which in this case was

that Solomon had a special love for her that was unique and greater than what he had for any of his other women. This feature of human psychology explains why people get involved with all manner of damaging situations- entering relationships with addicts, believing against all evidence that their child is in fact an innocent victim when the evidence is all the other way. This feature of our psychology is to be harnessed positively- Abraham hoped against hope, against all the reasons not to hope, and his hope / faith was rewarded. What matters is choosing the right narrative to believe, and the only ultimately true narrative is the saving love of God in His Son.

The Shulamite is a classic case of cognitive dissonance. On one hand she believes Solomon's protestations of love, on the other, she sees ample evidence that he has many other women in his life. And this creates mental disturbance, as witnessed by her nightmares about Solomon marrying other women. Typically in such a case, the person will try to reduce the inconsistency or contradiction by changing their cognitions to cause greater alignment between them so as to reduce the dissonance. Coping with the contradictory information or ideas is stressful and we seek to avoid or reduce this. They may simply avoid any information that increases the dissonance (confirmation bias) and an 'in love' person will often do this. No amount of facts, figures nor logical argument will mean anything- not even Solomon having hundreds of wives but still claiming to love this new one. Just as a man only watches media that confirms his political views, disregarding other media as biased and untruthful, so the 'in love' person will see only what they want to see and will be aggressive towards any other source of information; and that perfectly explains the tension between the Shulamite and the Daughters of Jerusalem.

Cognitive dissonance is typically experienced as psychological stress when persons participate in an action that goes against one or more of the contradictory cognitions or bits of information they are receiving. In her case, she has to either decide Solomon is a liar in what he is telling her; or somehow reinterpret his love for many other women. His love for those other women, and theirs for him, is a given that she began recognizing was a simple, observable fact. So she has to go the way she does at the end of the Song- removing herself from him, declaring him a liar, being sarcastic to him, telling him to clear off, and looking elsewhere for love. More observations on the Shulamite's cognitive dissonance on Song 6:3.

Song of Solomon 5:11 His head is like the purest gold. His hair is bushy, black as a raven-
The description of him as having a head of gold and then proceeding down his body in description to his feet… all recalls the picture of the idol image seen in Daniel 2. Constantly we have hints that when compared with other scripture, this woman and this relationship are absolutely spiritually fake. His head like gold may refer to the gold crown Solomon wore in the nightmare she had of him wearing a gold crown, given to

him by his mother, on the day he married many other women (Song 3:10). But now she sees that as something dashing and beautiful; and we see how selective we can be in our interpretation of imagery, seeing only what we want to see. Her praise of his thick black hair reflects her lack of awareness that his brother Absalom had the same kind of hair, which he was proud of- but it was the cause of his death.

Having said that she is "dark" in complexion (1:4,6), she later comments in 5:11 that to her, Solomon is also "dark" [s.w.]

Song of Solomon 5:12 His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks, washed with milk, mounted like jewels-
Solomon sees her as a dove with dove's eyes (Song 1:15, also Song 5:2), and she then says here that he has dove's eyes (Song 5:12). They tend to praise each other in the same language. Indeed this is an accurate record of a romance. But the praise is all of externalities, no attention is paid to the character, and there is absolutely no spiritual dimension to the relationship. This says so much about Solomon. This lack of attention to true spirituality means that his love of Divine wisdom at the time was purely of an intellectual, theoretical nature. And this is the warning for us. For he was writing this love song in his youth when he married foreign women, and it was then that he received Divine wisdom and wrote it up in the book of Proverbs.

Song of Solomon 5:13 His cheeks are like a bed of spices with towers of perfumes. His lips are like lilies, dropping liquid myrrh-
She has just tried to make herself pretty with liquid myrrh and perfume. She had delayed opening the door to him because of it, and landed herself in so much trouble (:5). She fails to see that attraction is not based on external things like myrrh. But actually they have had no other basis for their relationship. Even she is without her perfume and myrrh and a bedraggled rape victim (:7), she can only think in terms of externalities. For that is all these two have between them.

Song of Solomon 5:14 His hands are like rings of gold set with beryl. His body is like ivory work overlaid with sapphires-
She seems to claim she knows his naked body. But she praises his hands not for the hands in themselves, but because of all the gold rings with jewels which he wears, giving the impression his hands / fingers are gold. Even in her distraught state, she can only think of him in terms of externalities; for that was the sole basis of their relationship.

Song of Solomon 5:15 His legs are like pillars of marble set on sockets of fine gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars-

As noted on :14, even in her desperate situation, she can only praise Solomon for his external appearance. There is no implication that she praises him for his personality or character.

Song of Solomon 5:16 His mouth is sweetness; yes, he is altogether lovely-
She hereby boasts that she has experienced deep kissing with him. She no longer wishes to keep the relationship secret. As he sees her as so entirely beautiful, so she sees him (Song 4:7; 5:16). This mutuality of praise is indeed part of the "in love" period. But it was all a matter of external observation of each other, and because of that, the relationship fell apart.

This is my beloved, and this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem-
She seems to boast to them that he loves her, he is her friend. She clings on even in her desperation to the myth he had got her to believe, that he loved her uniquely and not the daughters of Jerusalem, whom he disparaged to her as "thorns" compared to her as a lily (Song 2:1-3). Solomon ought to have considered wisdom his sister and friend (Prov. 7:4), as he had exhorted others; but instead he considers this Egyptian woman to be both those things.

CHAPTER 6

Song of Solomon 6:1

Daughters of Jerusalem
Where has your beloved gone, you fairest among women? Where has your beloved turned, that we may seek him with you?-
This is bitter sarcasm. They ask her where Solomon has “turned aside” so that they can come and seek him with her, using a word elsewhere associated with ‘turning aside’ in apostasy to other gods. They sarcastically quote Solomon’s terms of endearment back to her. But with the hint that she's just another foreign woman and he's turned aside to her gods.

RV "Whither hath thy beloved turned him?". The idea could be 'To which other girl has he now turned aside?'. They mock her idea that Solomon uniquely loves her, when He is a polygamous with perhaps hundreds of girls waiting in the house of the women for their turn to sleep with him. Solomon wrote this Song, and is creating this sarcastic response from the daughters of Jerusalem, putting it in their mouths. He is thereby mocking the naivety of his lover.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 6:2 My beloved has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to

feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies-
In Song 4:16; 5:1 she has invited Solomon to enter her closed garden and he does so. The reference is to them sleeping together, and the language of beds, feeding and lilies has elsewhere been used in the song for sexual activity. She is therefore telling the daughters of Jerusalem that she has slept with Solomon, and therefore he is hers exclusively (:3). For all her self confidence and forwardness, she is betrayed as a laughable fool to believe this. In Song 7:6,8, Solomon likewise openly talks about their sexual encounters; their relationship is now no longer secret.

The references to the lover as a shepherd in Song 1:7; 6:2,3 have led some to think that the beloved is also in love with a shepherd. But this is to miss the clear connection in Hebrew thought between a king and a shepherd. David was to shepherd Israel (2 Sam. 5:2) and the seed of David likewise would be a shepherd over all Israel (Ez. 37:24).

Her response may mean that yes he has gone to his flock of other women, and thus his macho manliness is seem by her as yet another aspect of his amazing masculinity.

Song of Solomon 6:3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine. He browses among the lilies-
Being in the lilies has been language elsewhere used in the Song for sex. I noted on :2 that she is retorting to the daughters of Jerusalem that because she has slept with Solomon, therefore he is uniquely hers and this, she thinks is her final answer to her competitors. But of course her argument holds no water. She appears foolish and naive, for all her sexual manipulation of Solomon. And remember that Solomon is the author of this Song- he is painting his ex as a fool to believe him. She has likened herself to a lily (Song 2:1). Possibly she is replying that her man is not with her at this point because he is off with his other lilies, having sex with them ['in the garden', :2] and this makes him even more of a man in her eyes. A classic case of seeing what you want to see, a way of reducing the huge cognitive dissonance she is going through (see on Song 5:10).

The idea is "I am his and he is mine, he who is feeding his flock among the lilies". Although he is off with other women, she likes to think he is still uniquely hers in his affections. Again Solomon is writing this to mock her naivety as discussed on :1.

Lover

Song of Solomon 6:4 You are beautiful, my love, as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners-
This may continue the dream she has been having beginning in Song 5:2. Or it may be that now Solomon appears on the scene and comforts her with expressions of his unique love for her, to calm her after her nightmare. Tirzah was obviously an established

city at the time, and was later briefly the capital of the ten tribe kingdom. But it was destroyed at the time of the exile, and this would be evidence that the song indeed dates from Solomon's time, and the Song is not the fantasy of some post exilic writer as the critics lamely claim; see on Song 7:4. Jerusalem was the "perfection of beauty" (Ps. 48:3; 50:2), and yet through this allusion Solomon is showing that unlike for David, Zion was not his chiefest joy, but this Gentile girl was. "Lovely *as* Jerusalem" is another example of Solomon wanting to see this Gentile woman as if she were quintessentially Jewish, "as Jerusalem".

She now imagines Solomon praising her for her unique beauty, despite being with other women. See on :3. Song 6:4-7 repeats Solomon's praise of her in Song 4:1-3. She is remembering his words then and repeating them to herself, when assaulted by the reality of the fact he is with other women. This is totally psychologically credible.

Song of Solomon 6:5 Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me. Your hair is like a flock of goats, that lie along the side of Gilead-
Solomon is defying his own wisdom in Prov. 6:25: "Don't lust after her beauty in your heart, neither let her captivate you with her eyelids".
The blindness of Solomon is driven home time and again. He warned the typical young man about being captivated by the eyelids of the Gentile woman (Prov. 6:25); yet it was the eyes of Miss Egypt that he openly admitted stole his heart (Song 4:9; 6:5). We note his total inability to be self critical and have a sense of temptation and the possibility of personal failure. This seems to go with the territory of assuming that mere possession of Divine truth somehow justifies us of itself.

She has her hair down, a sign she was sexually available. Time and again the imagery of the song is distinctly sexually selective and without appropriate modesty in the contemporary culture. And Solomon clearly likes it.

Song of Solomon 6:6 Your teeth are like a flock of ewes, which have come up from the washing; of which each one has twins; none is bereaved among them-
Without dental science, missing teeth would have been common in those days, even in youth. But she apparently had none missing. Here and in Song 4:3 "your mouth is lovely" suggests they had already been involved in deep kissing.

Song of Solomon 6:7 Your temples are like a piece of a pomegranate behind your veil-
Solomon has seen behind her veil, the symbol of her virginity, for he has entered her closed garden by sleeping with her (Song 4:16; 5:1). But he likes to still perceive her as a virgin. They both create images of each other which are simply not true to reality, and fall in love with those images rather than reality. Although I am no fan of the allegorical

interpretation of the Song, it could be argued that this looks ahead to Christ's imputation of righteousness to His bride.

I noted on Song 1:1 that the Shulamite acts as a prostitute, and there are many connections between her and the bad woman of Proverbs who is a prostitute. Prostitutes wore veils (as Tamar in Gen. 38:14,15, and this is the sense of Song 1:7 ISV "Why should I be considered a veiled woman beside the flocks of your companions?"). Solomon's lover wears a veil (Song 4:1,3; 6:7) which the watchmen angrily pull off her to expose her for who she is (Song 5:7). The Shulamite acts like a very forward woman, if not a prostitute, and her veil may suggest that.

Song of Solomon 6:8 There are sixty queens, eighty concubines, and virgins without number-
The Queens were the women of noble birth he had already married; the virgins refer to the women in the house of the women still waiting and being prepared to sleep with him. Solomon boasts that he has many Jewish queens and concubines, but there is only one woman, the Egyptian, that he truly loves (:8,9); he even calls her his “sister”, associating himself thereby with Egypt. See on :13. This is his answer to her nightmare which began in Song 5:2, about the daughters of Jerusalem. Perhaps at that time he had 60 queens and 80 concubines, a number which would later rise to 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Solomon wrote this Song; he is painting her as naive to have believed that she was unique despite him having so many other women in his life. He leaves us to join the dots and see her as a fool for believing him at this point.

Song 6:8 refers to queens, concubines and virgins. The next verse speaks of queens, concubines and "the daughters" (Song 6:9). These are surely "the daughters of Jerusalem". Harems were comprised of virgins who were prepared for the king and once readied, they slept with him. After this, some were chosen as queens. The others, no longer virgins, were counted as "concubines" if they weren't chosen as queens. The book of Esther describes just such a harem. "The daughters of Jerusalem" would then refer to the virgins in Jerusalem who were being prepared to go and sleep with Solomon, in order for him to choose whether he wanted them as his queen or not. And they were "of Jerusalem", Hebrew women. Hence their jealousy and spirit of bitter competition against this foreigner who had come amongst them.

Song of Solomon 6:9 My dove, my perfect one, is unique-
Solomon seeks to persuade the girl that really she is his special love, better than all his women of :8. We marvel at her naivety in believing him.

She is her mother's only daughter. She is the favourite one of her who bore her. The daughters saw her, and called her blessed; the queens and the concubines, and they praised her-
This is simply not the case, obviously. She has just had a nightmare about the daughters of Jerusalem mocking her. And she is aware of Solomon's existing harem (:8). And he tries to persuade her that actually his queens, concubines and the daughters of Jerusalem think she is in fact wonderful. They clearly do not, and she is presented as hopelessly foolish in believing Solomon, who likewise presents himself as no more than a sweet talking womanizer.

The allusion is to "the daughters will call me happy / blessed" (Gen. 30:13); Solomon has a vision of this Egyptian girl as becoming as one of the founding mothers of Israel. But her heart is far from it. He speaks as if she is in fact already this. He is in love with an image and projection upon her which is simply unrealistic and untrue.

Solomon assures her that all his existing harem consider her just as he is telling her she is- the most beautiful and beloved of them all. Or perhaps she is imagining him to be saying this, i.e. the words of Solomon are in fact still part of her own fantasy.

Solomon likes to view positively the fact that she is her mother's only daughter, and therefore her mother's favourite daughter. Yet we know that the woman fantasizes about bringing Solomon back to her mother's house in Egypt. He is not at all factoring in that if she is her mother's favourite daughter, then there will always be a strong pull back to her mother and homeland.

Song of Solomon 6:10 Who is she who looks forth as the morning, beautiful as the moon, clear as the sun, and awesome as an army with banners?-
The reference is to the morning star. This apparently is common Egyptian love poem language. Solomon was clearly very influenced by Egypt from a young age, and likes to try to talk to the girl as it were in her own terms. He presents her as the brightest of all the stars, and more awesome than an entire army. The idea is that although he admits he does have a harem (:8), he seeks to persuade her that she is the brightest of all the stars, she is the **sun** and moon, and greater than an army with banners. The significance of "banners" is that she had rejoiced that his banner over her was love (Song 2:4). He is saying that his banner over her was far greater than that over a whole army of women. And she appears, for the time being, to believe his story. Which may well have been a standard story trotted out to all his many women.

Or we can read "an army with banners" as NIV "stars in procession". This would fit the context of describing her as one amongst many, the prettiest star amongst many others in the procession of stars.

Song of Solomon 6:11 I went down into the nut tree grove, to see the green plants of the valley, to see whether the vine budded, and the pomegranates were in flower-
AV "I went down into the garden of nuts". Entrance to the locked garden has been used by the couple to reference their lovemaking (Song 4:16; 5:1). He could be implying that he had slept with her in the hope that she was "in flower" and would fall pregnant. He calculated that this was going to comfort her more than anything at this time; he is trying to show that he is very serious about their relationship. "Pomegranates" have been used as erotic imagery in Song 1:6; 4:13. And she uses his reasoning here to urge him to sleep with her in Song 7:12.

Plants, fruitfulness, vines budding, pomegranates etc. are all sexual symbols in the song. Solomon could be saying [or she is imagining him as saying, or the daughters of Jerusalem are imagining him as saying] that he has gone to his other women, the orchard of trees representing his harem. And he was then blown away by his desire for her and how attractive he found her (:12).

Song of Solomon 6:12 Without realizing it, my desire set me with my royal people's chariots-
The idea is that he assures her that the sexual encounter of :11 had made him "beside himself" [NEV "Without realizing it"]. He felt he had been as it were whisked away by the passion she stirred in him, "she put me in the chariots of Ammi Nadib". Perhaps this was an Egyptian phrase. He is by all means trying to persuade her that he found her sexually superlative. We noted the confusion between the carriage / chariot and the marriage bed of Solomon in Song 3:9.

LXX "There I will give thee my breasts: my soul knew it not: it made me as the chariots of Aminadab".

Solomon tried to see in her an Israelite woman, "O daughter of my princely people" (when she was the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh, 6:12 cp. 7:1), comparing her body parts to various geographical places in Israel (e.g. goats on Gilead, 4:1; the tower of David, 4:4; "as beautiful as Tirzah, as lovely as Jerusalem" 6:4), so she tried to see him as an Egyptian. They were trying to see each other as who they were not… and so the relationship was doomed to failure.

Or we can go with RV "my soul (or, desire, RV marg.) set me among the chariots of my princely people". She could be saying that for a moment, she was back amongst her father's chariots, her princely, superior people to whom she wanted to return. This would then be in the same vein as her desire to return to her mother's house.

Daughters of Jerusalem

Song of Solomon 6:13 Return, return, Shulammite! Return, return, that we may gaze at you-
This would appear to be the sarcastic comment of the Israelite girls after the Egyptian girl has run off away from them. They call her the Shulammite, the Jerusalem girl, mockingly. Whilst "Shulammite" is not the exact female form of ''Shlomo', Solomon, the inexactness may be because they are mocking her by this term, as if to call her 'Solomon's wannabe lover who didn't quite make it'. For they all know she is a dark skinned foreigner and not really a Shulammite. The girl is presented in Song 5:7 as bedraggled, without her makeup and having been raped. Having made her defence of herself to them, she runs off; and they sarcastically invite her to return so they can look at her. This would assume that the nightmare dream which began in Song 5:2 is here continuing.

Lover
Why do you desire to gaze at the Shulammite, as at the dance of Mahanaim?-
Perhaps the tension between the two groups- the Jerusalem women and the Egyptian girl and her family (see on :8,9)- is behind the enigmatic reference to “the company of two armies” or “the dance of the two camps”. Solomon has to now carefully broker between his Egyptian woman and the daughters of Jerusalem. He asks them rhetorically why they want to gaze at her. The idea is of a girl dancing before two camps, one who support her with encouragement, the other who detest her and shout insults. And Solomon would be saying that he doesn't wish for this competitive situation to arise. He may be implying to the daughters of Jerusalem that they too need fear no competition, and so there need be no dance of comparison. And yet Solomon confirms that indeed this Egyptian girl is a Shulammite, a girl of Jerusalem, Yerushalem. She is one of the daughters of Jerusalem, so he decides; and therefore there should be division between her and the daughters of Jerusalem, as if they were in two camps. Again we observe that Solomon projects an image onto her, as an Israelite daughter of Zion… and believes it. Regardless of the reality.

These words could still belong to the daughters of Jerusalem. The context is the situation described in :11 where Solomon has gone to other women. The rhetorical question could be “why should you look at your own woman when there are so many others who will dance and present themselves to you?”.

CHAPTER 7

Song of Solomon 7:1

How beautiful are your feet in sandals, prince's daughter! Your rounded thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a skilful workman-
This continues the lover's praise of the Egyptian girl as she dances in the preceding verse in Song 6:13. But the praise of her is from the feet to the head, rather than from head to foot as in the previous praise of her in Song 4,5 and 6. This might be appropriate to her being praised whilst dancing, as her footwork would be observed. "The turns of your thighs" (Heb.) would also be an observation relevant to dancing**,** and Song 6 has concluded with the Shulamite at the dance of Mahanaim. "Your feet in sandals" is literally "your steps in sandals", as if her step dancing is being admired. We have confirmed that she was no peasant girl, as some commentators imagine due to misreading the earlier metaphors about Solomon as a shepherd of sheep, but rather a "prince's daughter", likely Pharaoh's daughter. Again we note how physical is his appreciation of her; he sees nothing spiritual in her only the delicateness of her adorned feet, her exquisitely turning thighs, smooth belly (7:3), streamlined neck, commanding nose and deep-sea eyes (7:5). All of which fade and degrade with the passing years. As mentioned previously, it would appear the girl is naked before Solomon and he is praising her.

He describes her thighs as if they had been rounded by a skilled artisan. But the maker of her body, and of all bodies, was God. He is the skillful and beautiful creator, but Solomon doesn't make this obvious point. God is nowhere in his thinking.

Song of Solomon 7:2 Your body is like a round goblet, no mixed wine is wanting. Your waist is like a heap of wheat, set about with lilies-
The comparison with "mixed wine" shows again that Solomon was well acquainted with wine from an early age, and viewed it positively. Perhaps this is why his mother specifically warns him against alcohol in Prov. 31. His later turning to alcohol mentioned in Ecc. 2 would therefore be an example of how the weaknesses of youth are developed in old age, unless they are cut out of life and thought. Solomon's path to apostacy can be traced as beginning in his youth, rather than as the result of some mid life crisis.

We note how few verbs there are in his description of her in :2-8. It's all about external appearances, things, nouns, not who the person was or what they did. The Shulamite describes him likewise in Song 5:10-17.

Song of Solomon 7:3 Your two breasts are like two fawns, that are twins of a roe-
Breasts as twins means Solomon considered them, after much observation, to be perfectly identical- apparently something he found attractive. "The lilies" is likewise a sexual allusion; see on Song 2:16. He was ravished with this Egyptian girl, especially with her breasts (Song 4:5; 7:3). Alluding to this he could confidently exhort in Prov.

5:18-20 AV: "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe (Song of Solomon language); let her breasts satisfy thee...
be thou ravished always with her love... And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange (i.e. Gentile) woman?". How, indeed? But 999 women later, it was a different story for Solomon. Solomon writes in Prov. 5:18-20 as if it is of course unthinkable that he should have been ravished by a Gentile woman; but he had been.

Song of Solomon 7:4 Your neck is like an ivory tower-
The idea is that her neck was very long, and this kind of praise of women is found in Egyptian love poetry. Again we see Solomon influenced by the culture of Egypt. And yet women emphasizing their long necks are condemned in Is. 3:16. Indeed the description there of the condemned daughters of Zion sounds very much like those we are reading in the Song of Solomon about the Egyptian girl.

Your eyes are like the pools in Heshbon by the gate of Bathrabbim. Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon which looks toward Damascus-
Again we note that Solomon likens her to the geography of Israel. She was an Egyptian, but he wishes to see her as an Israelite, he projects this image onto her, and falls in love with the image rather than the reality. Even though as noted above he was very much immersed himself in the language and culture of Egypt. Heshbon at that time was under Israelite control, but soon afterwards it was lost by them (Is. 16:8,9). Again this is evidence that the Song was written indeed in the times of Solomon and not, as the critics claim, much later. See on Song 6:4.

"By the gate of Bathrabbim" could refer to the gate looking toward Rabbath-Ammon on the north side of the city. "The tower of Lebanon" could refer to a tower on the house of the forest of Lebanon.

Song of Solomon 7:5 Your head on you is like Carmel. The hair of your head is like purple. The king is held captive in its tresses-

She has her hair down, a sign she was sexually available. Her hair was purple and "like Carmel" or 'like carmine', s.w. "crimson" in 2 Chron. 2:7,14; 3:14. She presents thereby as a whore. Time and again the imagery of the song is distinctly sexually explicit and without appropriate modesty in the contemporary culture. And Solomon clearly likes it.

“And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets, *and* her hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her” (Ecc. 7:26) is a clear reference back to Solomon’s own entanglement with this girl. In his younger days, he had found “the hair of thine head like the purple of a king [i.e. he imagined her to be suited to him, the King of Israel, when she wasn’t]; the king is held captive in the tresses thereof” (Song 7:5 RV). Solomon is the author of the Song... it is his own spiritual autopsy. He realizes he was held captive by this Gentile

woman, caught by her, just as he had warned in his Proverbs about the danger of the Gentile woman.

Song of Solomon 7:6 How beautiful and how pleasant you are, love, for delights!-
Heb. "among all the delights" could reinforce Solomon's claim that he considered her the most beautiful of all his women; although he carefully says that his other wives also provided "delights". And the Hebrew is literally "How pleasant is the love of this one". He clearly implies that he has already had sex with her, as admitted openly in :8. After the conflict with the daughters of Jerusalem in Song 5,6, the relationship is out in the open, and Solomon is confirming her own statements that they had already had sex (Song 6:2).

Song of Solomon 7:7 This, your stature, is like a palm tree, your breasts like its fruit-
He admires her for being tall. Dark skinned Egyptians were held to be generally taller than Israelites (Is. 45:14), and Solomon finds this attractive.

Song of Solomon 7:8 I said, I will climb up into the palm tree. I will take hold of its fruit. Let your breasts be like clusters of the vine, the smell of your breath like apples-
The allusion is to her nipples as vine clusters. All this sex stuff we would expect after the wedding. But there is nothing at all in the Song to suggest romance-wedding-sex-children-family life. Only premarital sex. Solomon here clearly states that he has had sexual activity with this Egyptian woman. He likens himself to a small man with her much taller than him. Clearly he has been dominated by the Gentile, just as he had warned Israelites not to be. He considers himself free of any personal moral restraint.

Song of Solomon 7:9 your mouth like the best wine, that goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding through the lips of those who are asleep-
He says that deep kissing with her gives the same after effect as drinking enough wine that you talk in your sleep afterwards. It's all very human and carnal. This was all a conscious disregard of Bathsheba's warning to Solomon not to love wine nor to be destroyed by foreign women (Prov. 31:4). And Solomon published her words in his anthology of wisdom known as the book of Proverbs. He likewise condemns love of alcohol throughout Proverbs, just as he does relationships with Gentile women. But he does the very things he condemns. His wisdom, as he admits in Ecclesiastes, was "far from" him personally. He failed to personalize the truths he knew. And in this he is a warning to all who know God's Truth. For like him, we can be tempted to assume that mere possession of it justifies us.

He is directly going against the wisdom he had taught in Prov. 7:21: "With the flattering of her lips, she seduced him".
The Hebrew literally refers to the smoothness of her lips; and Solomon admired the smoothness of the lips of his illicit Gentile girlfriend (s.w. Song 4:3,11; 7:9). Again we see Solomon doing the exact opposite of the wisdom and theoretical truth he was blessed with. Solomon in Prov. 7:5 argues as if mere intellectual assent to the truths he was teaching would keep a man safe from sexual temptation and the flattery of bad women. But Solomon himself possessed all this truth and failed miserably in this area.

We may also enquire as to how did Solomon know about wine unless even at a relatively young age, he knew about the sensation of wine from personal experience? He had again denied his own wisdom: “Look not thou upon the wine when it is red… when it goeth down smoothly” (Prov. 23:31 RV).

Grammatically, "that goes down smoothly for my beloved, gliding through the lips of those who are asleep" would imply this is spoken by the woman. In this case, she as it were playfully completes Solomon's sentence. This would explain the change of gender of the speaker in the middle of the verse.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 7:10 I am my beloved’s. His desire is toward me-
The woman comes over as incredibly naive to believe that indeed, Solomon's desire is toward her and she is his; despite his admission to having a harem of women and virgins in waiting to become his wives in Song 6:8. As noted on Song 1, she comes over as self confident, manipulative and forceful of her agenda. But even she is presented as being duped by smooth words. It's a case of "deceiving and being deceived". The allusion is to "your desire shall be for your husband" (Gen. 3:16). The Genesis ideal was that one man and one woman have mutually exclusive desire for each other. But she is going ahead with a relationship with a man whom she knows has a harem, and he likewise accepts that. And it could be argued that the *man* having desire for the woman is in fact an inversion of Gen. 3:16, where the *woman* is to have desire for the man. Both of them are trying to find a way out of the curse, to have a little of both- unrestrained sexual freedom whilst free from the curse for sin. And it doesn't work. She offers him to eat her fruit in her closed garden, but eating it leads to his spiritual death.

The Bride Gives Her Love
Song of Solomon 7:11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field. Let us lodge in the villages-
"Lodge" is "pass the night", "among the henna bushes" (Heb**.- the same word is translated "henna" in Song 4:13).** So she is setting up another night together, clearly

for sex in bushes thought to be aphrodisiacs. Still they appear to be unable to openly live and sleep together in the palace; for they are still unmarried, and the opposition with the daughters of Jerusalem is still unresolved.

Song of Solomon 7:12 Let's go early up to the vineyards. Let's see whether the vine has budded, its blossom is open, and the pomegranates are in flower. There I will give you my love-
Vines and pomegranates are sexual symbols in Song 1:6; 4:13; 7:9; 8;2. It could be that she urges him to sleep with her because she considers herself fertile. For he has used the figures in this way in Song 6:11, in trying to persuade her that he is very serious about their relationship and is sexually attracted to her in the hope of her getting pregnant. Again we note how forward she is, and "there I will give you my love" sounds as if she is sexually dominant and has control over Solomon, for all his power and glory.

LXX "there will I give thee my breasts". The language is alluding to the bad Gentile woman of Prov. 7: "Come, let us have our lovemaking until morning; let us revel…". As noted so often, Solomon consciously makes these connections within his writings. He knows that the Gentile woman has indeed led him astray; he perceives so accurately the mechanisms. But does nothing about it in terms of repentance.

Song of Solomon 7:13 The mandrakes give forth fragrance. At our doors are all kinds of precious fruits, new and old, which I have stored up for you, my beloved-
A woman offering a man delightful fruit in a garden recalls again the scene of Adam and Eve in Eden. Solomon on one hand realizes that he has been led to eat the forbidden fruit, with terrible consequences. But never is there a hint at repentance. The emphasis upon aphrodisiacs throughout the Song underlines the impression that these two are only in love on a physical level. If external adornment and drugs are required by them for the enjoyment of their relationship right at the start of it, then there is clearly no bond of personality or spiritual aspect to it at all. And so it proves finally unsatisfactory, and the love song doesn't end with marriage and children as we expect, but with cynical and bitter breakup.

Whose "doors"? The language is that of Mt. 13:52 about a householder who brings forth things new and old. She seems to have in mind his returning with her to Egypt under the influence of her aphrodisiacs and sexuality. That is the continued theme in the next verse (Song 8:1).

CHAPTER 8

Song of Solomon 8:1

Oh that you were like my brother, who nursed from the breasts of my mother! If I found you outside, I would kiss you; yes, and no one would despise me-
"Outside" begs the question 'outside where?'. The reference fits most comfortably to the idea of the house of the women, from which she occasionally slipped out for secret meetings and sex with Solomon.

She deeply wished that Solomon was her brother, i.e. an Egyptian, because in that case their relationship could be much more open, they would not be despised because of their love, and Solomon could come and live in her mother's house back in Egypt (:1,2). The courtship was held in lonely, secluded places, with the fear of being seen and mocked (Song 5:6; 8:1,14; 7:11,12). Clearly she was attracted to Solomon rather than to the God of Israel. Solomon describes her in terms of the geographical features of Israel, he wished her to be as one of the founding mothers of Israel (Song 6:9 = Gen. 30:13). But in the end, she was an Egyptian girl, and her heart was always going to be there. She hates the way she's not accepted in Israelite society, and their relationship has been a series of clandestine meetings in the open air, with her having nightmares in Song 3,5 about the Israelite soldiers and watchmen finding her.

Sin never satisfies. The daughters of Jerusalem and the watchmen (i.e. the prophets? Gad, Nathan? Whoever wrote Ps. 127 as a warning to Solomon?) were constantly watching them and being critical of her (Song 5:7,16; 8:1), they despised her. See on :6. Contrary to what Solomon had tried to kid her, the daughters of Jerusalem did not love and adore her (Song 6:9). They despised her, and the girl now sees things as they really are- straight after having sex at the end of Song 7.

She speaks of her taking the initiative and grabbing hold of and kissing Solomon in the street. This is exactly the picture of the wicked Gentile woman of Prov. 7:13. Again the point is made that Solomon was blind to his own wisdom, it took no personal lodgment in his own heart. And so it can be with those who hold and teach God's truth today. Even worse, since Solomon is the author of the Song, he hereby recognizes what has gone wrong and does nothing about it.

Song of Solomon 8:2 I would lead you, bringing you into my mother's house, who would instruct me-
We recall how Isaac brings his wife Rebekah into his mother's tent to consummate the marriage. Her desire is still as it was at the start of the Song, as noted on Song 1:4. She wanted to be instructed by her Egyptian mother, not by Solomon; who was in the business of writing his Proverbs at this time to instruct in God's ways. And she wants to be the one who would "lead you" [Solomon], or guide him. She didn't want his instruction, but wanted to instruct him in the ways of Egypt. It is the intended reversal of how Isaac brought and lead Rebecca into his mother's tent (Gen. 24:67). The Shulamite desires instruction from her Egyptian mother; whereas Solomon repeatedly has taught

in Proverbs that the spiritual person would seek instruction from God's wisdom mediated through believing parents.

I would have you drink spiced wine, of the juice of my pomegranate-
This could be an offer of conditional sex, if Solomon were to agree to her returning to Egypt and being under the instruction of her mother. I take Song 8:1-8 to be her fantasy, her desperate dream, for Solomon's return to her and for them to have an open, legitimate, public relationship but on her terms- in Egypt. She dreams of asking him to commit to her ("set me as a seal upon your heart", Song 8:6), but concludes by telling him to flee far away from her, although she still calls him "my beloved" (Song 8:14). It's a tragic, unfulfilled ending.

Song of Solomon 8:3 His left hand would be under my head. His right hand would embrace me-
The conditional tense of "would" is significant. As suggested on :2, it could be part of her fantasy. Or it could also be her attempted manipulation. She seems to be saying 'I'll have sex with you, as you offered in Song 7:12, *if* you agree to be an Egyptian' (and Song 4:16; 5:1,4-6 would imply they *did* have intercourse). But throughout the Song, Solomon describes her in Jewish terms, he likens her to many well-known places in Israel: the Heshbon fishpools, the tower of Lebanon etc., seeing the way her hair draped over her breasts as reminiscent of how Mount Gilead looked (Song of Solomon 4:1,4). He wanted to see her as an Israelite girl, and so that was how she appeared to him.

Song of Solomon 8:4 I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, that you not stir up, nor stimulate my love, until he so desires-
Again she tries to stop the daughters of Jerusalem, the Jewish candidates as Solomon's wives, from being attractive to him. But her bitter adjuration of them is mere words, it has no power.

Daughters of Jerusalem

Song of Solomon 8:5 Who is this who comes up from the wilderness, leaning on her beloved?-
The answer of the daughters of Jerusalem is said as a final triumph. They bid her watch an engagement procession coming into Jerusalem from the wilderness outside the city, with a young woman or girl (see on :8) leaning on her beloved, Solomon [for so his Hebrew name Jedidiah means in Hebrew]. Heb. "whose is this one who comes up…?" is gloating that as in chapter 5, Solomon arrives in a marriage procession- but not for her, the supposedly "beloved", but for another woman.

Earlier in Song 3:3 the daughters of Jerusalem have teased or jeered the Shulamite in the same way, asking her again "Who is this who comes up from the wilderness...?". Then, it was Solomon's wedding procession, and the description climaxed in the statement that the marriage litter is paved with love... for... the daughters of Jerusalem! The whole scene spoke of how the Shulamite progressively comes to understand that Solomon is in fact also in love with the daughters of Jerusalem and will marry them too. Only now in Song 8 do we see the Shulamite facing reality and walking out of the relationship, with the daughters of Jerusalem again jeering her.

LXX "Who is this that comes up all white...". The woman had earlier feared that her darker skin colour would be a turn off for Solomon. The daughters of Jerusalem now rub this in- that Solomon is appearing with a white skinned woman leaning on him as his partner.

Beloved
Under the apple tree I aroused you. There your mother conceived you. There she was in labour and bore you-
"Aroused" can as well be translated "undressed". The Egyptian girl watches in shock at the engagement procession coming from the desert, realizing with shock that she has been trounced, and all Solomon's words of unique affection were proved untrue as he arrived with his latest girl. Her angry response is totally imaginable. It is, effectively, "But you and me, we had sex together! And now... you're marrying another woman! And she's only a kid, she's not even got developed breasts!". It's the stuff of movies. She even claims they had slept together at the very spot where his own mother both conceived and gave birth to him, as if this was intended to be a defining moment in cementing their relationship. She has likened him to a hind deer, and hinds were known to return to their own birthplace beneath a tree to give birth to their own fawns. She considers therefore that their sex together at that spot was really a unique bond which precluded him from now marrying another woman. Now finally she accepts the reality of the fact that he is a polygamist, and has other women in view.

Lover

Song of Solomon 8:6 Set me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; for love is strong as death. Jealousy is as cruel as Sheol. Its flashes are flashes of fire, a very flame of Yahweh-
The Shulamite asks Solomon to not have her as another ring on his finger [or bracelet on his arm], but a seal upon his heart. Although at this point the relationship breaks up, Solomon does marry her, and she turns away his heart. A seal implies ownership; and

she did in the end want his heart, which was her intention from this point onwards. So in the end, he did set her as a seal on his heart- and the Biblical commentary is that she turned away his heart from God. Her reference to jealousy is to be understood in the context of all the jealousy we have encountered in the Song between her and the daughters of Jerusalem, and her nightmares of Solomon's marriages with other women. That jealousy, and the flashes of fire that come out of it in terms of the difficult relationship between her and Solomon, was going to continue in its cruelty until the grave. And in Ecclesiastes Solomon recognizes this. Again, seeing he is the author of this Song, he is lamenting that indeed this is how it had been with him and her. The cruelty of her jealousy would follow him to his grave. She is saying that love means jealousy- and indeed God's love is often associated with His jealousy. And therefore, she reasons, it's impossible to be in love with a polygamous man without jealousy issues, and the flashes of fire in their relationship were in fact of Yahweh in that His ideal for marriage was being compromised. Solomon wrote this. He put these words in the mouth of his character. He realizes it, writing perhaps now in later life, the reflections of a polygamist. No wonder he had to build Pharaoh's daughter a separate house to live in. Life together was going to be impossible.

"Love is strong as death" may mean that she claims marriage to be unto death, sealed permanently. And therefore seeing he has other women, her jealousy will be cruel as death. Because finally she accepts that Solomon involved with many other women. The cruel jealousy would also refer to that between her and the daughters of Jerusalem, which she suggests will meet Yahweh's flaming condemnation. For "A lightning-flash from Yah" is speaking of Divine judgment (Dt. 4:24 etc.). Solomon was led by this woman into an impossible situation, a polygamist married to a woman who loves him [so she claims] with the love that has to therefore be jealous. And it will lead to his condemnation. Solomon is the author of all this- he places these words on her lips. He realizes he is going to be condemned because of this woman, but as in Ecclesiastes, he just accepts that and will not come to repentance.

"Love is strong as / unto death" is parallel with jealousy being cruel as / unto sheol, the grave, death. She is protesting that she still loves him, and her parting words call him "Beloved". She says she will love him unto death, but because love and jealousy are linked, she will be jealous unto death. And that jealousy will be like sparks of fire, from Yahweh. And so began an impossible relationship. She loved him to the end of his life, to death, and was jealous to the end of his days- because he was a polygamist. And so he had to live with the flashes of fire from her, which were from Yahweh in that this was judgment for breaking His marital principles. For all his wealth and power, this woman was indeed like bands upon him. It was misery for them both, for life. And he is writing this Song looking back on his life, as the "old and foolish king who will not be admonished", recognizing that.

Or we could read these words as Solomon's words to his new bride with whom he has just arrived, a marriage vow demanding her total loyalty to him. His mention of jealousy was made in the hearing of the Egyptian girl. There was indeed a jealousy as cruel as the grave between the Jewish girls and Solomon's Egyptian lover. And so the Song ends on a most unhappy note; Solomon is unfaithful and the two separate, rather than there being the consummation we might expect. As noted on :21, he is alluding to the language of covenant with God (Dt. 11:18) and applying it to his wife's covenant with himself. He is warning that just as Yahweh is jealous if His covenant is broken, so he will be. And yet he felt free to flout the covenant himself, as he had just demonstrated by doing all this in view of the Egyptian girl he had been so infatuated with.

Solomon made the classic mistake of assuming that his will and word were effectively equivalent to the word of God. In Prov. 6:21 he speaks of the need to bind the law about your heart and neck; but in Song 8:6 he asks his lover to "set *me* as a seal upon thine heart" and arm. And often in Proverbs he uses the language of the blessings for keeping God's law and turns them into the blessings for keeping *his* law; e.g. "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart" (Prov. 7:1,2). And we all do the same in essence, whenever we assume that our consciences are effectively the will of God; when we 'play God' by allowing our words and will to count as if they are *His* word.

It is *God's* word that is to be the seal upon our heart. It is that which is to be bound in our hearts and or a sign upon our hearts (Dt. 11:18). That was the real sign of the covenant with God. But Solomon considers that the covenant with Yahweh could be subverted into a binding covenant between his wife and himself. Even though he himself had two timed her and had multiple partners.

Song of Solomon 8:7 Many waters can't quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man would give all the wealth of his house for love, he would be utterly scorned- Solomon had taught that the sexually unfaithful man will pay all the wealth of his house because of it, and still will not make things right (Prov. 6:31). Solomon claims in this hasty marriage vow that although he is wealthy, he now has found true love with his next wife, which cannot be purchased for money. And yet in the end, he did give all the wealth and glory of his house for his sins, because his wives turned away his heart from Yahweh and his kingdom / house suffered because of it, as he so often laments in Ecclesiastes. And he was indeed utterly scorned after his death (1 Kings 12:11), as he foresaw coming at the end of his life in several passages in Ecclesiastes.

Sarcasm fills the Song of Songs and Song 8 is full of it. Solomon was the most wealthy man on earth at the time, and the Shulamite is saying that even all his wealth cannot now buy her love. She scorns it. In :11,12 she will comment further upon Solomon's way of paying money to those who find and "keep" his potential wives. And probably she alludes to how the women agreed to be considered as his wives because of the perceived financial benefit to their families.

Daughters of Jerusalem

Song of Solomon 8:8 We have a little sister. She has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister in the day when she is to be spoken for?-
The girl has arrived leaning upon Solomon. But she is still a minor and her breasts not developed yet (Ez. 16:7,8). Before her day of being spoken for, the day of actual marriage, the daughters of Jerusalem vow they will prepare her to be a replacement for the Egyptian woman (see on :9).

To speak for a woman meant to ask her to get married. The same Hebrew is in 1 Sam. 25:39 when David sends messengers to speak for Abigail to be his wife. The daughters of Jerusalem are cruelly teasing the Shulamite. Solomon's wedding procession, to another woman or women, is approaching. And, by the way, we have an up and coming small breasted sister, Solomon will speak for her soon. This is getting at the way Solomon has praised the Shulamite for her large breasts and she is confident in her breasts being attractive to him ["my breasts were like towers", :9]; for her breasts are mentioned multiple times in the Song especially in the LXX.

The Song ends without the famous final scene which we expect in a romance. The expectation of a wedding and walking off into the sunset is subverted by the concluding songs. The girl laments how she can't kiss Solomon publically or be with him without being despised; and longs to be able to take him back to her mother in Egypt (8:1,2). She utters the final warning to the daughters of Jerusalem not to stimulate Solomon, and then breaks down with the lament that jealousy is cruel as death (8:6) and unrequited love is impossible; Solomon's true love cannot be bought by her. The daughters of Jerusalem then speak of how they have a younger sister whose breasts aren't yet developed, but they will care for her until she is ready for Solomon (8:8,9). The Egyptian girl then reminisces in the past tense: "I was a wall, and my breasts were like fortress towers. Then I found favor in his eyes" (8:10). Solomon throughout the Songs has commented positively upon her breasts; and now she is left to lament that that is all just how it was, it's all over now. She then makes the enigmatic comment about how Solomon has a vineyard which he leases out, and yet she is a vineyard which belongs to her alone: "My vineyard, which belongs to me, is at my disposal alone". The Songs have likened her and her sexuality to a vineyard (Song 2:13,15), and her romantic meetings

with Solomon appear to have sometimes been in a vineyard. Solomon spoke of her breasts as grapes (7:7). But Solomon's vineyard, she says, was associated with Baal-Hamon- Lord / husband of a multitude. She finally realized that he was a womanizer, who would go on to have over 1000 women in his life... Lord [or husband] of a multitude. Perhaps his 1000 wives and concubines lay behind her reference to the 1000 shekels that Solomon can have for his vineyard (8:12). But now she was splitting up with him, her vineyard was hers alone, her grapes were now solely at her disposal and were not his any more. The final couplet of the Song is one of bitter sarcasm, typical of the worst order of romantic breakup. Solomon says that his "companions"- the daughters of Jerusalem whom she had so hated- are listening carefully to her, as he is. And she responds by telling him to run away, whilst still calling him her "beloved"- for although jealousy is cruel as the grave, her love for him was unquenchable by many waters. Or perhaps this too is sarcasm. So the Song ends with Solomon in rather a bad light- off to his next women, whilst the Egyptian girl walks off the scene bitterly protesting her love for him and how she's a victim of circumstance and jealousy. Yet Solomon, presumably, authored the Song. I read it therefore in the same way as I do Ecclesiastes- his jaded statement of how life has been for him, how he sought fulfilment of his human lusts but it never worked out, leaving him with a tragic sense of unfulfilment because he had not gone God's way.

The allegorical interpretation falls down over the fact that there is no wedding scene. All we have is her nightmares of Solomon marrying the daughters of Jerusalem rather than herself. And the final scene in Song 8 where she faces the blind reality that he has married other women. Solomon wrote the Song, and ends it with him as it were having the last laugh. Her naivety, mocked by the daughters of Jerusalem, characters created by him to mock her, is revealed before all.

Song of Solomon 8:9 If she is a wall, we will build on her a turret of silver. If she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar-
The daughters of Jerusalem may be sarcastically saying that they will be the door that keeps her within the harem once they have inducted her into it, and the wall that keeps her within it. On :11,12 I discuss the payment for introducing a woman to the harem and keeping her there. "Boards of cedar" were the typical building style in Solomon's buildings, so we can assume the reference is to the house of the women which was also built with cedars. And the daughters of Jerusalem are saying they will keep the new candidate safely within it, unlike the Shulamite who escaped from it to meet secretly with Solomon.

This is the language with which Solomon once described the Egyptian girl. The daughters of Jerusalem vow to turn this young girl into a woman just as good as the Egyptian. The idea of enclosing her and keeping her as a wall may mean that they

promise to keep her chaste until the wedding, unlike the Egyptian woman whom they all knew would not have been a virgin at any wedding with Solomon (Song 5:1; 6:12).

Beloved

Song of Solomon 8:10 I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers, then I found acceptance in his eyes-
She is very confident of her own beauty, as in Song 1:5; 8:10. She comes over as bold and ever on the initiative; she goes out looking for him (Song 3:1-5; 5:6,7). She is the very fulfilment of Solomon's 'bad woman' of the Proverbs. She hears how the new queen for Solomon is still a minor and her breasts not developed yet (Ez. 16:7,8). And so she bitterly reflects about her own sexual adequacy and how "I was a wall [with turrets]", and her breasts which she speaks of were "in his eyes as one that found favour" (Song 8:10). For Solomon had repeatedly praised her breasts (Song 2:7; 3:5; 4:9; 8:14). But now she sees that was all surface level; he is going to marry a young girl from the daughters of Jerusalem, once her breasts have grown. And she has had to endure watching the engagement ceremony.

But "acceptance" translates *shalom*. She is saying that in the past, when he admired her breasts, she was seen by him as the Shulamite, the feminine form of 'Solomon'. She "was in his eyes like [the] one who has found peace" / Solomon. Then she was the Shulamite- but not now.

Song of Solomon 8:11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baal Hamon. He leased out the vineyard to keepers. Each was to bring a thousand shekels of silver for its fruit-
This is another parable of a vineyard, of which there are at least two in scripture. The vineyard may refer to virginity or sexuality (as in Song 6:11; 7:13). His 1000 shekels received for it may refer to his 1000 wives. The Songs have likened the Shulamite and her sexuality to a vineyard (Song 2:13,15), and her romantic meetings with Solomon appear to have sometimes been in a vineyard. Solomon spoke of her breasts as grapes (Song 7:7). But Solomon's vineyard was associated with Baal-Hamon- Lord / husband of a multitude. She finally realized that he was a womanizer, who would go on to have over 1000 women in his life... Lord [or husband] of a multitude.

The "keepers" would be the keepers of the "house of the women", whom Shulamite has twice clashed with, at least in her dreamscape in Song 3 and Song 5. By contrast, Shulamite says that she keeps her own vineyard- she is now free from her guards and out of that house. And as she has commented in :7, her love cannot now be bought for money. Or "Each would bring in his fruit [i.e., a virgin] for a thousand pieces of silver" could refer to the harem managers being rewarded for each woman they brought in to it. But now the Shulamite rejects both Solomon and harem life in the next verse: "My

vineyard, which belongs to me, is still before me. Keep your thousand [pieces of silver] and the two hundred for those who guard its fruit" (8:12). "Those who guard its fruit" would then refer to the guards of the harem.

It could be argued that 1000 silver shekels for rent of a vineyard was very expensive. Even in mid third century Greece, rental of a vineyard was never more than 20 silver shekels. 1000 shekels was a huge royal grant (Gen. 20:16; 2 Sam. 18:12) and was the cost of a fine vineyard in Is. 7:23: "The fine vineyards, each with a thousand vines and each worth a thousand pieces of silver, will be overgrown..." (GNB). The Shulamite could be saying that Solomon's vineyard, his harem, his being Baal Hamon, lord of the multitude, was grossly overpriced anyway. He was hollow, it was all for show, with far less real value than appeared. And she wasn't wrong. Likewise the 200 shekel payment to the vineyard guards was out of proportion. However we can also read her as saying that the 1000 women were worth only one shekel each- they were cheap women, paid only one shekel to enter the harem. And there is the suggestion that they were rented women, for the 1000 shekels is rental money. She is accusing all the others of being whores, bringing to a peak her struggles with them throughout the Song.

Song of Solomon 8:12 My own vineyard is mine alone-
Perhaps his 1000 wives and concubines lay behind her reference to the 1000 shekels that Solomon can have for his vineyard (8:12), possibly referencing the money given as reward to those who brought girls into the harem [a shekel / woman]. But now she was splitting up with him, her vineyard was hers alone, her grapes [elsewhere used as symbolic for her nipples] were now solely at her disposal and were not his any more.

The thousand are for you, Solomon; two hundred for those who tend its fruit-
I suggested on :8 that this talk of vineyards forms an inclusio with Song 1:6, where the girl's vineyard is her virginity, which she had given Solomon, much to her brothers' anger. Now she insists her vineyard is hers alone and not his. And he can let his 1000 wives (:11) have his own vineyard. Those who tend the fruit may refer to the daughters of Jerusalem, whom she saw as being responsible for getting the young girl of :8 to get engaged to Solomon, and who were the servants of his 1000 wives. "The thousand" would be an appropriate way for her to talk about the harem. This is the only place in the Song where she addresses Solomon by his name, Solomon- unusual for a wife in those days. She was supposed to call him by some title; recall how queen Esther had to address her husband. To use his first name was rude. But she is telling him things as they are...

Lover

Song of Solomon 8:13 You who dwell in the gardens, with friends in attendance, let me

hear your voice!-
This is very hard to interpret, but the idea seems to be that he addresses the Shulamite ["you" is singular feminine in the original]. He sees her as still there "in the gardens", where they used to have their trysts. And he addresses also the listening daughters of Jerusalem, the "friends in attendance" upon the young girl of :8 whom he has just gotten betrothed to. "Let me heart your voice" is the very phrase he has used to the Shulamite in Song 2:14. I take this to mean that he is asking the Shulamite, in the presence and audience of the daughters of Jerusalem, not to forsake him. He still wants to hear her voice. She responds negatively by telling him to go away (:14), and yet still calls him her beloved. This leads me to the suggestion offered on :14 that this ill-fated relationship only ends for a time; and Solomon does in fact marry Pharaoh's daughter.

We could read this as saracasm. She says she has her "friends in attendance", when Solomon knew the daughters of Jerusalem hated her. And then "let me hear your voice" could be sarcastically saying 'Speak on, speak your truth girl, just carry on'. On the other hand, he did love her to some degree, and we can read this as if he wants her with him, so he can hear her voice. She likewise replies by asking him to go away, but still calls him her "beloved". And in the end they do marry, although it was a disaster.

But the 'enclosed garden' has been a figure for virginity, and entering the garden means sex. It's as if Solomon now addresses other women in the gardens, and the attendant friends, the daughters of Jerusalem, and asks them to attend to his voice, his voice of crooning love. Hence the Shulamite sarcastically responds in :14 by telling him to indeed clear off to them.

Beloved

Song of Solomon 8:14 Go away, my beloved. Be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices-

"My beloved" is male singular. These are the words of the woman, telling Solomon to go away, and to race on to his next tryst. Earlier she has invited him to be like a gazelle or young stag on the mountains of Bether or cleavage, her own breasts (Song 2:17). Now she tells him to do the same on other mountains which have spices on them. The same word is used in Esther 2:10 of how the virgins in the house of the women, awaiting their night with the king, were prepared with "spices". Gazelles have a way of twisting and turning in a totally unpredictable way… and that was how she felt he was, always on the move, darting here and there in his endless search for sexual gratification. And so he was. Yet what happened to Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter? Despite this breakup, they did marry, and then Solomon built her a separate house at a later point. I suggest that in writing this Song, he is looking back to their initial relationship and explaining

how all went so wrong at the start, and how he now understands her motives for the relationship.

The Song ends abruptly, with the relationship at an end. The entire book has no particular plot or storyline. It begins with her talking about sex, and after various breakups and tensions, they abruptly leave each other. And this is the path of so many who live their lives without God in their relationships. There is no real plot, it's all about present pleasure, and so it ends. We are left feeling this, and seeing how this sad, vain, pointless, painful experience of "love" falsely so call will play its part in the disillusion and depression of Solomon in later life. We have the record of that in Ecclesiastes, and it is a picture of our postmodern, immoral age.

The final couplet of the Song is one of bitter sarcasm, typical of the worst order of romantic breakup. Solomon says that his "companions"- the daughters of Jerusalem whom she had so hated- are listening carefully to her, as he is. And she responds by telling him to run away, whilst still calling him her "beloved"- for although jealousy is cruel as the grave, her love for him was unquenchable by many waters. Or perhaps this too is sarcasm. So the Song ends with Solomon in rather a bad light- off to his next women, whilst the Egyptian girl walks off the scene bitterly protesting her love for him and how she's a victim of circumstance and Israelite jealousy. Yet Solomon, presumably, authored the Song. I read it therefore in the same way as I do Ecclesiastes- his jaded statement of how life has been for him, how he sought fulfilment of his human lusts but it never worked out, leaving him with a tragic sense of unfulfilment because he had not gone God's way.

We may well enquire why the Song was written and preserved. For who wants to keep such a record of a failed relationship, of passion which turned to pain? It is here that Divine inspiration comes into play. For the recording of it was inspired, as was the record of the nihilism of Solomon in Ecclesiastes, for our learning. That we might see the end of sin, of thinking that mere possession of God's truth is enough, and not personalizing it. Another take is that the girl was indeed the daughter of Pharaoh (Song 7:1), and despite this stormy start to their relationship, the break up of Song 8 was only temporary and they did in fact marry; see on Song 3:4. Indeed he found her hands were as bands, as he laments in Ecclesiastes and Proverbs about the bad woman. And yet the Song of Songs is preserved as a record of how unspiritual relationships don't ultimately work. For she turned away his heart from Yahweh to the idols of Egypt. In the end, despite the apparent victory of Solomon's lust and power at the end of the Song, it is she who wins. For she turns his heart away from Yahweh and Israel, and to her idols and Egypt.