

# Triennial Torah Study – 6<sup>th</sup> Year 25/04/2015



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Ex 39	Jer 13-15	Prov 12	Acts 9
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## Priestly Garments; The Work Completed (Exodus 39)

The priestly garments were made according to the fashion God had instructed Moses in chapter 28. The only thing left out here is the placement of the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate (see 28:30)—a step that takes place in Leviticus 8:8. Notice here the short trousers that were part of the priestly uniform. This linen undergarment, God had earlier explained, was for modesty's sake—"to cover their nakedness" (Exodus 28:42). "Given the sexually preoccupied worship of Israel's neighbor's, this provision was decidedly countercultural" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verse 42). "This modesty communicated to the Israelites that human sexuality could not influence God. That idea was a central feature of Baal worship, which continually tempted the Israelites. The priests of Baal would use obscene gestures and actions in the pagan worship of their depraved god" (note on Leviticus 6:10). In stark contrast, "Nothing obscene or unseemly was permitted in the pure worship of the living God" (note on Exodus 20:26).

With the completion of the priestly garments, the work of construction was finally finished. Verses 32-43 of chapter 39 list "all the work" that God had commanded through Moses. It was now finished. "Then Moses looked over all the work" (verse 43)—a final inspection. And the result? "And indeed they had done it; as the Lord had commanded, just so they had done it" (verse 43). May the same be said of *us* as we strive to please God in our lives. In the end, Moses blessed them, just as Messiah will bless us if we follow God's instructions.

## The Waistband and the Wine Jugs (Jeremiah 13)

We turn back now to chapter 13 of Jeremiah, as most of what it describes—starting in verse 6 and continuing to the end of the chapter—appears to fall during the three-month reign of the 18-year-old Jeconiah, who was apparently heavily guided in his rule by his mother Nehushta (compare verse 18; 22:24-27; 29:2; 2 Kings 24:8, 12). The events of the first five verses of Jeremiah 13, however, likely happened during the reign of Jeconiah's father Jehoiakim, as we will see—perhaps soon after the events of chapters 11 and 12.

God starts out telling Jeremiah to obtain a linen "girdle" (13:1, KJV). There is a difference of opinion as to exactly what this piece of clothing was. Many say the Hebrew here should be translated belt. Some say sash. Others contend that a waistcloth, or loincloth, is meant. Still others argue for a skirt or kilt, or even shorts. It is

not clear whether the girdle was decorative outerwear or an undergarment. What is clear is that it was worn around the waist (verses 2, 4, 11). This was to symbolize Israel and Judah, which God had bound to Himself by covenant—and which relied on clinging to God’s very being to be “held up,” so to speak (compare verse 11).

The waistband would also have been valuable. All of this was fitting symbolism for Israel and Judah. “Linen was a costly material (Is 3.23, 24), often imported from Egypt (Pr 7.16). The Israelites generally reserved its use for making exquisite furnishings, such as those in the sacred tent [the tabernacle] (Ex 26.1, 31, 13), and fine garments, such as those worn by the priests (28.39) or a favored person (Es 8.15; Ez 16.10.13)” (“A Waste of Fine Material,” *The Word in Life Bible*, sidebar on Jeremiah 13:1-11). Israel, rescued from Egypt and supported by God, was to be a special treasure and chosen priesthood. The waistband was not supposed to get wet (verse 1), as this would cause it to begin deteriorating.

God then instructs Jeremiah to take the waistband to the River Euphrates (Hebrew *Perath*) far to the north and hide it in a hole. “This would have meant a round-trip journey of some seven hundred miles—a trip that would have taken two to three months” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 3-5). And Jeremiah ends up going twice. Not believing that the prophet would have left his responsibilities in Judah for so long, some commentators argue that *Perath* should in this instance be rendered Ephrathah (another name for Bethlehem) or Parah (a town of Benjamin, Joshua 18:23), both of which were quite near Jerusalem. Yet the Euphrates seems far more likely.

First of all, *Perath* normally denotes the Euphrates in Scripture. The objection that Jeremiah would not have left his duties for so long is improper reasoning since his duty would always be to go where God told him. Consider also that Jeremiah preached for many, many years in Judah—so an absence of a few months is not at all unreasonable. God could even have supernaturally sped up Jeremiah’s journey if time was a factor. Most important, however, is the *symbolism* of the Euphrates. The land promised to Israel actually extended all the way to the Euphrates (Exodus 23:31; Deuteronomy 11:24)—and reached as far in the days of David and Solomon (2 Samuel 8:3, 6; 1 Kings 4:21, 24). *Beyond* the Euphrates was the territory of the Mesopotamian powers—previously Assyria and now Babylon. The Euphrates itself was the crossing point. The “hiding” of the waistband there would seem to imply God’s people seeking refuge and help from the powers of Mesopotamia. This was true of their national alliances. It was also true religiously, since the false gods the people worshiped originated in Babylon. The people of Israel were ultimately taken beyond the Euphrates themselves—in captivity. And the same would soon befall the people of Judah.

(Interestingly, the Euphrates continues to play a part in Bible prophecy right to the end of the age of mankind—see Revelation 16:12-14.)

The expression “after many days” in Jeremiah 13:6 could actually mean that Jeremiah didn’t return to the Euphrates until years later. If a few months of travel were required for the journey, the events of the first part of the chapter must have happened prior to Jeconiah’s three-month reign—thus sometime during his father’s reign.

Spending years in a hole by a river—far away from its owner—there was no way the waistband would not get wet and dirty and thus suffer damage. Indeed, Jeremiah finds it rotted and worthless. This parallels what happened to Israel and Judah: “Rather than clinging to the Lord, the people chose to worship idols (13:10). They became as useless to God as Jeremiah’s rotten linen belt was to him. The processes in [the physical realm of] creation often parallel the realities of the spiritual realm. Spiritual decay may not be as obvious as the damage of moisture to buried cloth, but the results are even worse.... Jeremiah’s ruined belt still paints a vivid picture of our ruined condition [when we fail to cling to God and His ways]” (“INDepth: Jeremiah’s Symbolic Acts,” *Nelson Study Bible*, sidebar on Jeremiah 13).

God then tells Jeremiah to say to the people, “Every wine jug is to be filled with wine”—to which the people basically respond, “Of course they are” (compare verse 12). Commentators believe the statement Jeremiah made was a proverb of the time. Some think it meant “good times ahead”—and that the complacent Jews were saying they already knew this (indeed, the false prophets had told them so). Yet it may also be that the statement was a proverb denoting a truism—that wine jugs were made to hold wine. Either way, the common

understanding of this proverb was not what God meant by it. He meant that the people, as the wine jugs, were going to be filled with His wrath until they reeled as if drunk: “As wine intoxicates, so God’s wrath and judgments shall reduce them to that state of helpless distraction that they shall rush on to their own ruin (ch. 25:15; 49:12; Isa. 51:17, 21, 22; 63:6)” (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown’s Commentary*, note on Jeremiah 13:12). In verse 17, we again see Jeremiah’s tremendous heart of feeling. As bold as his pronouncements have been, he knows he will deeply lament with weeping when his countrymen are carried away captive.

We then see a message for the king and queen mother (verse 18)—again, most likely Jeconiah and Nehushta. They would be exiled to Babylon very soon. The mention of the “cities of the South” in Judah (verse 19) is evidently to point out that even these—though located the farthest away from northern invasion (see verse 20)—will be shut up in a siege that no one will break. And *all* Judah—the whole land—will be taken captive. The nation will be stripped of her people and violated (verses 20-22, 26). God depicts the sins of Jerusalem as a prostitute that has no shame—sentenced for adultery and immorality, having forgotten Him to whom they were bound by covenant and trusting in false idols (verses 25, 27).

God speaks a now-famous proverb in verse 23—concerning Ethiopian skin color and leopard spots—that implies people cannot change their character and live rightly. “Habit is second nature...it is morally impossible that the Jews can alter their inveterate habits of sin” (*JFB*, note on verse 23). Yet notice God’s remarkable statement at the end of the chapter: “Woe to you, O Jerusalem! Will you still not be made clean?” (verse 27). The fact is, while the Jews were incapable of transforming themselves into people of right character, they actually could “*be made clean*”—through the miraculous power of God. Yet they had to respond to Him and cling to Him for this to happen. But alas, they did not.

The same situation remains true for everyone. While the normal human mind is hostile against God and cannot be subject to His law (Romans 8:7), through the transforming power of God we can be changed. Indeed, we *must* be changed. That is the message of the whole Bible.

### **Droughts Will Give Way to More Severe Punishment (Jeremiah 14:1-15:9)**

Drought, first apparently mentioned in 12:4, continues to afflict the land (14:1-6; see also 23:10). Things get so bad that the people resort to calling on God, Jeremiah here recording the people’s plea for relief in which they confessed their sins and asked God to save them for His own name’s sake (14:7-9). This was according to the prayer Solomon had long before prayed at the temple’s dedication: “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess your name, and turn from their sin because you afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance” (1 Kings 8:35-36).

But there was a major problem here. The people confessed but they did not “turn from their sin” as Solomon had stated. They asked God to act for the sake of His name (His reputation) after they had, by their wicked conduct, profaned God’s name among the nations—and would not desist from doing so. Therefore, their repentance is meaningless and God will not accept it. He knows that such pleas always come in times of need. In the past He answered the calls over and over again. This time He has drawn the line and will follow through with the threatened punishment (Jeremiah 14:10). Again, God tells Jeremiah not to pray for the people (verse 11; compare 7:16; 11:14).

In verse 12 of chapter 14, God says that He will not accept any of their hypocritical displays of piety but will send worse punishment than just the droughts. The people will be consumed by the sword (of warfare), by famine and by pestilence (disease epidemics). Centuries before, King David was given a choice between these three punishments for sin (see 2 Samuel 24:13). But the people of Judah would now suffer all three (Jeremiah 14:12; compare 16:4; 24:10; 27:8, 13; 29:17-18; Ezekiel 14:21). Indeed, these terrible occurrences

have often formed a cycle in human history. In war, people are pillaged, their crops and livestock ruined, their water taken or polluted. This leads to famine. Widespread malnourishment then weakens people to the point of greater susceptibility to infection with disease.

Jeremiah's love for the people is obvious. While he is not allowed to pray for the people's deliverance from punishment, he proposes mitigating circumstances that may alleviate the people's guilt to some degree. "He says it's the prophets' fault. The prophets have misled the ordinary folks. There are two things to note here. First, we are each responsible for our own choices. We can't pass that on to anyone else, even preachers! Second, the prophets *were* guilty of misleading Judah and would suffer more greatly than others [compare James 1:1-3]. [But] don't suppose that 'he said it was all right' or 'I was obeying orders' relieves us of responsibility" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on Jeremiah 14:13-16, emphasis added).

In verses 17-18, God gives Jeremiah a lament to utter when the prophesied punishment actually comes. "Jeremiah's tears, portraying his own and the Lord's anguish over a destroyed people, are part of his message to them and have the force of an 'acted oracle.' They show the backlash of the message of doom on him who preaches it, and none should preach destruction who cannot weep for those under its threat" (*New Bible Commentary*, note on verse 17). Surely we will feel the same when we see our nations suffer in the years ahead. Indeed, many tears were shed by God's people over the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York. Thus we can certainly empathize with Jeremiah.

At the end of verse 18, it is not clear in this case if the "land they do not know" is a foreign land or their homeland so devastated as to be unrecognizable. Eventually, as other prophecies make clear, they will be removed to a foreign land.

In verses 19-22, the people make another empty plea for mercy. "The people of Judah based their hope for relief on an appeal to God to act for the sake of (1) His name, (2) His temple (e.g., His 'glorious throne'), and (3) His covenant. Why was the plea empty? Because Israel's blatant idolatry had already dragged God's name through the mud. His temple was defiled by those who supposed they could [brazenly] sin and still worship. And His covenant had been broken by those who now wanted to claim it. There comes a time when only judgment can preserve God's honor" (*Bible Reader's Companion*, note on verse 21).

So God responds in Jeremiah 15:1-9 with His determination to proceed. Moses and Samuel were among the great leaders of God who interceded for Israel with favorable results (Exodus 32:11; 1 Samuel 7:9). But even *their* intercession would avail nothing for the people now. Verse 2 of Jeremiah 15 is rather ominous, telling the prophet to respond to inquiries about where to go (i.e., what to do now) with the pronouncement of judgment. "The imagery of dogs, birds and beasts devouring human flesh vividly illustrates not only death but desecration" (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 3-4). These animals may also portray gentile nations here. "The basis for this desecration is the defilement of Jerusalem that took place during the reign of Manasseh, when idolatry reigned in the temple courts and children were sacrificed to Molech" (note on verses 3-4). Manasseh was the most evil king Judah ever had (2 Kings 21:9-18). It seems he did turn to God later, but had caused much damage to the relationship between Judah and God. "He was now dead, but the effects of his sins still remained. How much evil one bad man can cause! The evil fruits remain even after he himself has received repentance and forgiveness. The people had followed his wicked example ever since; and it is implied that it was only through the long-suffering of God that the penal consequences had been suspended up to the present time (cf. I Kings 14:16; II Kings 21:11; 23:26; 24:3, 4)" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 4).

### **"As Waters That Fail?" (Jeremiah 15:10-21)**

Jeremiah has faithfully pronounced the message God has told him to. But no one, of course, is happy to hear it. His comment regarding not having lent for interest is "proverbial for, 'I have given no cause for strife against me'" (*Jamieson, Fausset & Brown's Commentary*, note on verse 10). Yet his preaching has generated nothing *but* strife it seems. Everyone hates him, whereupon Jeremiah is understandably dejected. He wishes

he hadn't been born. "Note that his call was from the womb and that God decreed from birth that he would be a prophet (see 1.5; 20:14-18)" (*The HarperCollins Study Bible*, 1993, note on Jeremiah 15:10).

The Hebrew of verse 11 is difficult. The New Revised Standard Version renders it, "The LORD said: Surely I have intervened in your life for good, surely I have imposed enemies on you in a time of trouble and in a time of distress." But, God asks in verse 12, can anyone break iron and bronze? This appears to symbolize Jeremiah, whom God referred to as an "iron pillar" and "bronze walls" in his call (1:18; compare 15:20). That is, God would protect him.

In verses 13-14 it is not clear whether God is speaking to Jeremiah or to Judah again. The latter seems more likely but some have suggested that Jeremiah is to experience some measure of punishment as a representative of the people—perhaps, in some sense, as a type of Messiah. We do know that Jeremiah was later carried away against his will to Egypt. In any case, Jeremiah asks that God, in fairness, would protect him and take vengeance on the real wrongdoers, those who are persecuting him. The prophet declares his faithfulness to God. He "ate" God's words—accepting and internalizing them and finding joy in them (verse 16). He was not part of the assembly of mockers because 1) he would not mock God's message and 2) what he preached prevented him from being part of the assembly at all—he was isolated from everyone.

In verse 18, we see Jeremiah in great anguish over his predicament. But then he goes too far. Having declared his own faithfulness, he actually accuses God of faithlessness. God is the fountain of living waters (2:13), but now Jeremiah wonders if He is not like a dried up stream as far as the prophet's welfare is concerned.

In 15:19, God responds with a gentle rebuke. It is a rebuke because God calls on Jeremiah to "return"—the Old Testament word for *repent*. He tells him to "take the precious from the vile"—an "image from metals: 'If thou wilt separate what is precious in thee (the divine graces imparted) from what is vile (thy natural corruptions, impatience, and hasty words), thou shalt be as My mouth': my mouthpiece (Exod. 4:16)" (*JFB Commentary*, note on Jeremiah 15:19). God warns him, "Let them return to you [that is, let the people change to walking in your right, faithful ways], but you must not return to them [you must not change to walking in their wrong, faithless ways]." If Jeremiah turns from his negative, wrong thoughts, then he will be able to continue in God's service and God will continue to protect him, just as was promised at Jeremiah's initial call (verse 20). It is in this way that God's rebuke is gentle, for it is accompanied by a wonderful positive reassurance of His enduring faithfulness even despite the weakness of His servant. This is something for which we should all be ever so grateful.

## **First Part of Major Solomonic Collection Cont'd (Proverbs 11:1-27)**

### **6. *What the Lord Abhors (11:1-21)***

"In 11:1-21 a group of proverb collections are held together by the inclusio formed by 'the Lord abhors' and 'he delights' in vv. 1,20 [NIV].

- "MORAL INTEGRITY AND GOD'S JUDGEMENT. *Type: Chiastic (11:1-4)*....Verse 1 describes God's abhorrence of fraud, and v. 4 answers it with the promise that the wrongfully gained wealth of the wicked will do them no good in the day of judgment. Between these verses vv. 2-3 assert that humility and integrity, rather than their opposites, are the best guides in life" (*NAC*).

In its note on verse 1, *The Bible Reader's Companion* says: "Leviticus 19:35-36 forbids the use of 'dishonest standards,' weighted to favor the merchant rather than the seller [he buys from] or buyer [to whom he sells]. The Jewish Talmud calls for meticulous efforts to keep this command, decreeing that 'the shopkeeper must wipe his measures twice a week, his weights once a week, and his scales after every weighing,' to keep any substance from throwing them off. We can't be too careful trying to be fair with others."

As previously noted, the language of Proverbs 11:4 is similar to that of 10:2.

- “SALVATION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS. *Type: Thematic, Parallel Proverb Pair (11:5-6)*....These two proverbs parallel each other and describe the respective fates of the righteous and the wicked...
- “DEATH OF A SINNER. *Type: Inclusio, Proverb Pair (11:7-8)*....As the text stands, these two proverbs are bound by the inclusio of the word ‘wicked’ in v. 7a and v. 8b.... In addition, these verses assert that God brings utter destruction to the wicked and imply a promise of eternal life to the righteous” (NAC).  
As earlier noted, v. 7 contains language similar to that of 10:28.
- “DESTRUCTIVE LIPS. *Type: Chiastic, with an Afterward (11:9-13)*....Verses 10-11 are an obvious pair in parallel, whereas vv. 9,12 are bound by the theme of the slanderous gossip of the wicked against restrained silence of the righteous....Verse [13] is an afterward on the subject of the tongue” (NAC).  
Verse 10 may seem odd in light of the unpopularity of God’s servants among the nations of the world. However, despite persecution, it does make sense that others rejoice when the righteous are doing well: “Why should the community rejoice in the prosperity of the righteous? Because both the way a righteous man gains his wealth and the way he uses it benefits society. The righteous businessman employs others, supports schools and government with his taxes and in the O[ld] T[estament] tradition, shares generously” (*Bible Reader’s Companion*, note on verses 10-11). And often people enjoy seeing justice where the good guy wins.
- “NATIONAL AND PERSONAL PRUDENCE. *Type: Parallel (11:14-15)*....Both proverbs here follow the pattern ‘imprudent action brings disaster / prudent action gives security,’ but the first involves national matters where the second concerns personal business” (NAC).  
Verse 14 explains that it’s vital to get counsel from a number of sources than can be weighed together in making important decisions (see also 15:22; 20:18; 24:6).

Proverbs 11:15 should also be read in light of the next listed proverb in verse 16. “These two proverbs balance each other. The first warns against rashly giving surety or a pledge for a stranger. The second praises generosity [as being ‘gracious’ or ‘kindhearted’ (NIV) surely includes]; generosity begets honor” (*Nelson Study Bible*, note on verses 15-16). Verse 16, discussed next, should also be read in the context of the next verse, with which it is parallel.

- “KINDNESS AND CRUELTY. *Type: Parallel (11:16-17)*....The pattern of these two proverbs is ‘kind woman / cruel man // kind man / ruthless man.’ By itself v. 16 could be read cynically (‘A kind woman gets respect, but a cruel man gets rich’...to justify unscrupulous behavior. In conjunction with v. 17, however, the self-destructive nature of the ‘hard-nosed’ approach to life is apparent....
- “THE WAGES OF SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS. *Type: Chiasmus (11:18-19)*....This pair has the chiasm pattern [in this case *a-b-b-a*] ‘wicked man / he who sows righteousness / righteousness / he who pursues evil’....Note that this pair has links to vv. 16-17. The wealth of the cruel man corresponds to deceptive wages as the honor given a kind woman is genuine. Also the health/self-inflicted pain of v. 17 corresponds to the life and death of v. 19.
- “DIVINE JUDGMENT. *Type: Parallel (11:20-21)*....God’s attitude toward individuals (disgust / pleasure) in v. 20 corresponds to the outcome of their lives (inescapable trouble / deliverance) in v. 21”—which also impacts their children (NAC).

#### 7. **Beauty Without Discretion (11:22)** “TYPE: INDIVIDUAL PROVERB”(NAC).

#### 8. **Generosity and Selfishness (11:23-27)**

“TYPE: INCLUSIO....Verses 23,27 closely parallel each other and form an inclusio around vv. 24-26, all of which center on the theme of generosity and selfishness. The inclusio states the general truth that one receives back according to one’s own behavior while vv. 24-26 deal with the concrete issue of hoarding [and refusing to sell currently at a fair price]” (NAC).

The picture of the one who scatters abroad increasing more—the generous person being made rich—is similar to Ecclesiastes 11:1: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.” The good we do will be returned to us in different ways. Just on a human level, a selfish, stingy person will likely make enemies,

a factor that will probably hurt him later—even financially perhaps. The generous person will make friends who will be there to contribute to his prosperity and well-being later. But there is more to the universe than that—as there is a real God who blesses generosity and curses greed and selfishness.

Yeshua likewise taught: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

Of course, the passages here are not a promise of material wealth in this lifetime in return for being generous. The greatest riches are spiritual ones—though this does include the promised hope of possessing the entire universe as co-heirs with Messiah.

## **Acts 9**

### Chapter Contents

The conversion of Saul. (1-9) Saul converted preaches Messiah. (10-22) Saul is persecuted at Damascus, and goes to Jerusalem. (23-31) Cure of Eneas. (32-35) Dorcas raised to life. (36-43)

So ill-informed was Saul, that he thought he ought to do all he could against the name of Messiah, and that he did God service thereby; he seemed to breathe in this as in his element. Let us not despair of renewing grace for the conversion of the greatest sinners, nor let such despair of the pardoning mercy of God for the greatest sin. It is a signal token of Divine favour, if God, by the inward working of his grace, or the outward events of his providence, stops us from prosecuting or executing sinful purposes. Saul saw that Just One, 14; 26:13. How near to us is the unseen world! It is but for God to draw aside the veil, and objects are presented to the view, compared with which, whatever is most admired on earth is mean and contemptible. Saul submitted without reserve, desirous to know what the Yeshua would have him to do. Messiah’s discoveries of himself to poor souls are humbling; they lay them very low, in mean thoughts of themselves. For three days Saul took no food, and it pleased God to leave him for that time without relief. His sins were now set in order before him; he was in the dark concerning his own spiritual state, and wounded in spirit for sin. When a sinner is brought to a proper sense of his own state and conduct, he will cast himself wholly on the mercy of the Saviour, asking what he would have him to do. God will direct the humbled sinner, and though he does not often bring transgressors to joy and peace in believing, without sorrows and distress of conscience, under which the soul is deeply engaged as to eternal things, yet happy are those who sow in tears, for they shall reap in joy. A good work was begun in Saul, when he was brought to Messiah’s feet with those words, Master, what wilt thou have me to do? And never did Messiah leave any who were brought to that. Behold, the proud Pharisee, the unmerciful oppressor, the daring blasphemer, prayeth! And thus it is even now, and with the proud, or the abandoned sinner. What happy tidings are these to all who understand the nature and power of prayer, of such prayer as the humbled sinner presents for the blessings of free salvation! Now he began to pray after another manner than he had done; before, he said his prayers, now, he prayed them. Regenerating grace sets people on praying; you may as well find a living man without breath. Yet even eminent disciples, like Ananias, sometimes stagger at the commands of the Almighty. But it is the Master’s glory to surpass our scanty expectations, and show that those are vessels of his mercy whom we are apt to consider as objects of his vengeance. The teaching of the Spirit of Truth takes away the scales of ignorance and pride from the understanding; then the sinner becomes a new creature, and endeavours to recommend the anointed Saviour, the Son of God, to his former companions.

When we enter into the way of God, we must look for trials; but the Eternal One knows how to deliver the godly, and will, with the temptation, also make a way to escape. Though Saul’s conversion was and is a proof of the truth of The Way, yet it could not, of itself, convert one soul at enmity with the truth; for nothing can produce true faith, but that power which new-creates the heart. Believers are apt to be too suspicious of those against whom they have prejudices. The world is full of deceit, and it is necessary to be cautious, but we must exercise charity, 1 Corinthians 13:5. The Lord will clear up the characters of true believers; and he will bring

them to his people, and often gives them opportunities of bearing testimony to his truth, before those who once witnessed their hatred to it. Messiah now appeared to Saul, and ordered him to go quickly out of Jerusalem, for he must be sent to the Gentiles: see 21. Messiah's witnesses cannot be slain till they have finished their testimony. The persecutions were stayed. The professors of the gospel walked uprightly, and enjoyed much comfort from the Set Apart Spirit, in the hope and peace of the gospel, and others were won over to them. They lived upon the comfort of the Set Apart Spirit, not only in the days of trouble and affliction, but in days of rest and prosperity. Those are most likely to walk cheerfully, who walk circumspectly.