

By Joseph F. Dumond

This week's Triennial Torah reading can be found at:

https://sightedmoon.com/sightedmoon_2015/files/TriennialCycleBeginningAviv.pdf

| | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Deut 18 | 1 Chron 22-24 | 2 Thes 1-3 |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|

The Prophet and False Prophets (Deuteronomy 18)

Israel is again cautioned against learning “to follow the abominations” of the people living in the land, including the practices of witchcraft, sorcery or divination (verses 9-14). In contrast to pagan soothsayers, Moses prophesies that God would eventually raise up a Prophet like himself, referring to the coming of Jesus Christ (verses 15-19; see John 1:45; Acts 3:22-23). He makes clear that just as the words from God that he proclaimed were to be obeyed, so it would be with this future Prophet. And indeed, like Moses, Jesus came as an Announcer of God's law and as a Mediator of a covenant based on that law. In short, Christ's words were to be followed—whereas others who would falsely claim to be prophets would have to be rejected (Deuteronomy 18:20).

Christ would later confirm that many false prophets would come to deceive the many (compare Matthew 24:4-5, 11). Sadly, this problem has always persisted among God's people (2 Peter 2:1-3). Moses gives a clue as to how to determine whether a person is a prophet of God or not: “When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not happen or come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously” (Deuteronomy 18:22). But one word of caution here: Sometimes, false prophets will foretell the future accurately (see 13:1-5)—and God Himself may even be behind it (see Numbers 22:20, 38; 23:12). Yet even if someone relays many correct prophecies, the verse quoted above basically tells us that if there is just one instance where he claims that God has, apart from Scripture, specially and directly communicated to his mind regarding some event that will happen and the event does not come to pass as he proclaimed it would, that alone would make him a false prophet—that is, unless the proclamation is a warning of divine punishment and those to whom it is directed repent, as all such prophecies are contingent upon whether the recipients repent or not (compare Jeremiah 18:6-8; Jonah 3). And, of course, as explained in the highlights for Deuteronomy 13, someone's fulfilled prophecies are to be measured against his teachings and deeds. We are never to follow anyone's anti-biblical teachings or evil practices.

Preparing for the Temple; Pursue Wisdom (1 Chronicles 21:28-22:19; Proverbs 4:1-9) The threshing floor David purchases from Ornan the Jebusite eventually becomes the site of the temple Solomon builds. How did David know to choose that site for the temple? In our last reading, we were informed that this is where God directed that a new altar be built (1 Chronicles 21:18)—one that He miraculously sanctioned by fire from heaven (verse 26). The passage in 22:1 sounds like a light suddenly came on in David’s mind as he mentally connected the dots. “By the miraculous sign of fire from heaven, and perhaps other intimations, David understood it to be the will of God that the national place of worship should be fixed there, and he forthwith proceeded to make preparations for the erection of the temple on that spot” (Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown Commentary, note on verse 1). “...This is to be the house because this is the altar. The temple was built for the sake of the altar” (Matthew Henry’s Commentary, note on verse 1).

It is interesting to consider the fact that the site was a threshing floor, where chaff was separated from grain. Speaking of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist said, “His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire” (Luke 3:17).

Although David is not allowed to build the temple himself (1 Chronicles 22:8), he has not been prevented from conducting preparations for it—and these he carries out thoroughly and abundantly (verse 5). David instructs Solomon on what to do regarding this temple, points out his need for wisdom—which Solomon remembers at a critical point (2 Chronicles 1:7-10)—and admonishes him to obey God (instruction he will not continue to do so well with over the course of his life).

David also makes it quite clear that Solomon is to be the next king. He recounts God’s original promise concerning Solomon in 1 Chronicles 22:9-10. These verses are dual in application, referring to both Solomon and the future Messiah. Solomon’s name means “Peaceful.” And note that God specifically and specially calls him “My son.” Solomon’s mostly peaceful reign is a definite type of the coming peaceful reign on earth of David’s descendant Jesus Christ, the ultimate Prince of Peace and Son of God—who is commissioned by God the Father to build a spiritual temple, the Church.

In Proverbs 4:1-9, we find Solomon passing David’s instructions about obedience and the pursuit of wisdom and understanding on to his own children. In this passage, we have words of David recorded outside his psalms or the accounts of his life. And they are words we would all do well to heed.

David Organizes the Levites (1 Chronicles 23:2-32)

In addition to his preparations for the building of the temple, David also organizes the temple duties and personnel. This chapter introduces that organization. It deals primarily with those Levites who were to assist the priests in “the work of the service of the house of God” (verses 24, 28, 32), and gives a brief description of the work they were to do. It also points out

specifically that the descendants of Moses were not given any special job beyond that of their fellow Kohathites (verses 14-17).

Note in verse 27 that David makes a change in how the Levites are to be numbered. Previously the Levites were not counted for service until age 30, apparently because the work of breaking down, transporting and setting up the tabernacle was considered too demanding and meticulous for younger men (verse 3; compare Numbers 4:2-3, 22-23, 29-30). At the end of his life, David points out that this constant moving of the tabernacle will no longer be necessary (1 Chronicles 23:25-26), and he allows the Levites to enter into the temple service at age 20, the age of “adulthood” for the rest of the tribes.

Solomon Installed as Co-Regent (1 Chronicles 23:1; 1 Kings 1:28-53)

David puts an end to the question of succession by putting Solomon on the throne before his death—in a great and dramatic public display. This practice becomes fairly common among Israelite kings, as we will see later on.

Adonijah is understandably terrified. His “quest for mercy at the bloodstained (Lev. 4:7, 18, 25, 30) horns of the altar was in keeping with the traditional function of the altar as a haven of refuge for those who had committed unintentional crimes (Exodus 21:12-14)” (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 50-53). Adonijah’s treason, however, is far from unintentional—so the king sends men to remove him from there. Yet, for the time being, Adonijah is spared any punishment—Solomon giving him temporary clemency no doubt out of respect for David. But Solomon’s words indicate that there will yet be an evaluation of him. And Adonijah’s future actions will demonstrate his real character, as we will see.

David Organizes the Priests and Levites Into Courses (1 Chronicles 24)

Twenty-four chief men are chosen to head up the courses of priests who are to serve in some sort of rotating fashion at the temple. Note that Ahimelech, the son of Abiathar, has taken over his father’s priestly duties, which has apparently been the case for some time (compare 18:16; 2 Samuel 8:17), even before Abiathar’s siding with Adonijah.

Of some interest is the eighth course, given to Abijah (1 Chronicles 24:10), in whose division John the Baptist’s father Zacharias was serving some 1,000 years later when he received his visit from the angel Gabriel regarding John’s birth (see Luke 1:5-23). When their service was completed, the priests in each course could return home to their families, as Zacharias did (Luke 1:23).

Tradition tells us that each course served for one week at a time (except during the three festival seasons, when all courses served together). And Scripture gives an indication that this was likely the case. While dealing specifically with the gatekeepers (who were Levites, but not priests), 1 Chronicles 9:25 states that each division of them served for seven days. That this was probably also the case with the priests is indicated by the fact that the Levites assigned to serve at the temple were also divided by lot into 24 courses (24:19-31).

Lining these weeks up on the Hebrew calendar gives indication as to when Zacharias served—and thus when John the Baptist was conceived, as well as Christ, who was conceived six months later (compare Luke 1:26, 36). This would put John’s birth in the spring of the year and Christ’s birth in the autumn. (For more details, see “Why Jesus Christ Wasn’t Born on Dec. 25,” Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?, p. 8).

2 Thess 1

It does not take long for us to realize that the believers in Thessalonica during the time of Paul’s letter to them are going through a persecution. He writes in verse 3 “... we ourselves boast of you among the assemblies of Elohim for your endurance and belief in all your persecutions and afflictions which you are bearing...” and Paul counts this unto “the Righteous judgment of Elohim. Persecution by the world is evidence of righteous living. We would do well to remember this in times of trial. Paul ensures these believers that Elohim shall rightly repay us when we afflicts those who afflict us in this present age.

So we see in chapter one, Paul engaged in words to uplift these believers for all they are going through and reminds them of their great hope of the revelation and return of Messiah to rule and reign. If they endure now, they shall overcome and be in His Presence while their persecutors shall be exiled and expelled.

2 Thess 2

There must be a rumor afoot in chapter two, for we read of some of the believers are concerned that Messiah has already come and that they have been “left behind” somehow. Paul writes, “we ask you not to become easily unsettled in mind or troubled by anything; whether a spirit or something someone says or by something someone writes.” If we hear that Messiah has come and the resurrection has already happened — don’t believe it and do not be deceived and become anxious over these words. There are also things that must happen first, he writes to them.

The falling away is to come first. The “falling away” is the Greek word apostasia. G646 — Strong ?????????? apostasia

ap-os-tas-ee'-ah Feminine of the same as G647; defection from truth (properly the state), (“apostasy”): – falling away, forsake.

Now even though the definition and meaning of this word Paul uses, as found from e-sword states: defection from truth, we also see in parentheses “properly, the state” This is profoundly interesting. Let us put ourselves back into context with this letter, the audience, and the historical context. Paul is writing to young believers. The Gospel is new among them and they are being persecuted by the secular worldly sects around them. These ones who are persecuting them are preaching “another gospel”. They are deceivers. They are tares among the wheat. At the time of Paul’s writing and letter, they are very easily recognized. They are outside the young and committed assembly of believers in Thessalonica but they are trying to “get inside” and get inside through deception and lies.

Here is our question that may help us understand what Paul is saying: If the falling away is to come, falling away from what? There is a covenant between Elohim and His People. These young believers in Thessalonica have entered into that covenant by faith. As Paul tells us and we all know, that where believers are in covenant with Elohim – there also will be the wicked one. Always. The wicked one sows his seed and the Holy One sows His seed. They grow together. Paul knows, that the young and committed assembly will be infected with the wicked seed and that seed will grow and grow and sow the doctrine of lawlessness among them, verse 7 “for the secret of lawlessness is already at work”. He admonishes them, “do not be deceived” just as our Messiah warns us to take heed.

The doctrine of lawlessness will take hold within the assembly and we have seen this literally take place throughout the centuries without question. The doctrines of demons teaching that the Torah of Elohim is old and no longer applies to believers of today is “a” doctrine of lawlessness sown by the wicked one.

Paul is now telling us that there will come a falling away first. Who is falling away and from what? We should take note that Paul is speaking now to them of things to come, things to come before the return of Messiah so we know that he is speaking of the end of this age. He is speaking to these believers at Thessalonica concerning things they will not even be around to witness for they will have gone to sleep.

We have a clue in verse 7 with the phrase: “comes out of the midst” This phrase is not dissimilar from “come out of her my people” If good and evil are growing together, as the wheat and tares and they look the same – what is it that causes the revelation of who they really are? It is their fruit. As the wicked ones continue in their lawlessness (Torahlessness) and the righteous ones return to Torah and do the “works of righteousness” and return to keeping the commandments for life... all of the sudden BOTH will be revealed. This is why the falling away (the coming out of the midst of the righteous, and the divorcement from the lawless assembly) will in fact reveal the wicked one, the man of sin. It is up to believers to reveal the man of sin, by living according to the commandments.

Those who do not receive the love of the truth in the assembly (truth is contrasted with lawlessness), verse 10, will be sent a strong delusion from God, verse 11.

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. Psalm 119:142 As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

Daniel 9:13

The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. Malachi 2:6

For the law was given by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. John 1:17

Why are they sent a strong delusion? In order that all should be judged who did not believe the truth, but have delighted in the unrighteousness, verse 12. The purpose is to expose them.

Chapter 2 ends with more uplifting words by Paul to them to stand fast, praise Elohim for choosing them from the beginning and to wait in expectation of their great hope and promise.

2 Thess 3

In this chapter we see further evidence of the infiltration of ones in their assemblies that may not belong there (possible tares) who do not want to work and act disorderly and cause unrest. Paul advises them to admonish and teach these ones as brothers and try to help them. But if they do not respond to this advice, help, and kindness he also tells them: withdraw from these people (come out of their midst) and do not keep company with them, so that that person is put to shame. In doing this, the one is “revealed” and they might be saved or they will put away the lawless from among them.