

Triennial Torah Study – 2nd Year 20/08/2011

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Ex 29	Isaiah 50-54	Ps 149-151	John 19
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Ex 29

<http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/Exodus/default.aspx>

In order to be placed in the service of God's tabernacle, there needed to be specific duties carried out that would prepare and purify Aaron and his sons. Aaron and his sons were consecrated (purified) and sanctified (set apart for a special purpose) before God. The priests officiated at the earthly altar of the Creator God of the universe. They were to carry out their duties with a sense of awe, because of His holiness (Psalm 99:9). They were not to be careless in any way. To violate what might have been viewed as minor details in their duties could have resulted in death. God is holy and He must be obeyed and worshiped according to His will. As The Nelson Study Bible notes on Exodus 28:43: "It is difficult for us to grasp the gravity of the priests' responsibility as they ministered before the living God. They had to serve God with a pure heart, to represent the people without guile, and to worship without deviating from the commands of God. To fail would invite judgment—even death. Sadly, priests did die because they failed to show respect for the holiness of God (Leviticus 10:1, 2; 1 Samuel 4:17; 2 Samuel 6:7). Of course, these are major issues with which we must all be concerned. In light of the fact that, as mentioned before, God refers to His people today as "a holy priesthood" and even "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:5, 9), we should consider such passages very soberly. Still, God is a God of grace. If we slip up and sin, the answer is to repent and go to Him for forgiveness and restoration, trusting in His kindness and mercy.

Isaiah 50-54

God—that is, the preincarnate Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:4)—was married to the nation of Israel by covenant. Isaiah 50:1, as commentaries generally agree, implies that He maintained this relationship and did not issue a certificate of divorce to His people. "Though the Lord had put away Israel, as a husband might put away a wife, it was for only a short period of exile (see 54:5-7; 62:4) and not permanently. Permanent exile would have required a certificate of divorce (see Deut. 24:1-4)" (Nelson Study Bible, note on Isaiah 50:1). Yet this would seem to contradict Jeremiah 3, where God stated that He did indeed issue a certificate of divorce. How do we resolve this?

In Jeremiah 3, it is clear that God divorced the northern tribes of Israel (verse 8), but not the southern nation of Judah—the Jews. "No prophet suggested that God had completely broken His covenant; rather, they predicted God's faithfulness to a remnant who would return (Mic.

4:9, 10). Your mother [in Isaiah 50:1] refers to Jerusalem, more specifically, the inhabitants of the preceding generation that had gone into exile" (Nelson Study Bible, same note). This is important to recognize. While God had

divorced the northern Kingdom of Israel, he maintained His covenant with the “mother” of all Israel—Zion or Jerusalem, the center of His true worship and the faithful remnant it represented.

Indeed, even in Jeremiah 3, God tells those of the northern tribes who would return to him that they would be considered joined to Zion and still married to Him (verse 14). God has never divorced all of Israel completely. He retained the Jews as the faithful remnant of Israel. Yet they ultimately proved unfaithful as well and He sent them into captivity in Babylon. But He still looked to a small minority of the Jews as the faithful remnant of Israel to whom He was still married. Thus, He brought a small group of Jews back to the Promised Land from Babylon. But these ultimately proved unfaithful as well, even murdering Him when He came in the flesh as the Messiah, Jesus Christ. So God finally raised up a spiritual people—still considered the faithful remnant of Israel (compare Romans 11:5; Galatians 6:16), spiritual Jews (see Romans 2:25-29)—“Jew” being, as it was following the northern tribes’ divorcement, a designation of the faithful remnant (compare Hosea 11:12).

Of course, it should be noted that the Old Covenant marriage between the preincarnate Christ and Israel did come to an end with Christ’s death. This allows Him to remarry—but, amazingly, to remarry the same “woman” Israel, yet one in which she would be spiritually transformed as part of the terms of a new covenant (see Romans 7:1-4; Isaiah 54; Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Returning to Isaiah 50, notice the reference to creditors in verse 1—clearly an imaginary scenario since God cannot be indebted to anyone. “If the Lord had sold Israel to creditors (see Ex. 21:7; 2 Kin. 4:1; Neh. 5:5), He would not have any authority over their destiny. But the Israelites had sold themselves because of their own iniquities (see 42:23-25). Therefore God as their Redeemer could buy them back (see 41:14; 52:3)” (Nelson Study Bible, same note, emphasis added).

Continuing on, while Isaiah 50:4-9 may be describing some of Isaiah’s own anguish in delivering his prophecies, it is more clearly part of the speech begun in verse 1. This means that it is still the Lord who is speaking. And it shows that He, the Creator of the universe, was going to come and be stricken across the back, have patches of His beard painfully yanked out, and be spat upon. These are things Jesus would suffer at the hands of human beings (verse 6; Matthew 26:67; 27:30)—which He went through to redeem these very same people, indeed to redeem us all.

Isaiah 50:10-11 exhorts Israel to trust in God and obey His Servant—again, referring to Christ. Verse 11 criticizes those who walk by the light of their own fire (relying on themselves) rather than by the true light—the Word of God, both living (Jesus Christ) and written (Scripture). Their lives will end in punishment. From other passages we know that God will later bring them back to life to give them their only opportunity for salvation. However, if they persist in rejecting Him even then, their lives will be ended permanently.

Awake to Righteousness (Isaiah 50-51)

Chapter 51 begins with three requests for those who are God’s people and know righteousness to “listen to Me” (verses 1, 4, 7). It ends with three commands for Jerusalem to “awake, awake” (verses 9, 17; 52:1). This ties in with Paul’s admonition to the Church in 1 Corinthians 15:34: “Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.” Those who know God must live in accordance with His commands. Indeed, those who don’t obey Him don’t really know Him (see 1 John 2:4).

In verse 1, Zion being dug from the hole of a pit is not a negative connotation. It simply denotes the same thing as the previous clause, being hewn from rock. The image is one of being quarried from a pit or mine as precious gems or metal. And the fact that the people of Israel are meant is clear from verse 2—those brought forth of Abraham and Sarah. Spiritually deriving from Abraham and Sarah (Romans 4:11; Galatians 3:29; 4:21-31), believers are the

only ones who really know God's righteousness and have God's law in their hearts (Isaiah 51:7). But eventually, starting with the time of Christ's return, the rest of Israel (physical Israel) will become part of spiritual Israel—as will then the entire world.

In stark contrast to this instruction for us to look to Abraham and Sarah, most of modern Christianity goes to great lengths to separate its theology from the Old Testament. In doing so, it breaks the continuity that exists throughout Scripture and loses much spiritual understanding. Here, we see that Christians ought to look for and learn from that unbroken continuity, which runs seamlessly from the Old Testament through the New. The roots spring from the Old Testament.

In verse 3, Zion is to be comforted with the fact that it will be a paradise like the Garden of Eden (see also Ezekiel 36:35)—as indeed the whole world will become under the rule of Jesus Christ, with God's holy "mountain," or kingdom, of Zion growing to fill the whole earth (compare Isaiah 11:6-9; Daniel 2:35). In verses 4-6, "the heavens and earth of the material universe are contrasted with God's salvation and righteousness. The material is impermanent and will 'vanish like smoke.' God's salvation will remain forever. How vital to anchor our hopes in salvation than anything in this passing world" (Bible Reader's Companion, note on Isaiah 51:46)—see also 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Hebrews 12:25-29.

Directly tied to salvation here is God's righteousness. But what is righteousness? King David defined it as obedience to all of God's commandments (Psalm 119:172). And that is certainly the implication here in Isaiah: "...you who know righteousness, you people in whose heart is My law..." (51:7). Many today, even many who profess Christianity, want to do away with God's law—to abolish it. Yet God says, "My righteousness [i.e., His law] will not be abolished" (verse 6). Indeed, God's law defines His way of life—the way of love. And while many things will pass away, love never will (1 Corinthians 13). Only those who ultimately choose to live by God's perfect law of love will experience salvation from eternal death to enjoy eternal life with Him forever.

Of course, obedience to God's law of love should never be construed as some stern duty. True, godly love is an expression of outflowing concern that comes from the heart. It includes devotion and loyalty to God and deep care for others as the focus of our deepest emotions. The New Testament instruction about the New Covenant reveals that God wants our hearts to be in the covenant and the covenant to be in our hearts. He wants to be a Father to us and for us to be His children in a loving family relationship.

Verses 9-11 of Isaiah 51 show that God will deliver His people as He delivered Israel from Egypt in ancient times. Rahab here is a reference to Egypt (see 30:7). The name signifies "fierceness, insolence, pride" ("Rahab," Smith's Bible Dictionary). Egypt is called a "serpent" in the King James Version and a "dragon" in the Revised Standard Version. It is the same Hebrew word *tanniyn* (Strong's No. 8577) used for the pharaoh of Egypt in Ezekiel 29:3, there translated "monster" in the NKJV. "The imagery [of Ezekiel 29] pictures a crocodile" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verses 4-5). Indeed, the protector god of Egypt was the crocodile god Sobek—whose name in Egyptian meant "rager" (Michael Jordan, *Encyclopedia of Gods*, 1993, p. 240, "Sobek."), of which *rahab* seems a reasonable Hebrew equivalent.

God delivered Israel from Egyptian captivity in ancient times. He later, as promised through Isaiah, delivered the Jews from Babylonian captivity. And in the end, God will deliver Israel and Judah from an end-time Assyro-Babylonian captivity. The punishment on His people will come to an end (51:22). Humbled, they will at last be ready to repent and "awake to righteousness." Then it will be time for Israel's enemies to suffer affliction for their evil in turn (verse 23)—until they too are ultimately brought to repentance.

It should be recognized that the deliverance from Babylon spoken of here and in the next chapter, while literal as mentioned, is also figurative of the deliverance from sin that Christians now have in Christ. In one sense, God has rescued believers from spiritual Egypt and Babylon —sin and this world. But in another sense, this is an ongoing process, as we overcome throughout life with His help. Finally, in an ultimate sense, deliverance and salvation will come when Christ's followers are glorified at His return. In fact, even the terrible trial and suffering mentioned in this section will befall a number of people in who are believers (compare Revelation 12:17; Revelation 3:14-19). God's message to all of us: "Be zealous and repent" (verse 19). Indeed, "Awake to righteousness, and do not sin."

Chapter 52 begins by describing Zion or Jerusalem in a state of bondage and captivity from which it is to be freed and then exalted. The statement in verse 2 to "arise and sit down" is not a contradiction. She is to rise from the dust and sit on a throne. As the New International Version phrases it: "Shake off your dust; rise up, sit enthroned, O Jerusalem." Once again, we should notice the parallel between national Israel's physical deliverance and spiritual Israel's salvation—which physical Israel will eventually experience as well, following its conversion into spiritual Israel.

God allowed His people to be taken captive in ancient times and will do so again at the end. But the gentile captors do not understand themselves to be agents of God's punishment. In fact, they glory in their power and terribly abuse God's people, saying such things as "So where is their God?" (see Psalm 115:2). In this way, God's name is continually blasphemed throughout the duration of His people's captivity (Isaiah 52:5). God will make Himself known to all nations through His awesome deliverance of His people.

The apostle Paul quotes verse 7, mentioning what is written there about how beautiful the feet are of those who preach the gospel, or good news, of salvation (Romans 10:15). This concept is addressed as well by the prophet Nahum (Nahum 1:15). And in Ephesians 6:15, Paul explains that our feet are to be clothed "with the preparation of the gospel of peace," which is what makes them beautiful—a poetic expression for the fact that good news (the gospel) is being brought by the feet of the bearer. By extension, we could view this as applying to whatever means is used to transmit such information (today including an automobile conveying a minister to deliver a sermon, a postal delivery truck bringing a magazine proclaiming God's truth, a radio station carrying a program on which the good news of God's Kingdom is announced, etc.).

God led the apostle Paul to draw upon the prophecies of Isaiah because they still directly apply to the life of a Christian, as well as provide an outline of the events yet to unfold in the history of mankind. Again, we see continuing evidence that the Old Testament, and not just the New, is for Christians.

The command to be "clean" and to depart and separate ourselves from that which is unclean (Isaiah 52:11) is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:17. It is a theme echoed in the book of Revelation as well—to come out of Babylon, as a type of that which is unclean (Revelation 18:2, 4). God says moreover that those who bear His "vessels" are to be clean. This appears to refer to priestly duties. God told Moses to tell Aaron and his sons: "Whoever of all your descendants throughout your generations, who goes near the holy things which the children of Israel dedicate to the Lord, while he has uncleanness upon him, that person shall be cut off from My presence: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 22:1-3). The priests thus had to remain ritually clean to carry out their duties. Yet this was merely symbolic of the spiritual purity God requires of His spiritual priesthood, (see 1 Peter 2:5, 9).

The Suffering Servant (Isaiah 52-53)

Beginning with Isaiah 52:13, we have a section giving some of the remarkable prophecies of the Messiah's sufferings and other aspects of His life at His coming—that is, His first coming. We have seen that God will redeem His people (verse 2). And now He tells us how. While ultimate deliverance would come by a miraculous force of

awesome power (at the Messiah's second coming), redemption would first come through a great sacrifice out of the depth of unfathomable humility. The Lord—the Creator of mankind, Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 3:9)— would come in the flesh and die for the sins of those He created. God the Father would thus give His only begotten Son for redemption of the whole world (John 3:16). It is truly mindboggling to contemplate.

“Amidst a declaration of the Lord's coming salvation (see 52:7-12; 54:1-10), Isaiah [through God's inspiration] places a portrait of the Suffering Servant (52:13-53:12)... Three other passages in Isaiah focus on the Servant and [the four] are called the 'Servant Songs' (42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9). The first song celebrates the Servant as the One who will establish justice for all (42:4). The second highlights the deliverance that the Servant will provide. He will restore Israel and become a 'light to the Gentiles.' The third emphasizes the God-given wisdom of the Servant. All this culminates in the description of the suffering and death of the Servant in ch. 53, the final 'Servant Song'” (“INDepth: The Suffering Servant,” Nelson Study Bible, sidebar on Isaiah 52:13-53:12).

Many of the Jews looked for the triumphant Christ to come and save them from their enemies, but they did not recognize the true Messiah when He came to save us first from our sins. Even now, all too many who adhere to at least the form of biblical Christianity look more to the triumphant coming of Christ to give them victory and rulership over the world and fail to grasp the critical importance of eliminating the unclean elements from their lives first. Many, sadly, will find themselves on the outside in that day (see Matthew 7:21-23; 25:1-13)—until they have learned to recognize the meaning of Christ's first coming in their lives.

Because of the conflicts with the Jews over Jesus being the Messiah, it is not surprising that the New Testament writers quote quite a bit from this section of Isaiah.

In discussing his ministry to the gentiles, Paul cites Isaiah 52:15 to show that Christ was fulfilling this prophecy through him in preaching to those who had not yet heard the gospel (Romans 15:21). Right after Paul cites the passage about preaching the gospel mentioned above (10:15; Isaiah 52:7), he quotes from this same section of Isaiah, asking, “Who has believed our report?” (Romans 10:16; Isaiah 53:1). John also quotes this verse in Isaiah as being fulfilled by Jesus when the Jews of His day did not believe in Him.

The apostles Matthew and Peter quoted Isaiah 53:4-6, which deals with Jesus taking our sins on Himself (see Matthew 8:17; 1 Peter 2:24-25). Peter also quoted from verse 9 of Isaiah 53 in the same place (1 Peter 2:22). In Isaiah 53:4, some margins correctly state that an alternate translation of the Hebrew word for “grief” is “sickness,” and an alternate translation for “sorrows” is “pains.” Indeed, the New Testament quotes the verse: “He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:17). Here, then, is an important foundation for divine healing—that Christ's physical suffering, together with His death, was to not only pay for our sins, but also to take upon Himself the suffering of our diseases and injuries. (For more on this subject, compare Matthew 8:16-17; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 Corinthians 11:29-30; James 5:14-15; Psalm 103:1-3.)

When Philip was sent by God to talk with the Ethiopian eunuch in the desert south of Jerusalem, the man was reading a passage from Isaiah that he asked Philip to explain to him (Acts 8:26-35). The specific section he was reading was verses 7-8 of Isaiah 53.

In verse 12, “poured out His soul [physical life] unto death” refers to His dying from blood loss, “for the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11).

Jesus, when preparing to leave the upper room where He kept His last Passover with His disciples before His death, quoted Isaiah 53:12 about being numbered with transgressors as a verse He needed to fulfill, and a reason to take swords with them (Luke 22:35-38). Mark cites the crucifixion between two thieves as actually fulfilling this prophecy (Mark 15:28).

It is sobering to read this passage, particularly when we see that Jesus was to be beaten into terrible disfigurement (Isaiah 52:14). Having inspired Isaiah to write this prophecy, Jesus, in the moments before His arrest on the night of the Passover, was fully aware of the suffering that lay ahead of Him. Yet through it all, He remained cognizant of His mission—and dedicated to it. He remained the ultimate, giving Servant of His Father. And indeed, He came to serve us too, to the point of suffering indescribable betrayal and agony and finally dying in our place. Let us all accept the justification His death has made available to us (53:11). But, realizing that it is our sins that necessitated His death, let us leave our sinful ways behind with Him in His death—and come out of sin through the power of His resurrected life (compare Romans 5:9-10; Galatians 2:20).

Paul uses verse 1 of Isaiah 54 in his allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Galatians 4:22-31). The barren woman, he says, is like Sarah with the prophecies given her about having many descendants. According to Paul, she represents the New Covenant marriage, to which no children were yet spiritually born—referred to by Paul as “Jerusalem above, the mother of us all.” This New Covenant is actually mentioned in Isaiah 54, as will be explained in a moment.

The “married woman” signified the Old Covenant marriage that already was—physical Israel with its millions of children. This was parallel to Hagar, who bore a son to Abraham while Sarah was yet barren. Yet the child of Hagar was produced apart from faith. God promised that Sarah, though barren, would produce a child through whom His promised blessings would come. This will give birth to its children at the return of Jesus Christ. And eventually, as more and more become part of, and are eventually born of, the New Covenant, the children of the woman who was barren will eventually outnumber those of her rival who are those born of the flesh in ancient Israel. For people of all nations will be made part of spiritual Israel.

Isaiah himself goes on to say that the physical Israelites will no longer be forsaken in their marriage to God, will be accepted of God and will grow to fill the earth—when they, too, are joined to Him and brought forth according to the New Covenant (verses 4-8), which will be accomplished through the Holy Spirit, as we learn in chapter 55. Indeed, in verses 2-3 of Isaiah 54 we see reference to Israel’s expansion, earlier prophesied in Genesis 28:14. Yet, while physical on one level, the subject of the previous verse in Isaiah seems to make it primarily a reference to the expansion of spiritual Israel, the family of God—parallel to Christ’s assurance that in His Father’s house are many dwellings (see John 14:2).

Verses 11-12 of Isaiah 54 are reminiscent of the description of the New Jerusalem recorded by the apostle John in Revelation 21:18-21. The eternal dwelling of the wife of Christ (see Ephesians 5:22-33), the New Jerusalem is itself referred to as the bride (Revelation 21:9-10)—again showing “Jerusalem above”.

The New Covenant is specifically mentioned in Isaiah 54:10, where God calls it “My covenant of peace” and relates it to His mercy. “This expression is also found in Ezek. 34:25-31. It is linked with the New Covenant of Jer. 31, for its benefits become possible only after the Messiah forgives the sins of God’s people and makes them righteous. Some of the benefits overlap: God will Himself teach the people, and they will be established in righteousness (cf.

Jer. 31:31-34). Yet the focus of this covenant [here] is on security. God throws a protective covering over His people so that they will be safe” (Bible Reader’s Companion, note on Isaiah 54:10). In verse 9, God equates the surety of His covenant of peace with Israel to that of His covenant with Noah that He would never again flood the whole earth (see Genesis 9:8-17).

In John 6:45, Jesus referred to Isaiah 54:13, showing that when the Father decides to teach someone His way, they will understand Jesus’ role in His plan of salvation. And eventually, all will be taught that way. The last verse in Isaiah 54 gives us a most important factor in this regard. God explains that the righteousness of His servants comes not from themselves but from Him. It is God who draws us to Himself. It is He who actually grants us repentance. It

is He who then forgives us and imputes us as righteous through the atoning blood of Christ. It is He who then lives in us through the power of the Holy Spirit to enable us to actually live in righteousness—that is, in obedience to His law. Of course, this does require our participation.

If we ultimately refuse God's work in us, then He will not redeem us.

Ps 149-150

On March 20 of 2010 we began our 3 ½ year Torah study and one of the first chapters we had to look at was Psalm 1. This week of August 20, 2011 we finally finish reading the psalms.

Psalm 149, the fourth hymn in the concluding Hallel collection, is a royal psalm praising Israel's divine King for granting to His people salvation and the high honor of executing His judgment on the nations for their defiance of His rule. This psalm follows from the conclusion of the previous one, with emphasis on the role of Israel and the focus on His "saints" or *hasidim*, meaning devoted ones, the Hebrew word being used here three times—in the first, middle and last verses (verses 1, 5, 9). And as in the former case, "Israel" and the "saints" (in addition to the "children of Zion" in this psalm) should not be limited to God's physical nation. Rather, the truly devoted and obedient people of God are principally in view here—spiritual Israel. This is especially so, given the primarily end-time focus of the song (as implied by the granting of salvation and the execution of vengeance on the nations).

The psalm begins with a call to praise God with a "new song" (verse 1; compare 33:3; 40:3; 96:1). This does not require a song never heard or sung before. The sense can be that of singing with renewed awareness of what God has done. Even old psalms can be sung as new because the congregation always has fresh reasons for expressing gratitude.

Note that the song is to be sung in "the assembly of saints" (149:1). As *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* points out, this statement in the closing frame of the book of Psalms ties back to the opening frame: "The phrase is equivalent to 'congregation of the righteous' (1:5), and it may be that Psalm 149 is a formal closure of the Psalter, climaxed by the great praise psalm, Psalm 150" (note on 149:1-5). There is a further tie back to the opening as well. As noted in the Bible Reading Program comments on Psalms 1 and 2, these two untitled psalms together apparently form the opening frame of the Psalter. Psalm 1 lays out the character of the righteous while Psalm 2 is a royal psalm focusing on the Messiah coming to conquer the world and set up His Kingdom. So it seems appropriate to read Psalm 149, the next-to-last psalm, in light of that second opening psalm.

The first part of Psalm 149 communicates a sense of celebration, including praising God with dance, singing with timbrels (tambourines) and harps (verse 3)—celebratory elements that are all invoked in the next and final psalm, as we will see.

Israel rejoices because "the LORD takes pleasure in His people" and "will beautify the humble with salvation" (149:4). God's people are thus equated with those who have a humble, respectful attitude before Him, parallel to what we read just two psalms earlier within the same Hallel collection: "The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy [*hesed*]" (Psalm 147:11). Here, again, we see that their hope will be rewarded with being "beautified" with salvation (149:4). The word here can also mean "adorned" and thus recalls other verses about being clothed with salvation (Psalm 132:16; Isaiah 61:10).

The "salvation" here could signify God saving His people from life-threatening circumstances in the here and now, yet the ultimate picture is certainly that of salvation in His coming Kingdom. The ancient Israelites in singing this song would have understood both aspects.

The saints singing for joy on their beds (Psalm 149:5) contrasts greatly with past circumstances: “The ‘beds,’ which had before been soaked with tears, share in the joy of the Lord’s deliverance (cf. 4:4; 6:6; 63:6; Hos 7:14)” (Expositor’s, note on Psalm 149:1-5).

The latter part of the psalm praises God for giving His people a role in executing judgment on the nations (verses 6-9). This applied in part to Old Testament Israel, as the nation fought against the Canaanites, the Philistines and other enemies: “Under the particular administration of the emerging [earthly] kingdom of God put in place in the inauguration of the Sinai covenant...she [Israel] was armed to execute God’s sentence of judgment on the world powers that have launched attacks against the kingdom of God. Under that arrangement, she served as the earthly contingent of the armies [or hosts] of the King of heaven” (Zondervan NIV Study Bible, introductory note on Psalm 149). The Nelson Study Bible says that Psalm 149 “was used by the army of Israel as well as by the people in their worship of God.... [At verse 6] the focus of the psalm switches from the congregation at worship to the army in training. Israel’s army was to be the vanguard for the battle of the Lord. Their training was to have a strong component of praise and worship of God” (introductory note on Psalm 149 and note on verse 6).

Yet we should once again recognize that the “saints” in this and other psalms is primarily a reference to the spiritually converted people of God-spiritual Zion. Of course, Brethren in this age are not to take up arms and fight, because Christ’s Kingdom for which we wait is not of this world (see John 18:36). Yet when Jesus returns to set His Kingdom up on this earth, His saints, then glorified in divine power, will fight alongside Him-as this psalm makes clear. Indeed, as the patriarch Enoch prophesied, “The Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all” (Jude 14-15). The two-edged sword here (Psalm 149:6) would seem to parallel the book of Revelation’s figurative portrayal of a sharp sword coming out of Christ’s mouth at His return (Revelation 19:15; compare 1:16; Isaiah 11:4-5; 49:2). And the imagery of a two-edged sword is used to represent the Word of God (compare Hebrews 4:12-13).

“The written judgment” (Psalm 149:9) refers to the “punishments” and “vengeance” (verse 7) recorded in God’s Word by the prophets. As Expositor’s notes on verses 6-9, “The ‘sentence’ [NIV] (mishpat, ‘judgment’) decrees that on the day of the Lord, the wicked (individuals, nations, and kings) will be fully judged for the deeds done against God and against his people (cf. Isa 24:21-22; 41:15-16; 45:14; 65:6; Ezek 38-39; Joel 3:9-16, 19-21; Mic 4:13; Zech 14; 2 Thess 1:5-10).”

The saints will then reign with Christ during the Millennium (see Revelation 20:6), continuing to rule by God’s laws. With Psalm 150, the fifth and final concluding Hallelujah Psalm, we come to the end of the book of Psalms. As in Psalm 148, the word “praise” (hallel) is used here 13 times. Yet this psalm more closely follows the pattern of only the first part of Psalm 148. In this case we see, within the framing Hallelujahs at the beginning and end, 10 imperative calls to praise God (150:1-5) followed by a single summary call to praise in the jussive subjunctive mood-that is, in the form of “let them” (see verse 6). As these calls are brief and without expressive praise, the entire psalm has the form of an extended doxology (a doxology being a brief expression of praise). Recall that Books I through IV of the Psalter each end with a short doxology evidently added to the last psalm in each book (see 41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48). Now at the end of Book V, the entirety of Psalm 150 appears to perform the same function-and it may have been composed specifically to close the Psalter.

Though brief, Psalm 150 encompasses many elements of the book of Psalms. As the Zondervan NIV Study Bible comments in its introductory note on the song, “This final call to praise moves powerfully by stages from place [verse 1] to themes [verse 2] to orchestra [verses 3-4] to choir [verse 6], framed with Hallelujahs.”

Verse 1 tells us where God should be praised-in His sanctuary and in His mighty firmament. The sanctuary is God’s temple, meaning His physical temple in Jerusalem and also His spiritual temple on earth, as well as His heavenly

temple. The “firmament” here signifies heaven or the sky (see Genesis 1:6-8), and the meaning in this case is probably the entire, vast universe.

Verse 2 of Psalm 150 tells us why God should be praised-“for His mighty acts” (for what He does) and “for His excellent greatness” (for who and what He is).

Verses 3-5 tell us “how God should be praised-with the whole orchestra (eight instruments: wind, string, percussion), with dancing aptly placed at the middle” (Zondervan, note on verses 3-5)-recalling the celebratory elements of the previous psalm (compare 149:3). Perhaps the idea here is simply to joyfully praise God with whatever we have to praise Him.

And finally, verse 6 of Psalm 150 tells us who should praise God-the choir of all that have life and breath. As The Nelson Study Bible remarks on this verse: “The very breath that God gives us should be used to praise Him. As long as we live we should praise our Creator (146:1,2).

By His breath God created all things (33:6), and by our breath we should adore Him. The Book of Psalms begins with God’s blessing on the righteous (1:1) and concludes with all of creation blessing its loving Creator.”

In all that we think, in all that we say, in all that we do, let it be to the praise of our great and loving God, our Almighty Maker and Savior and King, the infinite and majestic Lord of all creation. And let us all sing with joyful hearts, Hallelujah! Praise the Lord.

John 19

I want to show you a few things in this chapter which I do in Jerusalem when I show brethren the true sites in Israel. We are going to look at the t word Pavement and Gabbatha

G3038 ????????????

lithostro?tos lith-os’-tro-tos

From G3037 and a derivative of G4766; stone strewed, that is, a tessellated mosaic on which the Roman tribunal was placed: – Pavement.

G1042 ?????????? gabbatha

gab-bath-ah’

Of Chaldee origin (compare [H1355]); the knoll; gabbatha, a vernacular term for the Roman tribunal in Jerusalem: – Gabbatha.

H1355 ??? gab

(Chaldee); corresponding to H1354: – back.

H1354 ?? gab

From an unused root meaning to hollow or curve; the back (as rounded (compare H1460 and H1479); by analogy the top or rim, a boss, a vault, arch of eye, bulwarks, etc.: – back, body, boss, eminent (higher) place, [eye] brows, nave, ring.

Golgotha in verse 17 is describing the place of the skull or the place of the head counting is the mount of Olives East of the Gihon Spring. Again a prove this to all those who come on tour with me. But you can read the exciting evidence here at <http://www.askelm.com/golgotha/gol001.htm>

Once you know where Golgotha is and what the Dome of the Rock really is and where the temple once stood then you will also be able to find the final verse is John 19 where it speaks of the tomb in which Yehshua was buried. When I take people there they cry and weep once they realise all that happened on this most sacred spot.

Next time we meet in Jerusalem ask me to show you around and see the evidence first hand for yourself.

Also concerning what was written on the cross piece above Yehshua, John states that Pilate wrote the inscription that was to be placed over the head of Yehshua as He was to be hung on the tree of Crucifixion, and the writing was in first, Hebrew, then Greek, and lastly, in Latin. It is interesting that the Roman Governor of Judea would give primacy to the Hebrew Language over Latin or Greek, because he certainly didn't seem to have any particular love or respect for the Jewish people.

In John's version, not only is Jesus' name mentioned but also where He was from, and it is this bold declaration, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews" or *Iesvs Nazarenvs Rex Ivdæorvm*, that we derive the letters 'INRI.

But in Hebrew it is Yehshua ha-Notsri u'Melekh ha-Yehudim. This forms the acronym YHWH where the u is also a v.