

Triennial Torah Study – 5th Year 07/03/2015



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Ex 32	Isaiah 63-65	Prov 3	Acts 2
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The Golden Calf (Exodus 32)

With Moses gone for almost a month and a half, the people quickly became disoriented and asked Aaron to give them another god-symbol to lead them. Interestingly, they still seem to have viewed this idol as a representation of the Eternal (verses 4-5). God, however, saw it otherwise, saying that they “worshiped *it* and sacrificed to *it*” (verse 8) rather than “to *Me*.” With all God had done for them, it is amazing how quickly they forgot His commands—and dismissed Moses as if he were a fraud. The apostle Paul even warns us to learn from what they did and not do the same thing (1 Corinthians 10).

Another incredible aspect of this whole affair is Aaron's part. It seems almost stupefying that he would consent to it—and seemingly so readily. When the people approached Aaron with the suggestion to make an idol that they could worship, it was he who told them to give him their golden earrings. It was then Aaron who formed and shaped the idolatrous object. Perhaps Aaron himself had begun to wonder what had become of Moses. It is likely that he viewed the people's “request” as an implicit threat—which it probably was—that if he didn't go along with what they wanted, the consequences would be dire. Aaron likely feared for his own safety and that of his family if he opposed the movement underway. He should have shown more stamina and trust in God, but he went along. To top it off, rather than face up to his responsibility, he told Moses a ridiculous lie (verse 24). In any case, there was certainly a failure of leadership at a high level. This too should be a lesson for all of us. No matter who we are, no matter how much we have seen God do in our lives, we can be led astray if we aren't constantly on guard spiritually.

Concerning the Israelites' chosen object of idolatry, they were well acquainted with Egyptian calf worship, detailed in the discussion of the plagues. It's not surprising that they would choose a calf as a symbol of their worship, because it was common in the Egyptian culture in which they had been immersed for many generations. Centuries later the Israelite king Jereboam would fashion similar idols (1 Kings 12:28) after being banished to Egypt (11:40), and this idolatrous worship would remain prevalent throughout most of the time of the northern kingdom of Israel. Among the Canaanites, the bull was also seen as an embodiment of Baal. Perhaps the widespread worship of oxen in paganism, as in India today, has been directly inspired by Satan, as his main face—him being a cherub—is that of an ox (compare Ezekiel 10:14; 1:7-10).

“The bull was revered throughout the ancient Near East as the symbol of fertility” (Jonathan Kirsch, *Moses: A Life*, 1998, p. 264). It may have been the fertility connection involved in this idolatrous worship that stimulated some of the Israelites to become involved in sexual “play” (verse 6). *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* has this to say about verse 6: “The verb *sahaq* signifies drunken, immoral orgies and sexual play (‘conjugal caresses’)” (1990, Vol. 2, p. 478). In reaching this level, the unseemly episode had probably gone way beyond what Aaron had agreed to or perhaps even imagined. We read earlier that the apostle Paul compared sin to leavening (1 Corinthians 5:8). He even used an example to show that sin, like leaven, can spread to affect more and more people unless it is stopped in its tracks (verses 1-7). The incident with the golden calf seems like a classical case of allowing some leaven in and, as is the proclivity of leaven, before long the leaven had permeated insidiously. We need not necessarily think that the entire congregation of Israel had degenerated into extensive sexual immorality, but it was widespread enough that God told Moses, “Your people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves” (verse 7)—effectively disassociating Himself from the Israelites.

Though God forgave Israel’s sin—including that of Aaron—they paid a costly fee for such gross violation of God’s law. Moses told the Levites to take their swords and begin to slay the people. About 3,000 were killed (verse 28). Those who were slain may have been among the ringleaders or those who pushed things to an extreme once the partying started. Verse 35 states that God plagued the people because of the golden calf incident. This may be a reference to the slaying of the 3,000, or it may refer to an additional, unspecified punishment. The lesson that rings loud and clear from all this is that *sin exacts a penalty*. There is no exception to this principle.

Winepress of Wrath; A God of Great Mercy (Isaiah 63-64)

God is pictured as returning from battle with Edom, Bozrah being the chief city of Edom. This ties in with many prophecies of Edom’s destruction at Messiah’s return. Indeed, Obadiah states that there will be no Edomites left alive during Messiah’s reign (Obadiah 18). Yet, in context here, Edom seems to be used as a general representation of Israel’s enemies since God mentions treading down the “peoples” (verses 3, 6). As was explained in the comments on Obadiah and Isaiah 34, there may be a connection between Edom and the future Babylon, the preeminent national foe of the end time—that is, a significant portion of Edomites may end up being part of this system.

Messiah’s garments are stained with blood because of the vengeance He has taken on the enemies of His people, something He has had to take care of by Himself since no one was found to help Him (verses 1-6). The winepress imagery—squeezing out the “blood” of grapes—as a figure of judgment can also be found in Joel 3:13, Lamentations 1:15, Revelation 14:17-20 and 19:15.

Then, in a moving description, Isaiah tells of the loving-kindness (Hebrew *hesed*, “covenant faithfulness” or “steadfast love”) God has for His people, in spite of their depraved behavior (Isaiah 63:7). God is quoted as saying: “Surely they are My people, children who will not lie” (verse 8; see Exodus 24:7). He is pictured as trusting their honesty in remaining faithful to Him as they had promised, and He helped them in all their trials. Their rebellion grieved Him tremendously, yet God still remembers the old days fondly. And Isaiah reminds God of this in His appeal for mercy and help.

God putting “His Holy Spirit within them” in Isaiah 63:11 can also be translated as God putting “his Holy Spirit within *him*” (KJV and J.P. Green’s Literal Translation)—that is, within *Moses*, who is mentioned earlier in the same verse. Indeed, this must be the case since God’s Spirit was not given to the Israelites as a whole. Israel’s prayer for mercy and deliverance is continued in chapter 64. Verse 4 is quoted by Paul in describing the ignorance of those who crucified Jesus, not understanding the wisdom of God, and explaining that we, however, can understand through His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:6-11).

In Isaiah 64:6, the people confess that their own righteousnesses—that is, their attempts to obey Him without His spiritual help and their living by what they themselves consider righteousness as opposed to true righteousness—are as worthless and repulsive as “filthy rags.” Says the *JFB Commentary*, “lit[erally] a ‘menstruous rag’” (note on verse 6). Or *The Nelson Study Bible*: “Garments stained during menstruation...making a woman unclean (Lev. 15:19-24; Ezek. 36:17)” (note on verse 6). Paul describes Israel’s dilemma in this regard in Romans 10:1-3—and explains in the following verses that the answer they need is *Messiah* for righteousness. That is, they need the justification that comes through His sacrifice and the ongoing obedience that comes from His living in people—as He transforms them as a potter does clay (Isaiah 64:8).

Isaiah is able to see, through the visions God has given him, the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, including the temple: “Our holy and beautiful temple, where our fathers praised You, is burned up with fire” (Isaiah 64:11). It was something very distressing to him, and added to his emotional turmoil.

Judgment on Iniquity; A New Creation (Isaiah 65)

Verse 1 begins God’s answer to Isaiah’s entreaty that concludes with 64:12. The Israelites seek God but don’t find Him because of their rebellion against Him. Instead, God is found by others. The first two verses of chapter 65 contain some phrases quoted by Paul in his discourse regarding the future restoration of Israel (Romans 10:20, 21). Verse 1, where God mentions “a nation that was not called by My name” is referring, according to the apostle Paul, to gentile converts grafted into Israel spiritually (through becoming part of the Assembly) that God uses to provoke the natural Israelites to jealousy (Romans 10:19; see Romans 11). The verses that follow in Isaiah 65 then refer to the rebellious people of Israel, who would not respond to God’s appeal and outstretched hands. Some of the rebellious actions of the people are described—practices of those who have forsaken God’s true religion. While some of the actions mentioned may have applied literally in Isaiah’s day, it is likely that the sins here have some application for our time. In verse 3, sacrificing in gardens could simply refer to worshiping in pagan sanctuaries, i.e. false Believer worship places. Incense is symbolic of prayers in Scripture and could here signify prayer in false worship. In verse 4, sitting among the graves and tombs could refer to vigils and candle burning still carried out in segments of modern Messiahendom for the dead. Or it could refer to séances and other occultism. The eating of unclean food such as pork (verse 4; 66:17) is replete throughout the nations of modern Israel today. And the “holier than thou” attitude of Isaiah 65:5 is all too common. In verse 11, the people honor *Gad* and *Meni*—the pagan deities Fortune (or Luck) and Destiny (or Fate). Consider how many rely on luck and fate even today. God pronounces His determination to punish His rebellious people.

But He will not destroy them all, throwing the good grapes out with the bad (verse 8), for His “elect” and His “servants” of Israel will inherit and dwell in the land (verse 9). Sharon (verse

10), in the west, is the coastal plain between the modern cities of Tel Aviv and Haifa. The Valley of Achor (see Joshua 7:24-26), in the east is near the plain of Jericho. Thus, the whole land is meant. Throughout this section, a contrast is made between the rebellious people and God's "servants."

The new heavens and new earth (verse 17) are mentioned by John in Revelation 21:1 as coming at the time the New Jerusalem descends to earth. Yet here in Isaiah 65, the time described is one in which human beings still live on the earth in the flesh (verses 21-25; see also chapter 66:22-24).

How, then, are we to understand this? It would seem that the millennial reign of Messiah will experience a *measure* of a renewed creation—in anticipation of the *ultimate* new heavens and new earth that will follow man's final judgment. Indeed, the millennial picture of peace in nature and among people (Isaiah 65:25) is repeated from Isaiah 11:6-9. And all of this will continue over into the last judgment period immediately following the 1,000 years of peace (see Revelation 20:11-15). Indeed, some see verse 20 as an indication that this time of judgment will last 100 years.

Proverbs 3 (Matthew Henry's Commentary)

Chapter 3

This chapter is one of the most excellent in all this book, both for argument to persuade us to be religious and for directions therein. I. We must be constant to our duty because that is the way to be happy (v. 1-4). II. We must live a life of dependence upon God because that is the way to be safe (v. 5). III. We must keep up the fear of God because that is the way to be healthful (v. 7, v. 8). IV. We must serve God with our estates because that is the way to be rich (v. 9, v. 10). V. We must hear afflictions well because that is the way to get good by them (v. 11, v. 12). VI. We must take pains to obtain wisdom because that is the way to gain her, and to gain by her (v. 13-20). VII. We must always govern ourselves by the rules of wisdom, of right reason and religion, because that is the way to be always easy (v. 21-26). VIII. We must do all the good we can, and no hurt, to our neighbours, because according as men are just or unjust, charitable or uncharitable, humble or haughty, accordingly they shall receive of God (v. 27-35). From all this it appears what a tendency religion has to make men both blessed and blessings.

Verses 1-6 We are here taught to live a life of communion with God; and without controversy great is this mystery of godliness, and of great consequence to us, and, as is here shown, will be of unspeakable advantage.

2. We must have a continual regard to God's precepts, v. 1, v. 2.1. We must, (1.) Fix God's law, and his commandments, as our rule, by which we will in every thing be ruled and to which we will yield obedience. (2.) We must acquaint ourselves with them; for we cannot be said to forget that which we never knew. (3.) We must remember them so that they may be ready to us whenever we have occasion to use them. (4.) Our wills and affections must be subject to them and must in every thing conform to them. Not only our heads, but our hearts, must keep God's commandments; in them, as in the ark of the testimony, both the tables of the law must be deposited.2. To encourage us to submit ourselves to all the restraints and injunctions of the divine law, we are assured (v. 2) that it is the certain way to long life and

prosperity. (1.) It is the way to be long-lived. God's commandments shall add to us length of days; to a good useful life on earth, they shall add an eternal life in heaven, length of days for ever and ever, Ps. 21:4 . God shall be our life and the length of our days, and that will be indeed long life, with an addition. But, because length of days may possibly become a burden and a trouble, it is promised, (2.) That it shall prove the way to be easy too, so that even the days of old age shall not be evil days, but days in which thou shalt have pleasure: Peace shall they be continually adding to thee. As grace increases, peace shall increase; and of the increase of Messiah's government and peace, in the heart as well as in the world, there shall be no end. Great and growing peace have those that love the law.

3. We must have a continual regard to God's promises, which go along with his precepts, and are to be received, and retained, with them (v. 3): "Let not mercy and truth forsake thee, God's mercy in promising, and his truth in performing. Do not forfeit these, but live up to them, and preserve thy interest in them; do not forget these, but live upon them, and take the comfort of them. Bind them about thy neck, as the most graceful ornament." It is the greatest honour we are capable of in this world to have an interest in the mercy and truth of God. "Write to them upon the table of thy heart, as dear to thee, thy portion, and most delightful entertainment; take a pleasure in applying them and thinking them over." Or it may be meant of the mercy and truth which are our duty, piety and sincerity, charity towards men, fidelity towards God. Let these be fixed and commanding principles in thee. To encourage us to do this we are assured (v. 4) that this is the way to recommend ourselves both to our Creator and fellow-creatures: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding. 1. A good man seeks the favour of God in the first place, is ambitious of the honour of being accepted of the Lord, and he shall find that favour, and with it a good understanding; God will make the best of him, and put a favourable construction upon what he says and does. He shall be owned as one of Wisdom's children, and shall have praise with God, as one having that good understanding which is ascribed to all those that do his commandments. 2. He wishes to have favour with men also (as Messiah had, Lu. 2:52), to be accepted of the multitude of his brethren (Esth. 10:3), and that he shall have; they shall understand him aright, and in his dealings with them he shall appear to be prudent, shall act intelligently and with discretion. He shall have good success (so some translate it), the common effect of good understanding.

III. We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must own and depend upon it in all our affairs, both by faith and prayer. By faith. We must repose an entire confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, assuring ourselves of the extent of his providence to all the creatures and all their actions. We must therefore trust in the Lord with all our hearts (v. 5); we must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to his promise, to do what is best for us, if we love him, and serve him. We must, with an entire submission and satisfaction, depend upon him to perform all things for us, and not lean to our own understanding, as if we could, by any forecast of our own, without God, help ourselves, and bring our affairs to a good issue. Those who know themselves cannot but find their own understanding to be a broken reed, which, if they lean to, will certainly fail them. In all our conduct we must be diffident of our own judgment, and confident of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore must follow Providence and not force it. That often proves best which was least our own doing. 2. By prayer (v. 6): In all thy ways acknowledge God. We must not only in our judgment believe that there is an over-ruling hand of God ordering and disposing of us and all our affairs, but we must solemnly own it, and address ourselves to him accordingly. We must ask his leave, and not design anything but what we are sure is lawful. We must ask his advice and beg direction from him, not only when the

case is difficult (when we know not what to do, no thanks to us that we have our eyes up to him), but in every case, be it ever so plain, We must ask success of him, as those who know the race is not to the swift. We must refer ourselves to him as one from whom our judgment proceeds, and patiently, and with a holy indifference, wait his award. In all our ways that prove direct, and fair, and pleasant, in which we gain our point to our satisfaction, we must acknowledge God with thankfulness. In all our ways that prove cross and uncomfortable, and that are hedged up with thorns, we must acknowledge God with submission. Our eye must be ever towards God; to him we must, in everything, make our requests known, as Jephthah uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh, Jdg. 11:11 . For our encouragement to do this, it is promised, “He shall direct thy paths, so that thy way shall be safe and good and the issue happy at last.” Note, Those that put themselves under a divine guidance shall always have the benefit of it. God will give them that wisdom which is profitable to direct, so that they shall not turn aside into the by-paths of sin, and then will himself so wisely order the event that it shall be to their mind, or (which is equivalent) for their good. Those that faithfully follow the pillar of cloud and fire shall find that though it may lead them about it leads them the right way and will bring them to Canaan at last.

Verses 7-12 We have here before us three exhortations, each of them enforced with a good reason:—

1. We must live in a humble and dutiful subjection to God and his government (v. 7): “Fear the Lord, as your sovereign Lord and Master; be ruled in everything by your religion and subject to the divine will.” This must be, 1. A humble subjection: Be not wise in thy own eyes. Note, There is not a greater enemy to the power of religion, and the fear of God in the heart, than conceitedness of our own wisdom. Those that have an opinion of their own sufficiency think it below them, and a disparagement to them, to take their measures from, much more to hamper themselves with, religion’s rules. 2. A dutiful subjection: Fear the Lord, and depart from evil; take heed of doing anything to offend him and to forfeit his care. To fear the Lord, so as to depart from evil, is true wisdom and understanding (Job. 28:28); those that have it are truly wise, but self-denyingly so, and not wise in their own eyes. For our encouragement thus to live in the fear of God it is here promised (v. 8) that it shall be as serviceable even to the outward man as our necessary food. It will be nourishing: It shall be health to thy navel. It will be strengthening: It shall be marrow to thy bones. The prudence, temperance, and sobriety, the calmness and composure of mind, and the good government of the appetites and passions, which religion teaches, tend very much not only to the health of the soul, but to a good habit of body, which is very desirable, and without which our other enjoyments in this world are insipid. Envy is the rottenness of the bones; the sorrow of the world dries them; but hope and joy in God are marrow to them.
10. We must make a good use of our estates, and that is the way to increase them, v. 9, v. 10. Here is 1 A precept which makes it our duty to serve God with our estates: Honour the Lord with thy substance. It is the end of our creation and redemption to honour God, to be to him for a name and a praise; we are no other way capable of serving him than in his honour. His honour we must show forth and the honour we have for him. We must honour him, not only with our bodies and spirits which are his, but with our estates too, for they also are his: we and all our appurtenances must be devoted to his glory. Worldly wealth is but poor substance, yet, such as it is, we must honour God with it, and then, if ever, it becomes substantial. We must honour God, (1.) With our increase. Where riches increase we are tempted to honour ourselves (Deu. 8:17) and to set our hearts upon the world (Ps. 62:10); but the more God gives us the more we should study to honour him. It is meant of the increase of the earth, for we live upon annual products, to keep us in constant dependence on God. (2.) With all our increase. As God has prospered us in everything, we must honour him. Our law will allow a prescription for a *modus decimandi*—a mode of tithing, but none *de non decimando*—for exemption from paying tithes. (3.) With the first-fruits of all, as Abel, Gen. 4:4 . This was the law (Ex. 23:19), and the prophets, Mal. 3:10 . God, who is the first and best, must have the first and best of everything; his right is prior to all other, and

therefore he must be served first. Note, It is our duty to make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion, to use them and the interest we have by them for the promoting of religion, to do good to the poor with what we have and abound in all works of piety and charity, devising liberal things. 2. A promise, which makes it our interest to serve God with our estates. It is the way to make a little much, and much more; it is the surest and safest method of thriving: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty. He does not say thy bags, but thy barns, not thy wardrobe replenished, but thy presses: "God shall bless thee with an increase of that which is for use, not for show or ornament—for spending and laying out, not for hoarding and laying up." Those that do good with what they have shall have more to do more good with. Note, If we make our worldly estates serviceable to our religion we shall find our religion very serviceable to the prosperity of our worldly affairs. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is and most of the comfort of it. We mistake if we think that giving will undo us and make us poor. No, giving for God's honour will make us rich, Hag. 2:19 . What we gave we have.

III. We must conduct ourselves aright under our afflictions, v. 11, v. 12. This the apostle quotes (Heb. 12:5), and calls it an exhortation which speaks unto us as unto children, with the authority and affection of a father. We are here in a world of troubles. Now observe, 1. What must be our care when we are in affliction. We must neither despise it nor be weary of it. His exhortation, before, was to those that are rich and in prosperity, here to those that are poor and in adversity. (1.) We must not despise an affliction, be it ever so light and short, as if it were not worth taking notice of, or as if it were not sent on an errand and therefore required no answer. We must not be stocks, and stones, and stoics, under our afflictions, insensible of them, hardening ourselves under them, and concluding we can easily get through them without God. (2.) We must not be weary of an affliction, be it ever so heavy and long, not faint under it, so the apostle renders it, not be dispirited, dispossessed of our own souls, or driven to despair, or to use any indirect means for our relief and the redress of our grievances. We must not think that the affliction either presses harder or continues longer than is meet, not conclude that deliverance will never come because it does not come so soon as we expect it. 2. What will be our comfort when we are in affliction. (1.) That it is a divine correction; it is the chastening of the Lord, which, as it is a reason why we should submit to it (for it is folly to contend with a God of incontestable sovereignty and irresistible power), so it is a reason why we should be satisfied in it; for we may be sure that a God of unspotted purity does us no wrong and that a God of infinite goodness means us no hurt. It is from God, and therefore must not be despised; for a slight put upon the messenger is an affront to him that sends him. It is from God, and therefore we must not be weary of it, for he knows our frame, both what we need and what we can bear. (2.) That it is a fatherly correction; it comes not from his vindictive justice as a Judge, but his wise affection as a Father. The father corrects the son whom he loves, nay, and because he loves him and desires he may be wise and good. He delights in that in his son which is amiable and agreeable, and therefore corrects him for the prevention and cure of that which would be a deformity to him, and an alloy to his delight in him. Thus God hath said, As many as I love I rebuke and chasten, Rev. 3:19 . This is a great comfort to God's children, under their afflictions. That they not only consist with, but flow from, covenant-love. That they are so far from doing them any real hurt that, by the grace of God working with them, they do a great deal of good, and are happy means of their satisfaction. Verses 13-20 Solomon had pressed us earnestly to seek diligently for wisdom ch. 2:1 , etc.), and had assured us that we should succeed in our sincere and constant pursuits. But the question is, What shall we get by it when we have found it? Prospect of advantage is the spring and spur of industry; he therefore shows us how much it will be to our profit, laying this down for an unquestionable truth, Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, that true wisdom which consists in the knowledge and love of God, and an entire conformity to all the intentions of his truths, providences, and laws. Now observe,

1. What it is to find wisdom so as to be made happy by it. 1. We must get it. He is the happy man who, having found it, makes it his own, gets both an interest in it and the possession of it, who draws out understanding (so the word it), that is, (1.) Who derives it from God. Having it not in himself, he draws it with the bucket of prayer from the fountain of all wisdom, who gives liberally. (2.) Who takes pains for it, as he does who draws ore out of the mine. If it do not come easily, we must put the more strength to draw it. (3.) Who improves in it, who, having some understanding, draws it out by growing in knowledge and making five talents ten. (4.) Who does good with it, who draws out from the stock he has, as wine from the vessel, and communicates to others, for their instruction, things new and old. That is well got, and to good purpose, that is thus used to good purpose. 2. We must trade for it. We read here of the merchandise of wisdom, which intimates, (1.) That we must make it our business, and not a by-business, as the merchant bestows the main of his thoughts and time upon his merchandise. (2.) That we must venture all in it, as a stock in trade, and be willing to part with all for it. This is that pearl of great price which, when we have found it, we must willingly sell all for the purchase of, Mt. 13:45, Mt. 13:46. Buy the truth, (Prov. 23:23); he does not say at what rate, because we must buy it at any rate rather than miss it. 3. We must lay hold on it as we lay hold on a good bargain when it is offered to us, which we do the more carefully if there be danger of having it taken out of our hands. We must apprehend with all our might, and put forth our utmost vigour in the pursuit of it, lay hold on all occasions to improve in it, and catch at the least of its dictates. 4. We must retain it. It is not enough to lay hold on wisdom, but we must keep our hold, hold it fast, with a resolution never to let it go, but to persevere in the ways of wisdom to the end. We must sustain it (so some read it), must embrace it with all our might, as we do that which we would sustain. We must do all we can to support the declining interests of religion in the places where we live.

1. What the happiness of those is who do find it. 1. It is a transcendent happiness, more than can be found in the wealth of this world, if we had ever so much of it, v. 14, v. 15. It is not only a surer, but a more gainful merchandise to trade for wisdom, for Messiah, and grace, and spiritual blessings, than for silver, and gold, and rubies. Suppose a man to have got these in abundance, nay, to have all the things he can desire of this world (and who is it that ever had?), yet, (1.) All this would not purchase heavenly wisdom; no, it would utterly be contemned; it cannot be gotten for gold, Job. 28:15, etc. (2.) All this would not countervail the want of heavenly wisdom nor be the ransom of a soul lost by its own folly. (3.) All this would not make a man half so happy, no, not in this world, as those are who have true wisdom, though they have none of all these things. (4.) Heavenly wisdom will procure that for us, and secure that to us, which silver, and gold, and rubies, will not be the purchase of. 2. It is a true happiness; for it is inclusive of, and equivalent to, all those things which are supposed to make men happy, v. 16, v. 17. Wisdom is here represented as a bright and bountiful queen, reaching forth gifts to her faithful and loving subjects, and offering them to all that will submit to her government. (1.) Is length of days a blessing? Yes, the most valuable; life includes all good, and therefore she offers that in her right hand. Religion puts us into the best methods of prolonging life, entitles us to the promises of it, and, though our days on earth should be no more than our neighbour's, yet it will secure to us everlasting life in a better world. (2.) Are riches and honour accounted blessings? They are so, and them she reaches out with her left hand. For, as she is ready to embrace those that submit to her with both arms, so she is ready to give out to them with both hands. They shall have the wealth of this world as far as Infinite Wisdom sees good for them; while the true riches, by which men are rich towards God, are secured to them. Nor is there any honour, by birth or preferment, comparable to that which attends religion; it makes the righteous more excellent than his neighbour, recommends men to God, commands respect and veneration with all the sober part of mankind, and will in the other world make those that are now buried

in obscurity to shine forth as the sun. (3.) Is pleasure courted as much as anything? It is so, and it is certain that true piety has in it the greatest true pleasure.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness; the ways in which she has directed us to walk are such as we shall find abundance of delight and satisfaction in. All the enjoyments and entertainments of sense are not comparable to the pleasure which gracious souls have in communion with God and doing good. That which is the only right way to bring us to our journey's end we must walk in, fair or foul, pleasant or unpleasant; but the way of religion, as it is the right way, so it is a pleasant way; it is smooth and clean, and strewn with roses: All her paths are peace. There is not only peace in the end, but peace in the way; not only in the way of religion in general, but in the particular paths of that way, in all her paths, all the several acts, instances, and duties of it. One does not embitter what the other sweetens, as it is with the allays of this world; but they are all peace, not only sweet, but safe. The saints enter into peace on this side heaven, and enjoy a present sabbatism.³ It is the happiness of paradise (v. 18): She is a tree of life. True grace is that to the soul which the tree of life would have been, from which our first parents were shut out for eating of the forbidden tree. It is a seed of immortality, a well of living waters, springing up to life eternal. It is an earnest of the New Jerusalem, in the midst of which is the tree of life, Rev. 22:2 Rev. 2:7 . Those that feed and feast on this heavenly wisdom shall not only be cured by it of every fatal malady, but shall find an antidote against age and death; they shall eat and live forever. 4. It is a participation of the happiness of God himself, for wisdom is his everlasting glory and blessedness, v. 19, v. 20. This should make us in love with the wisdom and understanding which God gives, that the Lord by wisdom founded the earth, so that it cannot be removed, nor can ever fail of answering all the ends of its creation, to which it is admirably and unexceptionably fitted. By understanding he has likewise established the heavens and directed all the motions of them in the best manner. The heavenly bodies are vast, yet there is no flaw in them—numerous, yet no disorder in them—the motion rapid, yet no wear or tear; the depths of the sea are broken up, and thence come the waters beneath the firmament, and the clouds drop down the dews, the waters from above the firmament, and all this by the divine wisdom and knowledge; therefore happy is the man that finds wisdom, for he will thereby be thoroughly furnished for every good word and work. Messiah is that Wisdom, by whom the worlds were made and still consist; happy therefore are those to whom he is made of God wisdom, for he has wherewithal to make good all the foregoing promises of long life, riches, and honour; for all the wealth of heaven, earth, and seas, is his.

Verses 21-26 Solomon, having pronounced those happy who not only lay hold on wisdom, but retain her, here exhorts us therefore to retain her, assuring us that we ourselves shall have the comfort of doing so.

21. The exhortation is, to have religion's rules always in view and always at heart, v. 21. To have them always in view: "My son, let them not depart from thy eyes; let not thy eyes ever depart from them to wander after vanity. Have them always in mind, and do not forget them; be ever and anon thinking of them, and conversing with them, and never imagine that thou hast looked upon them long enough and that it is time now to lay them by; but, as long as thou livest, keep up and cultivate thy acquaintance with them." He who learns to write must always have his eye upon his copy, and not let that be out of his sight; and to the words of wisdom must those, in like manner, have a constant respect, who will walk circumspectly. 2. To have them always at heart; for it is in that treasury, the hidden man of the heart, that we must keep sound wisdom and discretion, keep to the principles of it and keep in the ways of it. It is wealth that is worth keeping.
22. The argument to enforce this exhortation is taken from the unspeakable advantage which wisdom, thus kept, will be of to us. 1. In respect of strength and satisfaction: "It will be life to thy soul (v. 22); it will quicken thee to thy duty when thou beginnest to be slothful and remiss; it will revive thee under thy

troubles when thou beginnest to droop and despond. It will be thy spiritual life, an earnest of life eternal.” Life to the soul is life indeed. 2. In respect of honour and reputation: It shall be grace to thy neck, as a chain of gold, or a jewel. Grace to thy jaws (so the word is), grateful to thy taste and relish (so some); it shall infuse grace into all thou sayest (so others), shall furnish thee with acceptable words, which shall gain thee credit. 3. In respect of safety and security. This he insists upon in four verses, the scope of which is to show that the effect of righteousness (which is the same with wisdom here) is quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. 32:17 . Good people are taken under God’s special protection, and therein they may have an entire satisfaction. They are safe and may be easy, (1.) In their motions by day, v. 23. If our religion be our companion, it will be our convoy: “Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely. The natural life, and all that belongs to it, shall be under the protection of God’s providence; the spiritual life, and all its interests, are under the protection of his grace; so that thou shalt be kept from falling into sin or trouble.” Wisdom will direct us into, and keep us in, the safe way, as far as may be, from temptation, and will enable us to walk in it with holy security. The way of duty is the way of safety. “We are in danger of falling, but wisdom will keep thee, that thy foot shall not stumble at those things which are an offence and overthrow to many, but which thou shalt know

how to get over.” (2.) In their rest by night, v. 24. In our retirements we lie exposed and are most subject to frights. “But keep up communion with God, and keep a good conscience, and then when thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid of fire, or thieves, or specters, or any of the terrors of darkness, knowing that when we, and all our friends, are asleep, yet he that keeps Israel and every true-born Israelite neither slumbers nor sleeps, and to him thou hast committed thyself and taken shelter under the shadow of his wings. Thou shalt lie down, and not need to sit up to keep guard; having lain down, thou shalt sleep, and not have thy eyes held waking by care and fear; and thy sleep shall be sweet and refreshing to thee, being not disturbed by any alarms from without or from within,” Ps. 4:8 Ps. 116:7 . The way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience; and the sleep, as of the labouring man, so of the wise and godly man, is sweet. In their greatest straits and dangers. Integrity and uprightness will preserve us, so that we need not be afraid of sudden fear, v. 25. The harms that surprise us, unthought of, giving us no time to arm ourselves by consideration, are most likely to put us into confusion. But let not the wise and good man forget himself, and then he will not give way to any fear that has torment, be the alarm ever so sudden. Let him not fear the desolation of the wicked, when it comes, that is. The desolation which the wicked ones make of religion and the religious; though it comes, and seems to be just at the door, yet be not afraid of it; for, though God may make use of the wicked as instruments of his people’s correction, yet he will never suffer them to be the authors of their desolation. The desolation which wicked men will be brought into in a moment. It will come, and timorous saints may be apprehensive that they shall be involved in it; but let this be their comfort, that though judgments lay waste generally, at least promiscuously, yet God knows who are his and how to separate between the precious and the vile. Therefore be not afraid of that which appears most formidable, for (v. 26) “the Lord shall be not only thy protector to keep thee safe, but thy confidence to keep thee secure, so that thy foot shall not be taken by thy enemies nor ensnared by thy own fears.” God has engaged to keep the feet of his saints.

Verses 27-35 True wisdom consists in the due discharge of our duty towards man, as well as towards God, in honesty as well as piety, and therefore we have here divers excellent precepts of wisdom which relate to our neighbour.

1. We must render to all their due, both in justice and charity, and not delay to do it (v. 27,

v. 28): "Withhold not good from those to whom it is due (either for want of love to them or through too much love to thy money) when it is in the power of thy hand to do it, for, if it be not, it cannot be expected; but it was thy great fault if thou didst, by thy extravagances, disable thyself to do justly and show mercy, and it ought to be the greatest of thy griefs if God had disabled thee, not so much that thou art straitened in thy own comforts and conveniences as that thou hast not wherewithal to give to those to whom it is due." Withhold it not; this implies that it is called for and expected, but that the hand is drawn in and the bowels of compassion are shut up. We must not hinder others from doing it, not be ourselves backward to it. "If thou hast it by thee to-day, hast it in the power of thy hand, say not to thy neighbour, Go thy way for this time, and come at a more convenient season, and I will then see what will be done; to-morrow I will give; whereas thou art not sure that thou shalt live till to-morrow, or that to-morrow thou shalt have it by thee. Be not thus loth to part with thy money upon a good account. Make not excuses to shift off a duty that must be done, nor delight to keep thy neighbour in pain and in suspense, nor to show the authority which the giver has over the beggar; but readily and cheerfully, and from a principle of conscience towards God, give good to those to whom it is due," to the lords and owners of it (so the word is), to those who upon any account are entitled to it. This requires us, 1. To pay our just debts without fraud, covin, or delay. 2. To give wages to those who have earned them. 3. To provide for our relations, and those that have dependence on us, for to them it is due. 4. To render dues both to Assembly and state, magistrates and ministers. 5. To be ready to all acts of friendship and humanity, and in everything to be neighbourly; for these are things that are due by the law of doing as we would be done by. 6. To be charitable to the poor and necessitous. If others want the necessary supports of life, and we have wherewithal to supply them, we must look upon it as due to them and not withhold it. Alms are called righteousness because they are a debt to the poor, and a debt which we must not defer to pay, *Bis dat, qui cito dat* —He gives twice who gives speedily.

1. We must never design any hurt or harm to any body (v. 29): "Devise not evil against thy neighbour; do not contrive how to do him an ill-turn undiscovered, to prejudice him in his body, goods, or good name, and the rather because he dwells securely by thee, and, having given thee no provocation, entertains no jealousy or suspicion of thee, and therefore is off his guard." It is against the laws both of honour and friendship to do a man an ill-turn and give him no warning. Cursed be he that smites his neighbour secretly. It is a most base ungrateful thing, if our neighbours have a good opinion of us, that we will do them no harm, and we thence take advantage to cheat and injure them.

III. We must not be quarrelsome and litigious (v. 30): "Do not strive with a man without cause; contend not for that which thou hast no title to; resent not that as a provocation which peradventure was but an oversight. Never trouble thy neighbour with frivolous complaints and accusations, or vexatious law-suits, when either there is no harm done thee or none worth speaking of, or thou mightest right thyself in a friendly way." Law must be the last refuge; for it is not only our duty, but our interest, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men.

When accounts are balanced, it will be found there is little got by striving.

31. We must not envy the prosperity of evil-doers, v. 31. This caution is the same with that which is so much insisted on, Ps. 37:1, 7-9. "Envy not the oppressor; though he be rich and great, though he live in ease and pleasure, and make all about him to stand in awe of him, yet do not think him a happy man, nor wish thyself in his condition. Choose none of his ways; do not imitate him, nor take the courses he takes to enrich himself. Never think of doing as he does, though thou wert sure to get by it all that he has, for it would be dearly bought." Now, to show what little reason saints have to envy sinners, Solomon here, in the last four verses of the chapter, compares the condition of sinners and saints together (as his father David had done, Ps. 37:22,), sets the one over against the other, that we may see how happy the saints are, though they be oppressed, and how miserable the wicked are, though they be oppressors. Men are to be judged of as they stand with God, and as he judges of them,

not as they stand in the world's books. Those are in the right who are of God's mind; and, if we be of his mind, we shall see, whatever pretence one sinner may have to envy another, that saints are so happy themselves that they have no reason at all to envy any sinner, though his condition be ever so prosperous. For, 1. Sinners are hated of God, but saints are beloved, v. 32. The froward sinners, who are continually going from-ward him, whose lives are a perverse contradiction to his will, are abomination to the Lord. He that hates nothing that he has made yet abhors those who have thus marred themselves; they are not only abominable in his sight, but an abomination. The righteous therefore have no reason to envy them, for they have his secret with them; they are his favourites; he has that communion with them which is a secret to the world and in which they have a joy that a stranger does not intermeddle with; he communicates to them the secret tokens of his love; his covenant is with them; they know his mind, and the meanings and intentions of his providence, better than others can. Shall I hide from Abraham the thing that I do? 2. Sinners are under the curse of God, they and their houses; saints are under his blessing, they and their habitation, v. 33.

The wicked has a house, a strong and stately dwelling perhaps, but the curse of the Lord is upon it, it is in it, and, though the affairs of the family may prosper, yet the very blessings are curses, Mal. 2:2 . There is leanness in the soul, when the body is fed to the full, Ps. 106:15 . The curse may work silently and slowly; but it is as a fretting leprosy; it will consume the timber thereof and the stones thereof, Zec. 5:4 ; Hab. 2:11 . The just have a habitation, a poor cottage (the word is used for sheep-cotes), a very mean dwelling; but God blesses it; he is continually blessing it, from the beginning of the year to the end of it. The curse or blessing of God is upon the house according as the inhabitants are wicked or godly; and it is certain that a blessed family, though poor, has no reason to envy a cursed family, though rich. 3. God puts contempt upon sinners, but shows respect to saints, v. 34. Those who exalt themselves shall certainly be abased: Surely he scorns the scorers. Those who scorn to submit to the discipline of religion, scorn to take God's yoke upon them, scorn to be beholden to his grace, who scoff at godliness and godly people, and take a pleasure in bantering and exposing them, God will scorn them, and lay them open to scorn before all the world. He despises their impotent malice, sits in heaven and laughs at them, Ps. 2:4 . He retaliates upon them (Ps. 18:26); he resists the proud. Those who humble themselves shall be exalted, for he gives grace to the lowly; he works that in them which puts honour upon them and for which they are accepted of God and approved of men. Those who patiently bear contempt from scornful men shall have respect from God and all good men, and then they have no reason to envy the scorers or to choose their ways.

4. The end of sinners will be everlasting shame, the end of saints endless honour, v. 35. Saints are wise men, and act wisely for themselves; for though their religion now wraps them up in obscurity, and lays them open to reproach, yet they are sure to inherit glory at last, the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. They shall have it, and have it by inheritance, the sweetest and surest tenure. God gives them grace (v. 34), and therefore they shall inherit glory, for grace is glory, 2 Co. 3:18 . It is glory begun, the earnest of it, Ps. 84:11 . Sinners are fools, for they are not only preparing disgrace for themselves, but at the same time flattering themselves with a prospect of honour, as if they only took the way to be great. Their end will manifest their folly: Shame shall be their promotion. And it will be so much the more their punishment as it will come instead of their promotion; it will be all the promotion they must ever expect, that God will be glorified in their everlasting confusion.

IF WE READ Leviticus 23, we can see that just as the Passover was prophetic of the death of Messiah, so Pentecost was prophetic of the coming of the Spirit, in whose power there is presented to God the "new meat offering" consisting of the two loaves of firstfruits—an election from both Jew and Gentile, sanctified by the Set Apart Spirit. Just as that to which the Passover pointed was fulfilled on the Passover day, so that to which Pentecost pointed was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. On Yeshua the Spirit came as a dove: on the disciples as the sound of a mighty blowing or breathing, and as cloven tongues of fire. The wind appealed to the ear, and was reminiscent of the Lord's own inbreathing, of which John 20: 22 speaks. The tongues of fire appealed to the eye, and were quite unique. The wind filled *all*: the tongues sat upon *each*. We may connect inward power with the one; and with the other the expression of the power in the many tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. When Yeshua came, He was audible, visible and tangible—see, 1 John 1: 1. When the Spirit came He was audible and visible only, and that in this mysterious way.

It is important that we should, from the outset, distinguish between the *great fact* of the Spirit's presence, and the *signs* and *manifestations* of His presence, which vary so greatly. This is the definite gift of the Spirit, referred to in John 7: 39; John 14: 16, though, since here only Jews were in question, the pouring out of the Spirit upon believing Gentiles (see Acts 10: 45) was an act supplementary to this. Having come thus the Spirit abides with the saints. As the result of the out-pouring here, they were all filled with the Spirit, so that He was in complete control of each. We must also distinguish between the *gift* of the Spirit and *the filling* with the Spirit, since the former may be had without the latter, as we shall see later. Here both were present together.

Those upon whom the Spirit came were a *praying* people, in this resembling their Lord. They were also people of *one* accord, and consequently in *one* place. The one place is not named: it may have been the upper room of Acts 1, but more probably, in view of the crowds that heard the Spirit-given utterances, some court of the temple, such as Solomon's porch. At any rate the thing was real and powerful and could not be hid. It was, within a limited sphere, a reversal of Babel. There man's proud building was *stopped* by the confusion of tongues: here God signalized the *start* of His spiritual building by giving mastery over the tongues and reducing them to order.

We may see another contrast in the fact that when the tabernacle had been made in the wilderness and the Lord took possession of it by the cloud of His presence, He at once began to speak to Moses concerning sacrifice. This is shown by connecting Exodus 40: 35, with Leviticus 1: 1 and 2. In our chapter we have God taking possession of His new, spiritual house by His Spirit, and again He at once speaks by His inspired Apostles. Many people from different countries hear "the wonderful works of God."

The enquiry of the crowds gave the opportunity for witness. Peter was the spokesman, though the eleven stood with him as supporting his words, and he at once directed them to the scripture which explained what it all meant. Joel had predicted the pouring out of the Spirit upon all flesh in days that are yet to come, and what had just transpired was a fulfilment of it, though not *the* fulfilment. Peter's words, "this is that which was spoken," imply that it was *of the nature of* that which Joel had foretold, but not necessarily the full and conclusive thing which the prophecy had in view. John the Baptist had said of Jesus, "The same is He which baptizeth with the Set Apart Spirit" (John 1: 33). Joel had said that, after Israel's repentance and the destruction of their foes, there should be this pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh. Now on the day of Pentecost there had been a kind of firstfruits of this in the pouring out of the Spirit upon those who formed the nucleus of the Assembly. That was the true explanation of what had happened. They were not drunk with wine, but filled with the Spirit. But Peter did not stop there; he proceeded to show *why* this baptism of the Spirit had taken place. It was the direct action of Jesus, now exalted to the right hand of God. This we find when we reach verse 33; but from

verse 22 he had been leading the minds of people through the scenes of the crucifixion to His resurrection and exaltation. Yeshua of Nazareth had been most manifestly approved of God during the days of His ministry, yet they had slain Him with their wicked hands. He had been delivered up to this by God according to His “determinate counsel and fore-knowledge,” for God knows how to make the wrath of man to praise Him and accomplish His designs of blessing; though this does not diminish man’s responsibility in the matter. Verse 23 is a clear instance of how the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man do not clash, when it is a question of practical results; though we may have difficulty in reconciling the two as a matter of theory.

What they had so wickedly *done* God had triumphantly *undone*. The collision between their programme and God’s was complete. It presaged their own complete undoing and overthrow in due season; particularly as the resurrection had been foreseen by God, and foretold through David in Psalm 16. Now David could not possibly have been speaking of himself, for he had been buried and his grave was well known amongst them at that day. When he spoke of One, whose soul was not left in hades and whose flesh did not see corruption, he spoke of Messiah. What he said had been fulfilled: Yeshua was not only raised but exalted to heaven.

As the exalted Man, Yeshua had received of the Father the promised Set Apart Spirit, and had shed Him forth upon His disciples. At His baptism He received the Set Apart Spirit *for Himself* as the dependent Man; now He receives the same Set Apart Spirit *on behalf of others* as their Representative. By shedding forth the Spirit these others were baptized into one body and became His members. This we learn from later scriptures.

In verses 34-36, Peter carries his argument a step further to its climax. David had prophesied of his Lord, who should be exalted to God’s right hand. David himself was not ascended to the heavens any more than he was risen from the dead. The One of whom David spoke was to sit in the seat of administration and power until His foes were made His footstool; therefore the conclusion of the whole matter was this:-the shedding forth of the Spirit, which they had seen and heard, proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that God had made the crucified Yeshua both Lord and Messiah.

As Lord He is the great *Administrator* on God’s behalf, whether in blessing or in judgment. His shedding forth the Spirit had been an act of administration, which had revealed His Lordship.

As Messiah He is the anointed *Head* of all things, and particularly of the little handful of His own left upon earth. His reception from the Father of the Spirit on their behalf, preliminary to shedding Him forth, had revealed His Messiahhood.

Being “made” Lord and Messiah is quite consistent with His having been both during His sojourn on earth.

These things were ever His, but now He was officially installed as such, as the risen and glorified Man.

The Spirit, who had just fallen upon the disciples, now began to work in the consciences of many of the hearers. As they began to realize the desperate situation in which they were placed by the resurrection of the Lord, they were pricked in the heart and cried out for direction. Peter indicated repentance and baptism in the name of Yeshua as the way to remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit; for, as he points out in verse 39, the promise in Joel is to repentant Israel, and to the children of such, and even to distant Gentiles. Thus in the first Believer sermon the extension of Gospel blessing to Gentiles is contemplated. Remission of sins and the gift of the Spirit carry with them all Believer blessings.

The four things that marked them, according to verse 42, are worthy of note. First comes the apostles’ doctrine or teaching. This lies at the foundation of things. The apostles were the men to whom the Lord had said, “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into *all truth*” (John 16: 13). Their doctrine was consequently the fruit of the Spirit’s guiding. The Assembly was now in being, and the first thing that marked it was *subjection to the Spirit’s teaching through the apostles*. The Assembly does not teach; it is taught, and is subject to the Word as given by the Spirit.

Continuing in apostolic doctrine, they continued also in apostolic fellowship. *They found their practical life and society in apostolic company.* Formerly they had everything in common with the world; now their communion with the world had disappeared and communion with apostolic circles had been established-and the apostolic communion was "with the Father, and with His Son Yeshua" (1 John 1: 3).

They continued also in the breaking of bread, which was the sign of their Lord's death, and also incidentally-as we learn from 1 Corinthians 10: 17-*an expression of fellowship.* Thus they were in constant remembrance of their Lord who died, and preserved from reverting to the old associations.

Finally, they continued in prayers. They had no power in themselves; all was vested in their Lord on high and in the Spirit given to them. Hence *constant dependence on God* was necessary for the maintenance of their spiritual life and testimony.

These things marked the primitive Assembly, and should no less mark the Assembly today.

The things mentioned in the closing verses of the chapter were of a less permanent character. The apostles, with signs and wonders are gone. The Believer communism, which prevailed at the outset, also passed away; as did the continuing with one accord in the temple, and the being in favour with all the people. Yet all was over-ruled of God. The selling of their possessions led to much poverty amongst the saints when years later the famine came, and thus was the occasion for that ministry of relief from Gentile assemblies (see, Acts 11: 27-30) which did so much to bind together the Jewish and Gentile elements in the Assembly of God.

For the moment there was simplicity, gladness and singleness of heart with much praise to God. And the work of God, adding the believing remnant to the Assembly, still went on.