

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 3

Introduction

This week we will finish the Book of Genesis (*Bereshit* in Hebrew). Where shall we go from there? Genesis is the *book of beginnings*. God's teaching begins in Genesis and the themes thread their way through all the Scriptures. Which way will the Holy Spirit lead us this year? One approach would be to read the Bible sequentially, book by book. Another approach would be to study it from a historical point of view, first studying the history of Israel in the Old Testament and then reading the New Testament. Yet another approach would be to follow themes as they occur here and there in the Bible. Over the coming years you will, no doubt, choose a different approach each year.

This year we will establish the first five books as the foundation of all God's teaching. The Hebrew word for these five books is *Torah* (teaching). The entire Bible is God's teaching, but traditionally the first five books, also known as the Five Books of Moses, are considered to be at the foundation of all God's teaching. This approach also gives a broadly historical framework for our studies, from the account of Creation, through the Fall to the Covenant purposes of God, the call of Abraham, the history of Israel culminating in the coming of Messiah. We must be careful, of course, to ensure that Jesus the Messiah (Yeshua HaMashiach) is at the centre of all that we study. If we read the Old Testament right through first it will be several months before we come to the New Testament. Therefore, we will make sure that we read some sections of the New Testament during the time that we are studying the Old Testament in depth, thereby achieving balance.

With this in mind, this week we will complete the last few chapters of Genesis and then turn to the Gospel of John, before coming back to study the Book of Exodus, starting next week.

Day 1

Notes on Today's Readings

Genesis Chapter 47. We are nearing the end of Jacob's life. He lived 130 years before coming down to Egypt. He had learned to live by faith but it had not been an easy life. This is a truth that we all learn in one way or another as we seek to stand firm in this same faith. In the Gospel accounts we will find that Yeshua confirms this truth, that in this life we will have troubles. In verse 9 we read that "few and evil" is the way that Jacob described the years of his life. That is what it costs to become one of the "heroes of faith" listed in Hebrews Chapter 11. In Genesis 47:27 we read that Jacob lived a further 17 years before he died. Despite all his troubles God preserved his life from the famine that

came upon the entire region of Canaan and Egypt. He spent these last 17 years with his entire family reunited around him and witnessed the way Joseph ruled over the affairs of Egypt.

Chapter 48. The blessing of Jacob's sons, that we study in this chapter, is also referred to in the list of examples of faith in Hebrews 11:21. From the time when Jacob wrestled with an angel at Peniel he had walked with a limp and now, also wearied by old age, he needs the support of the head of his bed to stand upright. This is a picture of a patriarch or an elder who has walked the path of maturing faith and wisdom, now able to pass on blessing, prophecy and counsel to the next generation. This is what it takes to acquire godly wisdom on this fallen earth. He brought his children and grandchildren together for blessing, each in their turn. His first blessing was on Joseph, the blessing being given as a double portion to his children Ephraim and Manasseh. Just as in the days when Abraham blessed Isaac and, in his turn, Isaac blessed Jacob, these blessings had eternal significance and were far from being just kind thoughts and good ideas.

Chapter 49. The prophecies and blessings over Jacob's sons are sometimes mysterious and hard to understand. There is, nevertheless, quite a bit of detail in the Bible about each of them. When you have time you can study each of their lives and check the details alongside the prophecies. What they did had long-term consequences for their descendants, and all of what Jacob said would come to pass. The most familiar prophecies were those made over Judah. These were fulfilled in Yeshua HaMashiach many years later. These prophecies are still being fulfilled in the Tribes of Israel to this day.

Jacob had become sick. The last thing that he did before dying was to speak these words over his sons. In one respect he died like every other human being. In another respect his death was timed in a very special way to coincide with this prophetic moment. We might wonder how our own lives, as those grafted by faith into the family of Israel, might fulfill God's plan and end in a timely and dignified manner, as it was for Jacob.

Chapter 50. In this chapter we have records of both the death of Jacob and, some years later, of his son Joseph. Both died in faith that the promises given to Abraham would be fulfilled. For about four hundred years Abraham's descendants would live in this foreign land, but then be taken to the Promised Land. Jacob was taken and buried in Canaan to the cave where Abraham, Sarah and others of the family had been buried. Joseph ensured that his bones would be preserved and taken there too, one day, in God's timing. No-one had guessed how God's promises would be fulfilled, neither the covenant promise to Abraham nor the promise made to Joseph through the dreams he had had. This is how we will see the covenant purposes of God unfold as we continue to study the Bible and consider our own lives. God is faithful to His promises, but His ways are quite different from our ways.

Day 2

The Gospel according to John

Chapter 1. John was one of Yeshua's closest disciples. He walked with Him, asked Him questions, listened to His teaching, saw His miracles, leaned on His shoulder at the meal table, and was an eye witness to His death and His resurrection. He tells us very much about the love of Yeshua because of his particular experiences with Him. After Yeshua's death each of the disciples would have their own particular memories of their time with the Lord. From what we read in his Gospel account, the Lord revealed truths to John that can only be discerned spiritually. Yeshua appeared as a man but His Spirit is eternal. He was and is the Son of God. It is good for us to study the Gospel of John parallel to the Book of Genesis. John sees Yeshua as the spiritual counterpart, purpose and fulfillment of Genesis. He begins the Gospel account with the same words – *In the beginning*.

We will read the entire Gospel account this week, but there is far more for us to study in later readings than we will have time for just now. John says, at the end of the Gospel account, that he could not find space to write all that he experienced in his walk with the Lord. Neither will we get to the end of it all. Indeed we will not get to the end of it all in a lifetime leave alone a week! Let us begin slowly, nevertheless, and spend today just in Chapter 1.

The Gospel begins with the revelation that Yeshua was with the Father before the creation of the universe. He was and is the Son of God. He is called *The Word*. The Word of God is manifest in anything that proceeds from God. His Word is creative, and it is living and active. God's Word is manifest in prophecy, in miracles and in all manner of spiritual power. His Word created the universe and the truth that God has spoken is accessible by the Spirit through meditation on the written words of our Bibles. John realized that the Father was in Yeshua His Son, creating all things. We must not think of the Son of God in the way that human beings have children. Human families are *intended* to be images of God the Father and His Son, from whom come the Holy Spirit. There is total unity in the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but sin spoils what we experience on this earth. Therefore let us be careful how we understand the identity of Yeshua, the Son of God, with the Father both before creation and before He came to earth in the form of a man. John experienced Yeshua at first hand. The Son of God took the form of a man and walked this earth. He realized that this was a special moment in time when the eternal Son, there before creation, came to be like one of us, living among us and experiencing all that we experience as human beings. The first part of Chapter 1 of John's Gospel is a meditation upon this. Take time to consider this carefully. John the Baptist was the Prophet that was given the special responsibility to announce the coming of the Messiah. Yeshua *is* the Messiah.

In Chapter 1 we also read about Yeshua's baptism. Yeshua was not baptized because of His sin – He had no sin. He was baptized to fulfill the requirement of those who were preparing for the Messianic age, totally immersing Himself as they were. Yeshua immersed Himself into total identification with those who were seeking to be reconciled to God. His commitment had His death on the Cross in view as the means of reconciling His people to God the Father. So this was also the moment for God to declare Yeshua as His Son and for the Spirit of God to be seen descending upon Him.

We also have, in this chapter, a wonderful meeting of Yeshua with a devout Israelite named Nathaniel, who was called, along with other disciples, to follow Yeshua. We have been reading

Genesis, the first book of Torah and Nathaniel would also have been reading a Torah portion from one of the books of Moses. It was the custom for students of Torah to meditate on the teaching of their Rabbi in the shade of a broad leafed tree, often the fig tree. Thus to sit under a fig tree was symbolic of sitting under the teaching of a Rabbi. Any Israelite would have gone through a Bar Mitzvah at the age of twelve or thirteen years, when he would have made the step of being responsible for his own spiritual growth and for his own sins. A true Israelite therefore would not only listen to a Rabbi's teaching, but be an earnest student of Torah and study the Scriptures prayerfully, seeking inspiration from God Himself. Before this meeting between Nathaniel and Yeshua perhaps Nathaniel was studying one of the messianic passages from Torah and asking God for understanding. We don't know, but it is quite possible that he was reading something quite relevant to the meeting that he then had with Yeshua. Yeshua spoke to his heart when He said that He had seen him under the fig tree. Surely Nathaniel knew that Yeshua not only saw him under a physical tree but also knew what he was studying and what he was seeking. In that heart to heart moment Nathaniel had the revelation of who Yeshua was.

That is why we have turned to the Gospel of John after the studying the first book of Torah, so that we too might begin to see more deeply the link between all of Torah, all that God has said and done, and Yeshua. See what God says to you as you meditate on Chapter 1 of John's Gospel today.

Day 3

Chapter 2. The Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke are easier to read in some ways than John's Gospel. The other three accounts are more narrative in style, concerning what Yeshua said and did. We follow His life from His birth to His sacrificial death and resurrection in an ordered way. John is more concerned with highlighting incidents in Yeshua's ministry to show His fulfillment of the Messianic promise, and gives specific examples of this. Chapter 2 contains the rich symbolism of a wedding. When Yeshua tells His mother that His time has not come He is referring to the time in the future when He will be fully involved in the consummation of His own marriage with His Bride. Time and again He uses situations in the life of His people as examples for His teaching or to illustrate His own ministry in fulfillment of the types and shadows drawn from Scripture and from the history of Israel. John describes the wedding and then moves on to describe Yeshua going to Jerusalem for the Passover. We will read about the origin of Passover in Exodus next week and set the foundational teaching in place for the fulfillment that was to come through the sacrificial death of Yeshua. John discerned the important implications of what Yeshua was saying and doing in His days of ministry, and here describes the incidents for us.

Chapter 3. It is easy for us to miss the depth of what was going on in this dialogue with Yeshua and Nicodemus. Nicodemus was among the rulers of the Jews and so he was both a devout man and a serious student of Torah. It seems, at first sight, that he did not understand the concept of being born again. This is far from the truth. In those days being born again was a concept applied to special times in a person's life. It was considered that a person became like a baby in any new area of life or responsibility. When Nicodemus became a member of the ruling council he would have been a newcomer to the council and without experience. He would have treated this as a new phase of life that he entered like a baby - he would be *born again* in regard to a new step in life. The way he raised questions with Yeshua was in the manner of Jewish dialogue of his day, asking a question in a certain way to provoke an answer. It was Yeshua's answer that he was seeking, on the matter of becoming a member of the Kingdom of Heaven, to have a position in God's coming Kingdom. Yeshua raised the idea of being born again to a new level. He made Nicodemus understand that indeed one comes into the Kingdom of Heaven like a new born child, but not one who learns a new trade or responsibility, but one who is transformed spiritually at the will of the Father. Yeshua used familiar terminology to help Nicodemus reach for spiritual rebirth. It is a wonderful encounter between a respectable and honorable leader of the nation of Israel and Yeshua, who ministered to him with higher authority, yet with loving care - Jew to Jew.

Chapter 4. In the Gospels we find a lot of information concerning Yeshua's attitude to the religious people of His day. He teaches through His actions. There were those in the strict religious parties, such as the Pharisees and Sadducees who, despite all their knowledge of the Scriptures, failed to understand who Yeshua was. In this chapter we read about how Yeshua departed from the place where the strict Pharisees were disputing with Him and demonstrated, through His action, who He had come to save. He waited at the well where, hundreds of years before, Jacob, the father of Israel, had given drink to his flocks. He waited for a Samaritan woman to come along and spoke of the living

water that He would bring by the Holy Spirit. Jacob's well became a metaphor pointing to a higher purpose that God had in mind all those years between Jacob and that day. He spent time with a sinful outcast, a Samaritan woman who, despite her sin, was attentive to His message. She received the revelation of the Messiah and told this to the entire town where she lived. Yeshua used this as a further opportunity to tell His disciples that the time had come to send this same Gospel message far and wide to such people. He used the metaphor of a whitened harvest to refer to the crowds coming from the town eager to know who He was.

Chapter 5. Yeshua is the fulfillment of all the Feasts of the Lord, including the Sabbath. We will study the instructions for these in the Books of the Torah. John's Gospel includes several incidents at the Feasts, which took place in Jerusalem at the set times each year. He challenged those who gathered to understand who He was by attending these Feasts. On this occasion He fulfilled one of the Messianic prophecies, causing the lame to walk. This was a sign of who He was, yet there were those who failed to believe that He was the Messiah. Yeshua made it known that He came from the Father and did only what the Father was doing. This was either blasphemy or wonderful truth, and the people had to assess which it was, as Yeshua continued to minister in their presence. His confrontations with the religious authorities, who opposed Him, contained strong and uncompromising words, but we must remember that He was also full of love for His people. He stood before them to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom and could not compromise, but it was to His own people that He came to seek and to save those who were lost. What we read in these chapters is the revelation of Yeshua among His people, some of whom heard the truth and accepted it gladly, and others whose first reaction was to oppose His teaching, thinking that in so doing they would be pleasing God.

Day 4

Chapter 6. When we return to our reading of the Books of Moses, the foundation of God's teaching (Torah), we will read how God fed the Children of Israel with manna in the wilderness. We will also learn about the principle that *Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.* This is the background to what we read in this Chapter. Here is the Word of God made flesh, Yeshua HaMashaich (Jesus the Messiah) powerfully and carefully demonstrating that He is the fulfillment of what God showed the Children of Israel in the wilderness. The way is prepared by letting the people become hungry, in the physical sense. He sits them down and provides food by a miracle. He is teaching them, not only about physical food, but that He is the source of all their spiritual needs. What a day that was and what was true for them is also true for us!

Chapter 7. When we studied Chapter 2, earlier this week, we considered how Yeshua would fulfill the deepest meaning of the Feast of Passover. In Chapter 7 we see Him at another Feast, where He indicates that He is also to be the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. He came to earth to dwell (tabernacle) with men. Soon He was to go to be with the Father but, in the future, He will return and bring in the Messianic Age, the greatest fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. In Verse 6 of this chapter, as in Chapter 2, He says that His time is not yet come, and so stayed back from the Feast in Jerusalem at first. Then He went up to Jerusalem and spoke powerfully and openly at the Feast. It was a High Holiday in the City. The City was full of Pilgrims from many nations. Lights in the Temple blazed out to light up the entire City. The Priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam and bring it to pour out in the Temple as a symbol of God's Living Water. Yeshua, the Light of the World, full of the Spirit of God, at this very time, stood boldly in the centre of it all to declare who He was. The Feast was being transformed to make Him the centre, the source of all Spiritual life. What a day this was!

Chapter 8. Again Yeshua spends time in the Temple teaching people about the Kingdom and about Himself. We recall that when Almighty God revealed Himself to Moses He used the words *I am.* God is *what He is.* He is beyond human description. When Yeshua also used the term *I am* for Himself He knew that He was claiming to be equal to God the Father. He also knew that those who heard Him would understand His claims. He left them with no doubt as to His claim to be the Son of God come to the earth as the promised Messiah (anointed one). Time and again people would come to Him to ask questions to see how He would answer, or set up situations to see how He would respond. All Jerusalem was alive with these questions after hearing of His claims and hearing of His miracles.

When the woman who was caught in adultery was brought to Him they waited to see if He would answer according to their understanding of the Law of Moses. In their view she should be stoned, and they wondered if Yeshua would confirm this death sentence. Yet Yeshua demonstrated that they did not really know the balance of justice and mercy in the Torah. He acknowledged their right to judge but showed that none of them was just enough to be a judge to the extent of stoning her to death. What did He write in the sand? This may simply have been a list of their names. Later in our readings we will come to a passage in Jeremiah where God, in judgement, writes the names of His people in the earth. They sought to judge the woman but they came under the conviction that they

were also under the judgement of God and departed, one by one. Yeshua is the perfect judge and perfect teacher of Torah. We read in the prophecy given over Judah, at the end of our readings in Genesis, that the coming Messiah would have eyes like wine and teeth like milk. Eye for eye and tooth for tooth is the summation of justice and so the symbolism in the prophecy over Judah pointed to Yeshua being the perfect judge. Yet there is more. In God's Law, mercy triumphs over judgment. So here is Yeshua, bringing the adulteress, to a point of repentance where mercy can triumph. In this simple incident lie hidden depths of God's Torah in action. Yeshua's answer to the question posed to Him was far beyond their understanding or their expectation.

Chapter 9. Here is another example chosen by John that shows us how Yeshua demonstrated that He is the Son of God, the prophesied Messiah of His people. From the ancient prophecies it was expected that through the Messiah the lame would walk, the blind would see and good news would be preached to the poor. Lameness and blindness can be spiritual as well as physical and the physical miracles were a testimony to Yeshua's power to heal spiritually. This is what He was expecting the people to understand when He performed these miracles. Gradually, day by day, He built up a teaching and testimony about Himself through what He did for people and showed the crowds. We too can learn from these incidents. Very often people associate sickness directly with sin. This can be so, but there are also times when God is working in a person's life through their circumstances. We need to discern why we are in a certain situation and what the Lord would say to us. In the case of the man born blind, his life of blindness was for this one special moment when He would meet Yeshua and be the means of Yeshua clearly showing who He was. He can take away physical blindness and He can also take away spiritual blindness.

Day 5

Chapter 10. Yeshua made it clear that there was only one way to be reconciled with the Father. This was so even before He came to earth as a man, but now He states this fact clearly. Abraham's faith pointed to Yeshua even though Abraham could not have foreseen so clearly how God would reveal His Son. Yeshua came first to the Children of Israel to teach these things. His teaching was accepted by those who were ready to receive it but those who were not prepared sometimes reacted in very strong ways as we read here. Yeshua also made it clear that He had come to seek and save people from other nations after first making Himself known to His own people. 2000 years later we see that this is still happening. God has prepared millions of people from all nations to hear the voice of Yeshua through His Spirit and to learn to recognize His leading day by day, as He shepherds us towards the future He has prepared for us.

Chapter 11. Yeshua's miraculous power was demonstrated again when He raised Lazarus from the dead. He left him in the tomb for several days in obedience to the Father but also showed that through His weeping He also felt the sadness of Mary and Martha at the death of this beloved man. Here we see the two natures of Yeshua, the Son of Man and the Son of God. He experienced human sorrows and He came with the spiritual power to save. The miraculous resurrection of Lazarus from the dead shows God's compassion for us through our human lives and also signifies His power and desire to work in the spiritual domain to raise us from spiritual death to spiritual life. Those who did not understand these things, and who were not willing to learn, stood even more against Yeshua after this miracle, seeking to kill both Lazarus and Yeshua. Caiaphas, the High Priest, had too much to lose by letting Yeshua continue to draw people to follow him. Yet, even through Caiaphas's evil intent, what he said concerning one man dying for the people was prophetic. Caiaphas thought that one man's death would satisfy the Roman authorities and appease Caesar, who considered himself to be a god. Almighty God was prepared to sacrifice His Son for the salvation of all who would believe in Him. God was in control doing His utmost to save us despite the schemes of foolish and sinful men.

Chapter 12. We recall what Joseph said to his brothers when they feared retribution for how they had treated him – *you intended it for evil but God intended it for good....to save many people alive.* The ministry of Yeshua moved to a climax at the time of Passover, when even many of His own people the Jews, would demand His death. As He rode into the City on a donkey as a man of peace, many people lined the road and proclaimed words from a Messianic Psalm - *blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord.* Many thought that this would be the time when Yeshua would take His place as King, but Yeshua would soon show them that they had not fully understood the way of salvation through the Cross. He continued to teach them and to prepare for the great Sacrifice that lay before Him, coinciding with and fulfilling the meaning of Passover.

Chapter 13. Every year the Children of Israel celebrated Passover to remember their deliverance from Egypt. They developed ceremonies around the Passover meal that recounted the story of the

Exodus from Egypt. They interpreted the symbols in the ceremonies that reminded them of what their forefathers had experienced at the Hand of God. Yeshua came to raise our understanding to a new level. He was the ram caught in the thicket that replaced Isaac on the altar when Abraham took Him to Mount Moriah as a burnt offering to God. He is also the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb whose blood was painted on the doorposts of the Israelites on the night when the Angel of Death passed through Egypt. He is the fulfillment of all these types and shadows. We will read about the origins of the Passover when we return to Torah and read the Book of Exodus next week. Here, in this Chapter, we see the end purpose God had in mind. Yeshua gathered His disciples at this special Passover meal to transfer the meaning of it fully to Himself, before becoming the Lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world in His death on the Cross. His betrayer shared the meal with Him as well as His other disciples. Those who did not believe thought He was only a man, a false prophet, worthy of death for blasphemy. Those who discerned the truth spiritually were learning how the Messiah would suffer for their sins so that they would be reborn as the children of God through the life of His Spirit in them. This Son of Man was certainly also the Son of God.

Day 6

Chapter 14. We are reading some of the most beautiful passages of the Bible. From time to time we will all have our favourite books and chapters of the Bible. Genesis and John are firm favourites for many people. Genesis opens our eyes to what God has done through creation and has promised through covenant. John lifts our eyes to the unseen spiritual world that Yeshua opened to us through His life and sacrificial death. It is important for us to read the words of the Bible for ourselves and let the Holy Spirit speak to us as we read. No commentary written by someone else, including these notes that I am writing to encourage you, will replace what God gives us directly through His Spirit. Read each chapter as we come to it slowly and carefully and note down briefly and prayerfully what God plants in your own spirit. Yeshua is still speaking to His disciples of every age. In this chapter we read of this promise of eternal life that comes through faith in Him alone.

Chapter 15. In Psalm 80, we read about the vine that came out of Egypt and was planted in a place prepared for it. Next week we will begin to read the Book of Exodus which records the events that brought Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Israel was to be that fruitful vine. In the Gospel according to Matthew we will read how Yeshua was taken, as a baby, down to Egypt by Joseph and Mary to save Him from Herod. As we read in Genesis, Joseph was the saviour of his family when a harsh famine came to the countries of the Middle East. At the time of Yeshua's birth there was a famine of the Word of God in Israel. Joseph was a type of Yeshua. Yeshua, the Word of God made flesh was sent to save His people from a dry and arid spiritual existence, and symbolically came out of Egypt like Israel of old. Therefore, when we read in this chapter about Yeshua claiming to be the vine, we see that He has come as the root and foundation of the Israel of God, those born of the Spirit, first from the physical descendants of Jacob and then to include those added from all nations, grafted into Him by faith. He *is* the vine that came out of Egypt in its fullest sense. In Him alone is Israel part of that vine. He speaks of those of us who need pruning and others who are cast out as unbelievers. If we live by faith, seeking to improve in our faith and life in Him then He will lift us up and cause us to grow in the light of His truth. He also reminds us of the greatest commandment of all, the true fruit of life in Him, love of the Father and of one another.

Chapter 16. John has given us a full account of what Yeshua taught to His disciples on the evening of the Passover before He would be taken from them. The words that He spoke are still relevant. He tells us that our path will not be easy as we seek to serve Him in the same fallen world that rejected Him. He tells us clearly what the path of discipleship involves, and also assures us about the promise of eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven for all who are His true disciples.

Chapter 17. This is Yeshua's High Priestly prayer. He stands before His Father and prays for all His disciples just as the Levitical Priests stood before God in the Tabernacle to pray for the Tribes of Israel. Make careful note of all that Yeshua prayed, especially for the unity between Him and us for which He would soon give His life as a sacrifice.

Day 7

Chapter 18. A deep spiritual darkness descended on the Land when Yeshua was betrayed and taken for trial and execution. It was the will of the Father that Yeshua should allow His enemies to reject His claims as Messiah and King of the Jews, that He had so clearly proven through His teaching and His miraculous signs. He was the spotless Lamb of God that had moved among the people. It was the custom for Passover that each family would take a lamb without blemish into their household and examine it on the days leading up to Passover, before it would be killed for the Passover meal. Yeshua fulfilled all that these Passover lambs had meant over hundreds of years, on this special Passover. He was taken as the sinless Lamb of God to be sacrificed for the people, to be further inspected by the rulers of the nation, both the High Priest and the Roman authorities. Gethsemane was a dark day. Yeshua was sacrificing Himself willingly for the sake of all who would seek to receive forgiveness of sins and the promise of eternal life through Him. For them, darkness would turn to light. For those who rejected Him darkness would remain.

Chapter 19. Go slowly and carefully through this account of the trial and crucifixion of Yeshua. There was no other way that we might be saved. God set down the principles of sacrifice for the sins of the people in the Books of Moses and they were carried out day after day and year after year, first in the Tabernacle and later in the Temple. These sacrifices atoned for the sins of Israel but did not remove the sinful nature. Yeshua fulfilled the sacrifice, being our substitute for the sins we committed, and then sent His Holy Spirit to change us and transform our character from within. This is the meaning of *It is finished*, prophetically declared on the Cross and echoing through all generations to include us too. We must simply accept that this was the day of our trial and of our condemnation, but through His sacrifice, if we believe it and accept it, our verdict is innocent, because He bore our guilt and condemnation. Through His association with us, which began in the heart of God before creation and was confirmed at His baptism in the Jordan, He was declared guilty before men, so that we might be set free in His resurrected life.

Chapter 20. This is a wonderful account of the continuing concern and understanding that Yeshua had for His disciples. He knew those who loved Him. Mary Magdelene, who was once among the worst of sinners, had been forgiven and was now among His closest disciples. When sin is forgiven in Yeshua it is forgiven to the uttermost. Mary was among the first to see the risen Lord. Yeshua knew that she and His other disciples would be confused, and so He came among them again before going back to be with the Father from whom He had come.

Chapter 21. There is a monument on the shores of the Sea of Galilee to remind visitors about what we read in this Chapter. In real time and in a real place Yeshua came among His disciples where He had first called them. This place is just a little round the shore near Capernaum, where Peter had lived as a fisherman and where Yeshua walked with His disciples. Just as this is one of my favourite chapters of the Bible, this is my favourite place to visit in the entire Land of Israel. Peter the fisherman had been called to follow Yeshua some years before. He left His nets and was among the

closest of the Lord's disciples, even seeing Him transfigured on the mountain in the presence of Moses and Elijah, two witnesses who confirmed exactly who He was. It was Peter who answered Yeshua's question on one of their walks to a city in Israel. "Who do people say I am", asked Yeshua. It was Peter to whom it was revealed that He was, *Messiah, Son of the Living God*. Yet it was this same Peter who denied Him, having overstated his ability to follow Him to the Cross and fearful for his life. This was not the same as the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. Yeshua knew the heart of Peter and knew that he could still use him. Here, in this chapter, John records how they ate fish again with Yeshua on the shores of Galilee, and were commissioned by Him to their own individual works. He draws special reference to the reinstatement of Peter. This is a very special moment and a message for all of us who have been like Peter and need a fresh touch from the Lord. Later we learn how Peter was powerfully used as an Apostle. His recommissioning took place here on the seashore where he was first called to follow the Lord. How often do we need to return to the "altar" where we made our first bold commitment to God and yet failed to live up to our promise?
