

## Under The Fig Tree



### WEEK 41

The pivotal point of history is Yeshua's sacrifice for us. Daniel was shown the precise time that this would take place. The Angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel (Chapter 9). He gave the exact number of years between the permission to rebuild the streets and wall to the cutting off of Messiah (Verses 25 and 26). The number of years was 69 times 7, 483 years. Several calendars have been used throughout history. The Children of Israel were given a lunar calendar, so that months were measured from one new moon to the next. This is a period of approximately 29 ½ days. Modifications have been incorporated into the Hebrew calendar to adjust the 12 months, each of either 29 or 30 days, to conform to the solar year of approximately 365 days.

The Romans ruled Judah for approximately 60 years before Yeshua's birth. The Roman calendar of that time was devised by Julius Caesar and known as the Julian calendar. Reform of this calendar began hundreds of years later, through Pope Gregory. This is called the Gregorian calendar. It was adopted throughout the world and is still in use today. Based on this calendar, the years of history were renumbered, centred on the approximate year of Yeshua's birth. For this reason, this calendar is also called the Christian Calendar. The years after Yeshua's birth are called AD (Anno Domine, the Year of our Lord) and those before His birth they are called BC (Before Christ). There is no year zero, so 1 AD follows 1BC. Based on this new way of counting years, the Gregorian calendar was used from 1582 AD. The reference point of Yeshua's birth was not accepted by Jews who did not believe Yeshua to be Messiah so, using the same numbering for the years, instead of BC the term BCE was introduced, meaning *Before the Common Era*, while CE replaces AD.

The years quoted in our studies have been reckoned from the Gregorian calendar. This brings some discrepancies with other calendars, which are not always easy to assess. Much work is done on this, which is ongoing, so we must, at times, work with approximations. Even with these approximations, it is clear that Gabriel's words to Daniel came to pass, that the City of Jerusalem was rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah and that Yeshua was born at exactly the time foretold by the Prophet. Yeshua was crucified after the 69 periods of 7 years, counted from the decree of Darius 1<sup>st</sup> to rebuild Jerusalem.

The years recorded in the Bible show that biblical history is wonderfully ordered by God. Based on the Gregorian calendar, Ataxerxes decreed that Nehemiah could return to rebuild the City of Jerusalem in 445 BC. Careful calculations, based on the lunar calendar of the Hebrews adjusted to

the Gregorian Calendar, beginning with the command of Ataxerxes, confirms Daniel's Prophecy, that after 483 years Yeshua was crucified in Jerusalem. He had ministered to His people for three and a half years from the age of 30. It is instructive to note that it was the same Angel Gabriel, who had revealed the timing to Daniel, and later announced to Mary the birth of Yeshua.

While we might fit these timings to our calendars with reasonable accuracy, the Bible does not use calendars. The Bible refers not to dates but to the circumstances of the time, and to years in between key events. The birth of Yeshua was at the time when Herod was King of the Jews. Historians have studied these times more fully since 1582, and noted that Herod the Great died in 4BC. The birth of Yeshua, therefore, which was in the time of Herod the Great, was misplaced on the Gregorian Calendar. With this in mind there is a remarkable symmetry in the history of Israel. We must not force this too far but it cannot go unnoticed that the Children of Israel were in Egypt for 430 years (Exodus 12:40). Ezekiel was made to lie on his side 430 days (Ezekiel 4:5-6) to portray the number of years of the sins of Israel and Judah. Malachi was the last of the biblical Prophets. His Prophecy coincided with the gradual rise of Greece and then of Rome. 430 years from Malachi was the birth of Yeshua. When the Children of Israel went to Egypt there was a famine in Canaan. When Yeshua came to earth it was to bring relief from a famine of the Word of God (Amos 8:11).

Yeshua came to earth at *exactly the right time* (Galatians 4:4) to fulfill all of the Prophecies pointing to His birth, earthly ministry and sacrificial death. He came to the Land of Israel to minister to the gathered remnant now under the oppressive rule of Rome. He was born a Jew and his ministry was confined to the Land of Israel. It was not until after His Ascension that the Gospel went to the entire world. At the time of His birth Rome had appointed Herod as King. Herod came from a Jewish family that had assimilated with the Romans, so he was a "puppet king". Nevertheless, he was called Herod the Great because he was a powerful ruler and a great architect and builder. He constructed several palaces, a great viaduct, whose remains are still visible in the coastal town of Caesarea, and many other buildings, so that Roman architecture was widespread in Israel. He was appointed in 40 BC. In 20 BC he began the ornate reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. The work took, in total, 46 years (John 2:20). It was a grand structure to the human eye, but it was barely completed before Yeshua prophesied its destruction. A new era was dawning for the Israel of God, perfectly timed for the fulfillment of the promises to Israel, in the context of the might of Rome.

Herod the Great died in 4 BC. Archelus (Herod the Tetrarch) was next appointed by Rome until 6 AD, but not as a king. Herod Antipas followed and he was the ruler in Judea at the time of Yeshua's trial and execution. Herod Agrippa followed him at the time of the first Apostles. Pontius Pilate was sent to Judea in 26 AD. A second Agrippa followed in the family line of the previous Herods. He too was proclaimed King by Emperor Claudius and the Roman influence continued to be strengthened into the reigns of Nero (54-68 AD), Galbo, Otho, Vitellius and Vespasian (69-79 AD), under whom Jerusalem fell. The Temple was destroyed by the Roman army under the rule of Vespasian's son, Titus. The Roman Caesars who overlapped the life of Yeshua were Augustus (27 BC to 14 AD) and Tiberius (14 AD to 37 AD). The ministry of Yeshua took place during the reign of Tiberius, a wicked man. He was by nature like those who perished in Sodom. The City of Tiberius on the south-west of shores of the Sea of Galilee was named after

him and completed in 18 AD. This was the time of Yeshua's coming, and when the Gospel began to go out from Jerusalem. The contrasts of the world, in which Yeshua ministered, with the Kingdom of Heaven, which He proclaimed, are like dark is to light.

Let us, therefore, with this in mind, turn to the Gospel of Luke and then into the remaining Books of the New Testament.

## Day 1

Luke Chapter 1. Luke was called the *beloved physician* by Paul (Colossians 4:14). His account of Yeshua comes to us with the sense of care we might expect of a family physician. He addressed it to Theophilus, who may have been a real person and/or anyone who might desire to be addressed in this way. *Theophilus* means *beloved of God*. Luke set out an ordered account, which we suppose was based on his personal experiences of Yeshua, his discussions with those who knew Him and access to the records of eye witnesses. He included much the same information as in Matthew, Mark and John, but each of the Gospel writers had his unique perspective. We must study all of the Gospel accounts to discover the wider picture, combining the details that are unique to each Gospel. Luke ordered his account largely as an historical overview, from which we gain insight on Yeshua the *Man*.

Ezra and Nehemiah reestablished the order of the Temple service according to how it had been at the time of Solomon. Luke's account begins when Zacharias ministered in the Temple. He was of the order of Abijah. The order of Abijah ministered in the eighth two-week period of the year (1 Chronicles 24:10). If the cycle of the priestly service began in the month of Nissan, the first month, then this would have been during the second half of the fourth month. John the Baptist was conceived after this period of ministry was completed (Verse 23 and 24) and Zacharias' wife Elizabeth hid herself away for 5 months. A month later (Verse 26) the Angel Gabriel announced the Birth of Yeshua to Mary. This was in the 11<sup>th</sup> Month of the Hebrew calendar. Allowing for the fact that the Hebrew calendar contained 12 months of 29 or 30 days, this would put the birth of Yeshua at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in the 7<sup>th</sup> Month. This is not recorded as such, but this supposition fits with the prophetic significance of Yeshua's birth and the circumstances surrounding His birth. He came to Tabernacle with us. On His return He will fulfill the Feasts of the Seventh Month.

The Angel who visited Mary was Gabriel, the same Angel who had visited Daniel to announce the Prophecy of the 70 weeks (Daniel 9:21). This links together the promises for Daniel's people, focusing on God's plan for the Children of Israel, and the fulfillment in Yeshua. The Christian Church has derived various Names for Yeshua, including the Name *Jesus*. The Lord has chosen to answer to the Names we have given Him, but the original Name was chosen by God: it is a statement of *who He is* as much as a Name by which we can address Him. *Yeshua* was the Name that Gabriel announced to Mary: it is the Hebrew word for *Salvation*.

Though they are familiar, from our reading of the other Gospels, read the details of this Chapter again carefully. Meditate on the prayers of Mary and Zacharias. They look back to the promises of God to Abraham and to David, reminding us that both John and Yeshua were totally integrated into the purposes of God for the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Luke notes

the circumcision of John and how he grew in the strength of God's Spirit, being prepared for the ministry he had been given. We know from the Tanach that this is a ministry typified by the Prophet Elijah (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 4:5).

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 2. The year of Yeshua's birth is related to the timing of the rulers of Rome and Syria, and the circumstance of the census. Rome numbered the people under its power, while God was preparing to number His own people, made possible by the birth and sacrificial death of His Son. In this chapter, we have the account of Yeshua's birth in Bethlehem. This was the town of David the King. Bethlehem was a small town. Perhaps there was only one house (the inn) set apart for visitors at this busy season. This was at the time of the census and also the Feast of Tabernacles. Many pilgrims would be passing through on their way to Jerusalem, just a few miles to the north. It was an act of kindness that room was found in a stable at the side of the inn. Yeshua was born to Mary and Joseph, who was of the line of David, and so fulfilled the promise given by the Prophets, that David's Kingdom would never end (Isaiah 9:1-7).

How fitting that the first people to visit the new-born King were the shepherds. These were most likely shepherds caring for the sheep used for ritual slaughter in the Temple. It has been discovered that there was a region near Bethlehem where sacrificial lambs were reared. Among their duties, they were to ensure the purity of the sacrificial lambs. They, who were caring for the sheep to be sacrificed, were first to view the Sacrificial Lamb of God, who was also to become the Great Shepherd of God's sheep!

Every aspect of Yeshua's birth confirmed that this was the beginning of the fulfillment for God's promises to Israel. He was accepted into the household of Israel through circumcision and dedicated at the Temple before two witnesses whom God had prepared. Imagine the joy of Simeon and Anna, to see God's promised salvation (Yeshua) before them (Verse 30). They were prophetic figures and intercessors, who had waited a long time for this day, in patient anticipation and prayer. Verses 34 and 35 are moving prophecies about what Mary would later witness at the Crucifixion.

Luke moved the account forward quite quickly, covering Yeshua's childhood and His visit to the Temple. This was at the time when Jewish boys are traditionally expected to begin to take responsibility for their study of Torah and their personal relationship with God. This is known in Judaism as *Bar Mitzvah* (*Son of the Commandment*). Yeshua was brought up in Nazareth according to all the traditions of the Jews. The question (Verse 49), *did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* was the ultimate statement from a boy going through *Bar Mitzvah*. Yeshua, now moving traditionally from childhood into the first stages of responsibility before God, knew exactly what He was doing. The discussions with the religious leaders were the first stage of His new phase of life. Later, He would fully challenge the authority of the rabbis and their understanding of Torah. Notice the mention of asking questions (Verse 46). This is related to the Hebraic mindset, which is different from the Greek mindset. Whereas the Greek philosophical mindset seeks logical answers to all questions, the Hebraic mindset gives rise to challenging questions that might not be answered. A question gives rise to another question, not necessarily with an answer. The further the discussion goes the more challenging are the questions, touching

on high and holy matters of Heaven that cannot be answered with human logic. This was the Jewish framework of Yeshua's day, and He entered fully into it. Verse 52 is a key statement about the growth of Yeshua towards His ministry. Remember wisdom is not the same as knowledge or understanding. All these three (wisdom, knowledge and understanding) are spiritual, but wisdom is the spiritual gift from God that moves a person in conformity to His will. Yeshua was growing in His experience of *doing* and *saying* only what His Father was doing and saying.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 3. Next came the move of repentance across Israel. Anna and Caiaphas were High Priests at the time, but the Spirit of God moved people to the ministry of John the Baptist and baptism in the Jordan, rather than to the Priests and the Temple mikvot (ritual baths). John fulfilled the ministry announced by the Prophets to *prepare the way of the Lord*, now manifest in Yeshua. The challenge to repentance touched the hearts of many ordinary people who wanted to be right in God's eyes. The same challenge brought rebuke from the prominent leaders, finally leading to John's imprisonment and execution. John was the witness before whom those who were repentant made their confession to God. In this context, Yeshua came to the Jordan, the river that once was crossed by Joshua. This time the Heavens opened, rather than the waters of the river, to confirm Him as God's Son.

The practice of baptism was that, before witnesses, a person would immerse himself fully, from a kneeling position, in running water (*Haim Maim, living water*). For those who needed to repent of their sins the immersion was symbolic of the inner cleansing that was desired, which God alone could give. Full immersion was a reminder of the crossing of the Red Sea and symbolic of death to oneself that one might become alive to God. For Yeshua, who had no sin, this was *identification* with repentant sinners. Indeed, He was soon to take the punishment for their sins upon Himself. He had no sin, but with complete identification with those who desired to be saved from their sins, He demonstrated that He was dead to the world and alive to God. The ministry of the Temple had been a temporary substitute to deal with sin, but now a permanent way to God was given through God's own Son. Yeshua's commitment to baptism and His total commitment to repentant sinners was confirmed on the Cross. When He knelt in the water to pray (Verses 21-22), the Holy Spirit confirmed that Yeshua was God's Son. He was now 30 years old, the time when, according to Torah, a Priestly ministry might begin (Numbers 4:3). From within the framework of Torah, Yeshua began to bring the true meaning to Torah.

The genealogy of Yeshua contains many names of people not listed elsewhere in the Bible. The genealogy is in the reverse order to that in Matthew Chapter 1, and some of the names are different. There may be several reasons for the different names of people we do not find elsewhere. Some people consider the genealogy in Luke as applying to Mary and the one in Matthew as applying to Joseph. This, however, does not seem to be according to the wording of Verse 23, which implies that what follows is the genealogy of Joseph. One reason for different names is that sometimes people were *given* different names, because of the different nations who influenced Israel. We find this in other parts of Scripture (For example Daniel was also known as Beltshazzar, depending whether he was being addressed by the Babylonians or the Jews, and some of the Apostles had different names (Luke 6:13-16, Matthew 10:2-4)). Secondly,

according to the Torah, if a woman should be childless at the death of her husband, the husband's brother must marry her. He became the kinsman redeemer. The child from this marriage might be called the son of either the deceased husband or the kinsman redeemer. Thirdly, there are other circumstances of adoption, just as, in a way, Joseph adopted Yeshua to be his legal son. Fourthly, genealogies need not be complete. Fifthly, Jewishness was reckoned through the father and not the mother. We do not know whether Mary was from the Tribe of Judah. She may have been from the Tribe of Levi, since her close relative Elizabeth was married to a Levite, who was obedient to Torah and would not have married outside his tribe (Leviticus 21:14). If Mary married a Jew, she would become a Jew (Numbers 36:3). As long as there are sufficient links in the chain to trace a person back to a given ancestor then there may be some omissions from the full genealogy. In our translations, the words *the son of* is inserted: it is not in the Greek. The genealogy goes, *Joseph of Heli of Matthat*, and so on. The important emphasis of both Luke's and Matthew's Prophecies is that a link has been established to include key figures who indicate the fulfillment of Prophecy and the right of Yeshua to the Throne of David. Zerrubbabel and David are the key forefathers of Joseph, and are in both genealogies. Luke also traces the family line back to Abraham and Adam, to illustrate that Yeshua is fully man, and of the physical seed of Abraham.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 4. Immediately following His baptism, Yeshua was tested by satan. Just as Moses was on the Mountain with God for forty days and nights and the Children of Israel were in the wilderness for 40 years, Yeshua fasted in the wilderness for 40 days and nights. It is hard to understand why Yeshua was tested, but it is the nature of God's dealings with mankind that everything must be tested. Faith is tested in action; otherwise it is not real faith. A spiritual battle ensued – a battle of words. Satan's command of the Bible is immense, but he uses it deceptively, twisting truth to meet his own ends. Yeshua's command of the heart meaning of Scripture is infinitely superior and satan was defeated. Immediately Yeshua began His earthly ministry, first in His own town of Nazareth. Perfectly coinciding with the prescribed reading from the Prophets, He announced His fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2. He proclaimed *the acceptable year of the Lord* had begun through Him. He stopped halfway through Verse 2: *the Day of vengeance of God* is reserved for the time of His *second* coming. This is confirmed through the message of other Prophets. Instead of rejoicing, the people sought to kill Him as a false prophet! Yet, it was not the time for Yeshua's sacrifice, nor was it to be in this way, so He walked away and began His wonderful ministry to the poor and needy in the nearby town of Capernaum, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The remains of this small City have been uncovered by archaeologists and can be seen today. Remains of Peter's mother-in-law's house have been identified as a place where a small home group met for study and prayer after the time of Yeshua. It is a living witness of the very place where Yeshua once walked this earth and ministered to ordinary people like you and me, casting out demons, healing sickness, and preaching the Kingdom of Heaven. Even the demons recognized who He was and submitted to His authority.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 2

In some ways the Bible is complex. We must read it over and over again. Even an entire lifetime will not exhaust the possibilities of what God might show us. There are, nevertheless, some simple principles accessible to all. The main, issue for us all, is our response to God and His teaching. Isaiah summed it up in a single verse: *For all the things My hand has made, and all those things exist, says the Lord. But on this one I will look: On him who is poor in spirit, and who trembles at My word.* (Isaiah 66:2)

Micah put it another way: *He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?* (Micah 6:8)

Throughout Israel's history, God found such people. They were the "good figs" of the exile (Jeremiah 24); those who accepted God's discipline and trusted Him – the remnant who would return from Babylon. They were those who wrote the Psalms, with inspired words that touch our hearts today. They were the Prophets who ministered in God's Name, the Priests who interceded for God's people and taught accurately from His Word, and they were the Kings who led Israel well. Some are listed in Hebrews 11, as those who showed great faith through various circumstances of life. This kind of person gathered at the Jordan's edge to be baptized by John. This was also the kind who followed Yeshua in faith and trust to hear His teaching. These are people, like you and me, who, in a complex world, reach out to God with a humble heart. These, simply, are those whom Yeshua came to seek and save.

None of us can save ourselves, and none of the rabbinic schools could interpret Torah fully. God so ordained it that only through His Son could all His promises be fulfilled. Whether a person was a rabbi, or a person with no education, God sent His Son into the world at the right time to do what no other could do: He simply asked for a humble, willing and teachable heart. This Great Shepherd of the Sheep gathers us into His sheepfold for eternal life. His Word transcends time, so that the remnant who preceded His coming might also be saved, including the heroes of faith of Hebrews 11 and the many unnamed people, whom God identified through history, who had lived by faith in the One True God.

The writer to the Hebrews said: *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...* (Hebrews 1:1-3)

God prepared the way for His Son by making Covenant with Abraham. The Covenant and all that followed, through the calling of Israel, can be read from two perspectives. The promises He made to Abraham have application in this world: they also have interpretation pointing to the Eternal Kingdom of Heaven. Until the coming of Yeshua, the Kingdom could not be fully preached, only the temporal purposes of God could be attained. The entire universe waited for His coming

(Romans 8:22) to take the principles of Torah and interpret them in terms of the Kingdom of God. Yeshua came into the world to preach the Kingdom and gather those of humble heart, for whom He would reveal the eternal purposes of God, interpreting Torah at this higher level.

Luke chose incidents from the ministry of Yeshua to show us various aspects of Yeshua's life and ministry, illustrating the way He fulfilled the promises of God. He shows Yeshua as a Man, teaching in the traditions of the rabbis, going from place to place, with crowds following. Crowds followed Him, made up of people like us and those of humble heart who went before. See how the Holy Spirit speaks to you as you are taken incident by incident through Yeshua's life on earth.

Chapter 5. Here is the account of the calling of the disciples. Yeshua healed the sick and cast out demons to help those in need, and also to verify with signs that He ministered with the authority of God. He did what only God can do, having power over satan, and, more than that, having the power to forgive sins. On the edge of the crowds whom He taught, were religious leaders. If they were not humble-hearted and teachable they stuck firmly to their own interpretations of Torah, challenging Yeshua's authority. He showed them that, like new wine replaces old, there was now a fulfillment of Torah that they had not understood previously. Yeshua had not come to patch up their misconceptions, but to transform Torah observance into the life of the New Covenant. He did not immediately replace the Levitical order of Priesthood. Notice how He sent the cleansed leper to the Priests, so that they obeyed the Torah rules given through Moses. How would this be judged? Only God can cleanse lepers, the outcasts of Jewish society. The Priests would have known this and so it was possible to interpret the sign of Yeshua's authority to fulfill and not replace Torah.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 6. Yeshua drew every element of Torah to Himself, because He is the Son of God through whom Torah was given to Moses. He is the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). He is the Sabbath rest, with all authority to say and do what He intended for the Sabbath. In Chapter 5, Verse 24, He used the title, *Son of Man*. This was an accepted way of saying *human being*, so this was not a new term. Yeshua used it of Himself, however, giving the term a higher meaning. He was saying that He came as a human being. He was also claiming to be the Messiah, which means *anointed One*. He was *the* human being anointed by God to save the Children of Israel from the oppressive and sinful world. There were different expectations of what the Messiah would do: Yeshua surprised many and disappointed others. Knowing full well who He was, He called Himself *Son of Man*. Adam was the first man, the ancestor of all human beings. Yeshua *became* a man in the line of Adam, so that He would restore mankind to God. He was the only Man to be allowed to ascend to Heaven, so that other men and women might also be restored to the fellowship with God lost by Adam.

Chapter 6 contains a briefer version of the Sermon on the Mount than is recorded by Matthew. The crowds gathered to Yeshua's teaching and He taught as no-one else had done. Throughout the Tanach we have glimpses of the true intent of Torah; only Yeshua gave Torah its true meaning, preparing the way for the new era of the Kingdom of Heaven.

\*\*\*\*\*



Chapter 7. Each incident described by Luke has a particular purpose. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. The centurion was a Gentile to whom God gave faith. Yeshua ministered specifically to the Children of Israel, to fulfill the Covenant with God's chosen people. He also showed through various incidents that Gentiles will also join the Covenant community through faith. After Yeshua ascended to be with the Father, the Gospel was to go to the entire world. God signified this through inclusion of some Gentiles while Yeshua was on earth.

*Among those born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he:* this statement about John the Baptist seems somewhat unfair after all that he did. John had no way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven until the sacrifice of Yeshua, and neither did anyone else before or since. The Kingdom of Heaven was opened through Yeshua and all else is temporal. All the heroes of faith of Hebrews 11, and also John the Baptist, would find their place in the Kingdom, but not on their own merit. Yeshua was uncompromising in His message, because He knew there was no other way. His signs fulfilled what the Prophets had been shown as authenticating the Messiah. This was not a day of rejection for John, but a day of fulfilled promise. Soon he was to be beheaded, but with the promise of eternal life. Yeshua is Israel's Messiah.

Who believes such things? Those who are of humble heart. Who loves Him most? Those who know their desperate circumstances and know how much Yeshua did when He forgave them. The sinful woman was saved by faith and knew what Yeshua did when, through His forgiveness, she was completely cleansed of her sins. Her experience is offered to all mankind.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 8. It is a glorious day of cleansing when, through His response to the faith, that is itself a gift from God, Yeshua proclaims forgiveness. This is God's gift offered to all, but the proud and hard-hearted reject the gift. Yeshua showed that there were indeed many who would reject His Word.

Here are more of the familiar incidents that we read in the other Gospel accounts. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you afresh through what you read.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 3

Pause for a moment and review the purpose of these Bible studies. Let us consider again some of the objectives established at the beginning of our studies. These objectives will be familiar but they are restated for emphasis as we complete our studies in the New Testament. We do not want to lose the overall purpose, having studied so carefully up to this point.

- We have spent the majority of our time so far studying the Tanach (Old Testament). This was to establish the framework from which the New Testament emerged. “New Testament” and “Old Testament” are the accepted divisions of the Bible, but these are not the best terms to use. God’s purpose in history is centred on Yeshua HaMashiach, through whom He is restoring, from the effects of Adam’s fall, a family drawn from all nations. The key principle is *Covenant*, not *Testament*. The word *testament* has come to imply covenant, but it is also associated with a legal document declaring a person’s wishes for the disposal of his property after his death. The concept of a *testament* has some bearing on Scriptures, but it can take away from the more deeply rooted principle of *covenant*. It is not that the Tanach was put aside to be replaced by a completely different plan. God cut the key *Covenant* with *Abraham*. The means by which this Covenant would be fulfilled is at the foundation of all Scripture. The concept of *testament* instead of *covenant* has led to a division of the Bible that has weakened the foundations upon which many Christians have based their Bible study. We have sought to build a better structure. Starting with the Tanach, we have studied first the call of the Children of Israel, the temporary framework revealed to Moses, and the Prophetic pointers to the future. We have seen much of this as types and shadows pointing to a fulfillment in the promises Messiah. We, therefore, at times, read portions of the New Testament to confirm links with the Old, establishing a mindset of the continuity of all Scripture.
- Now we are continuing our Bible study in the New Testament. We are partway through the ordered account of the Gospel of Luke. Just as Yeshua HaMashiach came as *the Light of the World* so that same *Light* shines through our studies. The heaviness of some of the other studies is lifted away as we enter into the account of Yeshua lifting burdens from heavily burdened people. Because of this wonderful revelation be careful not to detach our studies from what has been gleaned through the reading of the Tanach. As you read, have in mind this background. The Jews, to whom Yeshua ministered, emerged from the history of the Tanach. Yeshua came among them, in His humanity, a member of the Tribe of Judah. He is the King of the Jews and will not lose this identity. It links Him to all that went before and establishes Him as the fulfillment of the Covenant with Abraham, manifesting the true intent of Torah. As we read the Gospels and the other Books of the New Testament, having already done so much, let us not fall into the trap of now detaching our studies from the setting and background on which they are founded. If we strengthen our understanding of the continuity of all Covenant history, our future studies of the Bible will allow the themes of Scripture to be understood more comprehensively.

- The title of our studies is *Under the Fig Tree*. This originates from the practice of Yeshua's time, whereby a student of Scripture might sit in the shade of a broad-leafed fig tree to further meditate on what he learned from his rabbi. We recall that Yeshua saw Nathaniel *under the fig tree* (John 1:48). Yeshua perceived that Nathaniel was *an Israelite indeed*, one whose heart was right with God, who would be numbered in the Covenant family. Paul called this Covenant family *the Israel of God* (Galatians 6:16). *Under the Fig Tree* is, therefore, a good title for our purposes in studying the Bible. It encourages us to be like Nathaniel and spend time studying our Bibles in the presence of God. Yeshua came as a teacher in the manner of the rabbis of His day, gathering disciples and taking them from place to place to teach them, using parables and other familiar teaching methods. *He is our teacher* and has sent His Holy Spirit to live in us, so that if we, metaphorically, sit under His fig tree, we will find the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a personal way. Any other Bible teacher or Bible teaching scheme is simply an aid to help us to strengthen our personal relationship with God.
- Thus, as we move forward into the last weeks of our Bible study course, please have these principles in balance. Take the opportunity to strengthen your understanding of the continuity of all Scripture. As you do this also ensure that you are listening to the Holy Spirit as you read the Scriptures in a prayerful attitude. The main objective of all these studies is to *strengthen your personal walk with God*.

Luke Chapter 9. Notice the progression of Yeshua's ministry. He called the first disciples and took them from place to place to teach them. Yeshua is the fulfillment of all the types and shadows of the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Hebrews 8:2). The Tabernacle in the wilderness and its purpose was a preparation for understanding how Yeshua, God in Man, would minister to us. As the Tabernacle moved from place to place on the wilderness journey, so Yeshua led His disciples. He then sent them out to be His representatives, continuing His ministry on earth. Just as the Children of Israel were, in their journey through the wilderness, observed by people of the world around them, so was Yeshua and His disciples. Herod the Tetrarch was fascinated by what he heard but remained an outsider, as the Moabites and other nations had done in the wilderness years.

It was in this context that we have the account of the feeding of the five thousand, confirming that it was Yeshua who was with the Father in the wilderness, providing manna for His people. He ordered the people into small groups to receive their food, symbolic of the congregations of His people throughout the world who receive His spiritual food together.

In this same chapter are Peter's revelation that Yeshua is the Messiah and the Transfiguration before Moses and Elijah, in the presence of the three disciples. Soon after would come the walk up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. Yeshua gradually prepared His disciples for this time, so that they would be in a position to continue His ministry after His sacrificial death. He ensured that they were in no doubt as to the commitment this entailed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 10. 70 was the number of members of the Sanhedrin. This body of religious leaders goes back to the time when Moses divided responsibility for interpreting Torah between the elders (Exodus 18:19-22, Numbers 11:16). The ministry of Moses pointed to Yeshua. Moses brought in a temporary order that would be fulfilled by Yeshua. The Book of Hebrews has much to say on this. In Yeshua's day, both the Sanhedrin and the rabbinical schools were, to a great extent, teaching dry legalism, having lost the Spirit of Torah. There was also corruption. Furthermore, Yeshua was preparing the way for Torah to be manifest on the heart of every believer, including Gentiles as well as Jews. It was necessary to renew the structure by which Torah would be taught, understood and lived. The sending out of the 70 disciples is symbolic of the change that would soon come. Read the details of this incident with Exodus 18 in mind. Note that, while the authority structure for interpreting Torah was being renewed and the period of the authority of the Sanhedrin was coming to an end, the new authority was first given to Jewish disciples. Yeshua was not taking away God's promises to the Children of Israel, but establishing a new order among them.

Consider this carefully. Moses went daily into the Lord's presence to commune with Him directly. The ministry of interpreting Torah to every aspect of life was then shared among the elders. There were elders in the community, and Aaron and the Levitical Priesthood were responsible for services of the Tabernacle. All authority came from God. His presence was among His people. He was their King. No-one else was like Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10), while, among the Messianic prophecies, Moses foretold that *the Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear.* After Moses, the Kingdom of Israel gradually departed from God's direct rule and authority. It separated into various religious groups each with its own interpretation of Torah. The overall rulers lost their authority to Rome and sin also entered into their midst.

Yeshua is the Prophet spoken of by Moses, raised up from the midst of the Jews to be King. He is the Son of God who is one with the Father, confirming the creed of Israel: *Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one!* (Deuteronomy 6:4) The Hebrew for *one* is *echad*, a unity with multiple manifestations, so that Yeshua and the Father are One God. Yeshua came with the full authority of God. Through His authority He restored the Kingdom to the Father. Those who resisted His teaching lost their authority. Indeed, a new authority structure came into place. With the gift of the Holy Spirit, God brought every believer into direct communion with Him. We will see in our further reading of the New Testament that there is structure among congregations of God's people, but now under the direct rule of God through Yeshua. Yeshua reformed the Jews into a community where He is King, and extends His Kingdom into the entire world, all believers being part of that same family of faith.

With further points of teaching, Yeshua and His disciples set out for Jerusalem with His disciples, arriving at the home of Mary and Martha.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 11. Some of the teaching of Matthew 6 is included in this Chapter, while some came earlier in Luke. Sometimes Bible accounts are chronological, sometimes they are thematic. Consider this teaching again carefully. Notice too how Yeshua revealed the spiritual battles that

His disciples would encounter as well as giving practical teaching for our lives on earth. Verse 27 and 28 is a warning to those who have made images of Mary and make her the object of their worship. Yeshua's words warn us about such religious frameworks that, in our day, have turned to idolatry. His priority is that we *hear the Word of God and keep it*. He brought other stern warnings to the religious leaders of His day. If they had heeded these warnings they would have renounced their sins and errors of judgment, and followed Him. Many religious leaders did follow Him eventually (Acts 6:7).

These particular leaders heard Yeshua's rebuke. This was the way in the interaction between Jews: not to compromise and to speak frankly, man to man. They *also* heard His invitation to faith through His challenge to their hearts and minds – this was God speaking to His people, with love behind strong words of rebuke. Be careful not to draw wrong conclusions from this very Jewish interaction.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 12. Read every point of Luke's account carefully. There is progression in the teaching, touching greater and greater depths. There is also width in the teaching, touching on various aspects of the life of faith. Let the Holy Spirit guide you. This is best done through times of prayerful study that are not likely to be interrupted. Protect these times. Even the Lord needed to do this (Luke 6:12, 4:42, 9:18). You may be familiar with much of what we are reading in these chapters, but do not be tempted to skim over the account. There are always new things to see.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 4

Chapter 13. The Chapter begins with Yeshua's reference to a sad incident in Galilee and the fall of a tower near the Pool of Siloam. The Chapter ends with Yeshua's lamenting over Jerusalem. The nature of God's judgments is in focus. We studied this at the time of the exile. God protects His people, but the protection is taken away when people don't seek His protection. Good laws protect, bringing order to a society. Added to this is the protection of God, which He Himself brings. When God's laws are not followed, and when God withdraws His Hand of protection, society decays. Sin is transgression against the laws of God. This is why Yeshua called for repentance. Without God's protection, sinful men are neglectful of their role in society, so towers that are badly constructed fall down as in Siloam, and other evils become rampant in society. Jeremiah's weeping over Jerusalem was a shadow of Yeshua's lamenting, because of what would happen when God once more allowed Israel's enemies through the walls of protection. Hard lessons still needed to be learned; Yeshua's teaching was not fully accepted when He came to earth.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 14. Here is more teaching that, by now, is familiar. Go over the details again and see how the Holy Spirit challenges you in your commitment to Yeshua.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 15. Here, in three parables, Yeshua showed His priorities. He came from Heaven to restore repentant sinners to the Father, and there is rejoicing in Heaven every time a person is restored, like a sheep who went astray, a lost coin or a boy who wasted his inheritance. Yeshua showed the love of the Father, ready to receive back, with rejoicing, a child who went astray. He challenged those who thought that God receives back a repentant sinner with a stern attitude that demands punishment. This was illustrated through the response of the older brother in the story of the Prodigal Son. When God restores a sinner, He forgives and rejoices. He is glad that the lost one has returned. Soon Yeshua was to go to the Cross so that repentant sinners could be completely free from the penalty of their sins. The parables showed, ahead of time, how God will receive us when we return to Him through faith in Yeshua.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 16. Yeshua used a parallel with the way shrewd people deal in the world, to show us that we must be wise in going about His business. He calls people out of the world, such as those who have dealt shrewdly in business, and uses their experiences to teach them about how to serve Him in the Kingdom. Just as we were shrewd in the world's affairs, so we must be dedicated to the Kingdom's affairs, single minded, wise and uncompromising.

In verses 14 to 18, Yeshua uses the analogy of a husband and wife to illustrate that He did not come to separate us from the heart intent of Torah. He came to preach the Kingdom. When the Kingdom comes into our hearts and minds, it will be to bring fulfillment to Torah rather than replace it. He was not divorcing His people from the root and foundation of the faith. There is

much to follow up from these studies! If we follow the analogy of marriage we come to the image of the Bride and Bridegroom applied to the Covenant family and Yeshua. Since He is the fulfillment of Torah, this confirms the teaching in these few verses. Torah, given at Sinai in its written form, was seen as being like a marriage contract. The contract is brought to life through the Spirit of God in us, sent from the Father to unite us with the Son. There is much more to study than we have time now. We must come back to these passages time and again and see how the Bible themes are knit together through all of Scripture.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is not to be taken as a literal picture of heaven and hell. It conveys a point of teaching through an illustration. There are different views as to where we go when we die, prior to the Lord's return. The concept of Abraham's bosom is a picture of a place of safety for those who died with the faith of Abraham, prior to the Kingdom coming in fully at Yeshua's return. This was familiar imagery in the days of the Jewish rabbis. Yeshua used the imagery to teach that our eternal life is determined by our response to Him in *this* life. He also made it clear that even when He rose from the dead there would be those who would not believe in Him, because they had not understood the teaching passed on by Moses. He is the fulfillment of the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings of Tanach. He is not divorced from this background, but gives true meaning to it.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 5

Chapter 17. Yeshua's teaching maintained its intensity and its challenge. With warnings, exhortations and signs of the Kingdom, Yeshua continued to minister. He began to speak of the time of His return. We read about this in the Prophets. It is called the *Day of the Lord*. Yeshua associated His return with what the Prophets foretold, likening it to the time of Noah and of the judgment on Sodom.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 18. Here are yet more challenges for us to consider one by one, just as those who heard them as they followed Yeshua from place to place. Some asked questions to try to trap Him, and others to learn more about Him and what God requires of us.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 19. Yeshua spent time with anyone who wanted to know Him and come to faith. He spent much time with the poor and the outcasts of society – those who knew their need. When Zacchaeus brought an overwhelming response to Yeshua's kindness, with a wonderful play on words, Yeshua said, *Today salvation (Yeshua) has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham* (Verse 9).

Luke recorded the Parable of the minas. Yeshua taught this before He arrived in Jerusalem. He was telling His disciples to keep working for the Kingdom (Verse 13) until He returns. This parable speaks to us as well as to them.

Then came the entry into Jerusalem for the Passover. Yeshua is the Passover Lamb: everything that was done: the cleansing of the Temple, the Passover meal, the way He appeared before all the people for inspection as the perfect Lamb of God, or the Crucifixion, fulfilled the types and shadows of the Passover that Moses instituted at the Exodus.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 20. Here are some of the final events in the ministry of Yeshua before His Crucifixion. He continued with His strong warnings. In the Parable of the Vinedressers, He even warned them what was about to happen. In the past God's Prophets had been cruelly treated and now wicked people were about to crucify the Son of God. They would remember, in due time, what He said and recall His claim as to who He is. He also left these Parables for later generations to consider. In the imagery of the Temple He now claimed to be the chief corner-stone that holds the entire structure together.

The Pharisees sought to trap Him concerning duties on earth, with what they thought was a difficult question on paying taxes. He silenced them with His answer. Caesar's head is imprinted on his coins: God's people have God's hallmark stamped on their lives, so render to Caesar what is His and to God what is His. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and, in a few



words, Yeshua revealed the foolishness of their ideas. Whether on matters of earth or of Heaven, Yeshua showed understanding of Torah superior to every religious system and every rabbi.

He warned His disciples to beware the false teachers.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 6

Chapter 21. He turned away from those who sought to exalt themselves and showed how God looks on the heart. He exalted a poor widow who gave to God everything she had.

Then began the summary of the days leading up to His return. Read the details carefully. They are in full accord with Daniel and the other Prophets. It was now nearing the end of Daniel's prophesied 62<sup>nd</sup> set of 7 weeks. Then would follow a period when the Gospel would go to the entire world, followed by the final week of Daniel's Prophecy prior to the Lord's return. We are required to search the Scriptures for the overall picture as far as we can understand it. Here we have, in language plainer than any other Prophet, the Lord's summary of the remaining days of human history. 2000 years have now passed!

The Temple was, indeed, destroyed in 70 AD and there has not been another Temple in Jerusalem since, because the Temple is now the Lord and His people: this is now where the Holy Spirit resides. The exile, in the time of Ezekiel and Daniel, was a shadow of what was about to take place in Jerusalem.

The return to God of the remnant of the houses of Israel and Judah is according to the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31. To this remnant is added all who come to saving faith from the entire world.

Luke 21 is parallel to Matthew 24 and Mark 13. It is to be read alongside the fuller, more mystical account in Revelation, and the foundation of understanding that was set through the Prophets. Read this Chapter carefully. The budding of the fig tree is mentioned in Verse 29. This metaphor is related both to Israel and to the interpretation of Torah. Yeshua cursed a fig tree (Matthew 21:18), which would have been understood as a rebuke to those who brought no true fruit from their teaching. Yeshua's referred to the budding fig tree as a sign of His return. This could be related to an expectation for a time when Bible teaching from Torah foundations will bear better fruit. In our day we are witnessing both a return of Israel to their Land and an interest growing across the world for interpretation of Scripture from the Torah foundations. These signs are all around us in our day.

\*\*\*\*\*

Chapter 22. Read carefully this familiar account of the last days of Yeshua, the Passover meal, the betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane (a word which means *Olive Press*), and Yeshua's arrest and trial before the religious authorities. See how your thoughts and prayers are led by the Holy Spirit.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Day 7

### A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Luke Chapters 23 and 24. Complete your reading of Luke. Take time to do this slowly and prayerfully. There is an old hymn that contains the question, *were you there when they crucified my Lord?* With the Spirit's help you can read the account as if you were there.

Then came the glorious day of Resurrection, when the stone was rolled away and the cry went out *HE IS RISEN!*

Imagine yourself as one of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. The risen Lord ensured that His disciples were shown how He fulfilled every type, shadow and prophecy of Scripture. It would take time before they understood, and we are still trying to understand today, with further light on our reading of Scripture day by day.

The risen Lord showed that He is fully Man. He was not an apparition that suffered no pain. The Son of God became one of us so that He could be our representative to the Father. Before their eyes He was taken to be with the Father. Was He taken upwards into the sky, or simply taken from their presence into another domain? We don't know, but He will return one day and everyone will see Him. There will be shakings in the heavens and on earth to accompany His return – no less. Now He is ruling from the heavens. The Kingdom is restored to the Father. He is the reigning King and He communicates to His disciples through the Holy Spirit within us. The Throne-room of the King of the Jews is no longer on earth: it is in Heaven.

He is coming back – soon.

\*\*\*\*\*