

# Triennial Torah Study – 6<sup>th</sup> Year 21/03/2015



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<b>Ex 34</b>	<b>Jer 1-2</b>	<b>Prov 6</b>	<b>Acts 3</b>
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## Covenant Relationship Renewed and a “Shining Example” (Exodus 34)

Since Moses had broken the tablets of the Ten Commandments that God had given him previously, God instructs him to carve out of stone two more tablets so that God could again write His commandments, the basis of the covenant relationship between Him and His people. This was an act of tremendous mercy on the part of God, who, despite the Israelites' terrible disobedience, was willing to renew His covenant relationship with them. God then passes before Moses, showing him part of His glory. As He does, He proclaims the glory of His character—focusing on His tremendous mercy and graciousness, the very thing that enables the covenant relationship to be renewed (verses 5-7). Yet He still warns that sin has consequences (verse 7). Upon hearing this, Moses is quick to again seek God's merciful pardon of the people's sins, also asking again that God would “go among” them (verse 9).

God's response? He renews the covenant relationship. And He begins this renewal with the wonderful announcement that He will do an “awesome thing” in driving out the inhabitants of Canaan from before the people (verses 10-12). The Israelites were to make no treaties with the Canaanites, to prevent their being corrupted by pagan customs and ideas. They were certainly not to adopt pagan worship practices. God considered His relationship to Israel to be one of marriage (Jeremiah 3:1-14). For the Israelites to “play the harlot” with pagan gods (Exodus 34:15-16)—to worship them or adopt their religious rites—was thus a kind of marital infidelity and spiritual adultery. But the phrase also had a direct literal application, as sexual rites with temple prostitutes, both male and female, was a major part of the disgusting and debasing pagan religions of the land the Israelites were to enter. Here, as with God's reaction to the golden calf incident in chapter 32, we see that pagan religious practices are abominable and utterly unacceptable to Him— something we should consider whenever we examine the origins of today's popular religious traditions and customs (be sure to read our eye-opening booklet [Holidays or Holy Days: Does It Matter Which Days We Keep?](#)). Notice that God also warns in this context that intermarriage with those outside the true faith is a dangerous path that can lead to compromising His truth.

God then goes on to repeat some of the terms of the covenant that He gave in chapters 21-23. Exodus 34:26 repeats the prohibition from 23:19 about boiling a young goat in its mother's milk. Regarding the earlier verse,

The Jerome Biblical Commentary states: “The legislation in 19b (and in Dt 14:21) puzzled commentators for centuries; however, the discovery and publication of the Ras Shamra literature (UM [Cyrus H. Gordon, Ugaritic Manual, 1955] 52:14, “Birth of the Gods”) have eliminated this conundrum. It is now clear that this practice was a cultic one among the Canaanite neighbors of the Hebrews. Hence, the Israelites were to refrain from it, lest they also adopt some of the Canaanite cultic inferences.” Referring to the same verse, Matthew Henry’s Commentary states: “At the feast of ingathering, as it is called (v. 16), they [the Israelites] must give God thanks for the harvest-mercies they had received, and must depend upon him for the next harvest, and must not think to receive benefit by that superstitious usage of some of the Gentiles, who, it is said, at the end of their harvest, seethed a kid in its dam’s milk, and sprinkled that milk-pottage, in a magical way, upon their gardens and fields, to make them more fruitful next year. But Israel must abhor such foolish customs.”

As we are to avoid customs that originated in pagan worship, it would still seem prudent to refrain from intentionally boiling a young goat in its own mother’s milk. Yet, on the basis of the restriction in question, Orthodox Jews will not eat meat and dairy products together at all. In fact, these foods must be prepared in different places with different utensils in order to be considered “kosher” by them. The Jews see a general principle in these verses—that what was given to nourish life (milk) not be used to destroy it. However, this was clearly not God’s intent.

Abraham, who kept God’s statutes and laws (Genesis 26:5), had Sarah prepare meat and milk products together to serve to God (the preincarnate Messiah) and two angels: “So [Abraham] took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate” (Genesis 18:8). Thus, even God Himself, while manifested in physical form, ate milk and meat together. Yet some Jews, while admitting the restriction is a narrow one, will argue against eating meat and dairy products together on the basis that there might be a chance, however remote, that a particular milk product was derived from the mother of the animal being eaten. But if we applied remote possibilities to our diet in general, we could never eat anything, for fear that a molecule of something unclean had somehow gotten onto it. This is certainly not what God had in mind.

After being in the presence of God this time, Moses came down from the mountain with his face shining—a muted reflection of the glory that had shone upon him while in God’s presence. It appears that this happened each time Moses met with God hereafter. Moses would then appear before the people—and they would know he had come from God because his face was shining. Then, as Paul later explained, he would put on a veil to conceal the fading of this temporary glory (2 Corinthians 3:7, 13). We may view Moses’ shining face as typical of the glory of God’s character as it is reflected in us. In seeing it, others will know that we represent God and have been close to Him. As time passes between our contacts with Him, our spiritual power and focus wanes, as does our example—something we don’t want reflected. Then we go to God for renewal and are ready to let our light shine before others once again.

## Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah

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The Old Testament mentions nine different people named Jeremiah. The man God used to author this book was a priest and one of Israel’s greatest prophets. Because of several biographical narratives in the book of Jeremiah, more is known about Jeremiah than any other prophet.

The Hebrew name Jeremiah apparently means “Exalted of the Eternal” or “Appointed by the Eternal.” It may relate to the fact that the prophet was one of only a few people whom the Bible reveals to have been sanctified by God before birth for a special purpose—the others being John the Baptist, Yeshua Messiah and the apostle Paul (Luke 1:13-14; Isaiah 49:1, 5; Galatians 1:15). Jeremiah 1:5 may mean that, like John and Yeshua, Jeremiah was chosen even before his conception for his commission.

Jeremiah’s father Hilkiyah (1:1) was apparently not the high priest Hilkiyah of 2 Kings 22:8. The priests who lived at the priest-city of Anathoth (about 3 miles northeast of Jerusalem) were of the house of Ithamar (compare 1 Kings 2:26) while the high priests, since Zadok, were of the line of Eleazar.

Jeremiah’s ministry began in the 13th year of Josiah (Jeremiah 1:2)—ca. 627 or 626 B.C.—when Zephaniah is also believed to have preached. The book bearing Jeremiah’s name relates his words and works during the reigns of the last five kings of Judah—a span of about 40 years—and on into the first years of Judah’s Babylonian captivity (verses 1-3). Josiah was a righteous ruler who was apparently close to Jeremiah—the king’s great reformation coming five years after Jeremiah’s preaching began. Upon Josiah’s death, Jeremiah lamented for him (2 Chronicles 35:25). But the mostly superficial benefits of Josiah’s reforms were soon replaced by moral and spiritual decay. Following him were four wicked rulers—Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and, finally, Zedekiah, whose reign was ended by Babylon’s invasion of Judah.

“According to the traditional date, the time of [Jeremiah’s] call (year 13 of Josiah’s reign—Jeremiah 1:2) coincided approximately with the death of the last great Assyrian ruler, Ashurbanipal, an event which signaled the disintegration of the Assyrian empire under whose yoke Judah had served for nearly a century. Against the waning power and influence of the Assyrians, Judah asserted its independence under Josiah” (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, “Jeremiah, Book of”). This was no doubt assisted by the arrival of the Scythians, which soon followed. But following their eventual withdrawal, Judah found itself in a vulnerable position between two powers contending for dominance—Egypt and the Neo-Babylonian Empire—and the latter would emerge supreme.

Jeremiah was appointed “a prophet to the nations” (verse 5)—to “all the kingdoms of the world” (25:26). And chapters 46-51 are directed to various gentile nations. However, “nations” would seem to refer primarily to the people of Judah and Israel. His preaching was, of course, in large measure directed to the people of Judah where he lived. But Jeremiah also prophesied to the house of Israel—which God had punished and sent into captivity nearly a century before he began preaching. Obviously, then, God’s message is for Israel of the end time. Jeremiah wrote of a time of national trouble that is yet ahead for the modern descendants of the lost 10 tribes of Israel. A number of passages in Jeremiah clearly refer to events that will occur just before and after Messiah’s return at the end of this age.

One of the greatest values of this book is its universal application in understanding the righteous nature of God and the rebellious nature of man, desperately in need of transformation. According to The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, “Jeremiah preached more about repentance than any other prophet” (introductory notes on Jeremiah). For a time,

Jeremiah’s message was for the people of his day to repent or else be taken captive by Babylon. Yet, because the response was resentment rather than repentance, God revealed to Jeremiah that Jerusalem’s fall and the people’s captivity had become the inevitable punishment. Following that revelation,

Jeremiah continued to exhort the people to repent, but he also preached that God's will was for them to submit to Babylon—with assurance that, if they did, they would receive mercy. However the populace, especially the authorities, viewed this message as pessimistic, heretical, unpatriotic and even treasonous. As a result, Jeremiah repeatedly suffered rejection, hostility, ridicule, persecution, and threats against his life. For a while he was actually imprisoned.

Besides this book that bears his name, Jeremiah is also credited with writing the book of Lamentations—a term that has become almost synonymous with the prophet. Indeed, much of the book of Jeremiah can be described as a lament about the people's lack of obedience to God and the tragic fate awaiting them. Based on the prophet, the English language contains the word "jeremiad," defined as "an elaborate and prolonged lamentation or a tale of woe" (American Heritage Dictionary, 1969). That should not be surprising. The Jeremiah of popular imagination is a stern and gloomy doomsayer. But that is an extreme and unfair characterization of the prophet. His messages, which were critical of the people's conduct and warned of punishment, were not his own inventions. Rather, he was conveying God's messages. Moreover, these messages included the wonderful promise of mercy and deliverance if the people would repent. And Jeremiah 1:10 clearly reveals that his commission was to include positive and negative—constructive and destructive—elements. His book also contains joyous prophecies of the coming Messiah, a new covenant and a blissful new age to come. Part of the unfair portrayal of Jeremiah's personality is the picture of a chronically depressed person. Yet while he did suffer frequent melancholy, this was a reflection of the great stress and sacrifices of his life, not of inherent weakness. A prophet's lonely life of being the bearer of bad news was a heavy and depressing burden to bear, especially for one so deeply concerned and tenderhearted as Jeremiah. He felt anger and disgust at the apostasy and idolatry of the people, but he grieved as well, knowing the ominous fate awaiting his beloved countrymen. Added to that, he felt perplexed and humiliated when many years were passing and his prophecies were not materializing.

Jeremiah is sometimes called the "weeping prophet" (see 9:1, 10; 13:17; 48:32), but mourning for others over their wickedness and future suffering is a spiritual strength, not a weakness (Ezekiel 9:4; 21:6; Amos 6:6; Matthew 5:4). Other strengths of Jeremiah were his faith in God, devotion to prayer, faithfulness in fulfilling his calling, and unflinching courage in the face of hostility and danger. Jeremiah's life has parallels with the life of Messiah, who was a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 16:14). Eventually, Jeremiah will see his prophecies of the immediate future come to pass. Following the righteous reign of Josiah, a period of national decline will end with Judah's fall to the Babylonians. But the prophet's work does not end with that calamity, as we will see.

Of all the prophetic books, Jeremiah is the longest. It "is longer than Isaiah or Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets combined are about a third shorter. The claim has been made that it is the longest book in the Bible" (Expositor's). It is also the most complex of the prophetic books. It is not arranged chronologically or topically. That may partly be because Jeremiah was mainly a preacher rather than a writer, who later dictated events and messages after the fact. (Jeremiah dictated much of the book to his secretary Baruch.) As it is, "the organization of the oracles, prose sermons, and other material is based on content, audience, and connective links" (Nelson Study Bible, introductory notes on Jeremiah). The Bible Reading Program will not cover the chapters in the biblical order, but will rather put the sections in the apparent chronological order to follow the story flow of Jeremiah's life—placing his messages in that context.

## Jeremiah's Calling and Commission (Jeremiah 1)

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When God called and commissioned Jeremiah, he was modest and reluctant, citing his youth as a handicap to speaking from experience and with authority. The Bible Reader's Companion states, "He was called by God as a na'ar (1:6), a youth some 16 to 18 years old" (note on verse 6). However, youthfulness is relative and his age was not important, since his safety and success was dependent on God, not on himself (verses 7-8, 17-19). Indeed, this would have provided evidence of God's direction and inspiration—as well as serving as a point of shame for the nation's elders who had been failing in their responsibilities. The king on the throne now was young too—and he would lead the nation in wonderful reforms.

Jeremiah's young age at his calling should also serve as an inspiration for any young person reading God's Word who understands the truth and is stirred with a strong conviction to act on what he or she knows. God calls and works with young people too.

In verse 10 God gives Jeremiah a mysterious commission: "See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (New Revised Standard Version). "The words root out, pull down, destroy, throw down, build, and plant are repeated at key points in the Book of Jeremiah to reaffirm

Jeremiah's call (18:7; 24:6; 31:28; 42:10; 45:4)" (Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 10). Based on Jeremiah's life hereafter, it is easy to ascertain what God meant by plucking up, pulling down, destroying and overthrowing. This great prophet repeatedly warned the Jews to repent of their disobedience—but they scorned him. So God used him to pronounce judgment on the nation: the people and the kings of David's line would be overthrown in the Babylonian conquest and uprooted—to Babylon.

But the latter part of the prophet's commission yet remained: "to build and to plant." What did this involve? From Jeremiah 45:4 we can see that building and planting in this context originally entailed God's planting His people in the land and building a kingdom of them there—now to be pulled up and destroyed. So the commission would seem to involve planting people in another place in order to establish a kingdom elsewhere. We will examine this question further toward the end of the book.

God here gives the sign of an almond tree, "which blossoms when other trees are still dormant.... as a harbinger of spring, as though it 'watched over' the beginning of the season. In a similar fashion, God was 'watching over' His word, ready to bring judgment on Israel" (note on 1:11-12). Jeremiah also saw a boiling pot tilted southward, "indicating the direction in which the pot's contents would be spilled. The calamity suggested by this vision was an enemy attack on Judah and Jerusalem from the north. In 20:4, Jeremiah finally identifies this enemy as Babylon. Babylon was itself east of Jerusalem, but the road went around the desert and approached from the north" (note on verses 13-14). Interestingly, the enemy to the northeast when Jeremiah started prophesying was still Assyria. But that would soon change. Indeed, the book of Jeremiah refers to Babylon 164 times, more references than in all the rest of the Bible.

Jeremiah foretold that Babylon, the destroyer of Judah, would herself be destroyed by the Medes and Persians, never to rise again. Some of the prophecies in this regard are dual, referring also to the rise and fall of the end-time political, economic and religious system called Babylon—located to the northwest of Judah (thus still north)—while some prophecies refer exclusively to the end time.

Preaching God's message brought Jeremiah a great deal of suffering, but God emphatically charged him, "Do not be afraid of their [intimidating] faces" (1:8, 17)—as He, the Almighty Deliverer, would provide impregnable defense (1:18-19). We too can take encouragement from these words as we carry out the commission God has given His Assembly to preach His true gospel to the end of the age (see Matthew 28:19-20).

## "Broken Cisterns" (Jeremiah 2)

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Jeremiah was to "go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem," yet his message was about all Israel (Jeremiah 2:1-3). And then God's message was to go to the "house of Jacob and all the families of the house of Israel" (verse 4). Yet remember that the northern kingdom of Israel had been taken into captivity a century earlier. Still, we do know that, around three years after Jeremiah's ministry began, a small percentage of Israelites actually returned to the land for a short period—that is, the Scythians who overran the region. Thus, it is likely that Jeremiah's message was intended in some measure for Jews and Israelites of His day. But notice again that the message was for "all the families of the house of Israel." Because the Israelites were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire at the time Jeremiah prophesied, with many near the Black and Caspian Seas, we may safely assume that his message was never delivered to them in that age.

Since God would not deliver a message to people who could never hear it, these prophecies must then be dual, directed more to the descendants of Israel in the latter days, particularly since the descriptions in this chapter and much of the book certainly fit our American and British societies and much of the world today. (In the book of Jeremiah, "Israel" is named almost as much as "Judah." And "Jerusalem"—ancient capital of all 12 tribes—sometimes clearly refers more to Israel than to Judah.)

The Israelites have a short memory, soon forgetting the source of past and present blessings (verses 7, 32), and quickly turning to myriad forms of idolatry. "Those who handle the law" (verse 8) have turned from the true God and His law to false gods! Whereas most cultures cling to their traditions and gods, Israel, chosen by God to receive the true religion (the only way that brings true reward!), has been quick to forsake God and to do so "for what does not profit" (verse 11). These are the "two evils" here—forsaking God and substituting false gods (verse 13). "God, the fountain of living waters, offered a limitless supply of fresh, life-giving sustenance. Instead the people chose broken cisterns, which were useless for storing water and useless for sustaining life" (The Nelson Study Bible, note on verse 13). God proclaims a dire penalty for rejecting Him, "the fountain of living waters," in Jeremiah 17:13.

As He often does, God colorfully portrays the utter stupidity of making gods of wood and stone, but Israel and Judah make as many dumb deities as the number of cities in Judah (2:27-28). "See if they can save you in the time of your trouble!" God taunts (compare verse 28). Today, our peoples still trust in worthless and inanimate things to save us—such as our weapons of war and our money. And some still serve actual idols, seeing power in crosses, statues of Mary, good luck charms, etc. And then there is a wrong trust in other people, directly condemned elsewhere in Jeremiah (17:5).

Verses 14-16 of chapter 2 show that though God had freed Israel from slavery, the nation subjected itself to vassalage and subsequent plunder and slavery by the Assyrians after making a failed deal with the Egyptians (Noph and Tahpanhes, also known as Memphis and Daphne, were principal cities in northern Egypt). In verse 18, Sihor, meaning "Black," is a reference to the Nile River, while "the River" associated with Assyria is the

Euphrates. Judah is here basically warned, “Why trust in Egypt or Assyria when they cannot save?” This should serve as a warning to us now. For modern Israelites often make the mistake of putting more trust in alliances than in Almighty God (compare verses 36-37).

Jeremiah repeatedly portrays Israel and Judah as an unfaithful wife who has both deserted her loving, generous husband and also committed adultery, “playing the harlot,” with multiple lovers—false gods and national allies (verse 20). She takes steps to “wash” herself (verse 22) —efforts to feel and appear righteous. But it is her heart that needs washing—her thoughts purified (compare 4:14). And only through true repentance, God’s forgiveness and God’s power can one be truly spiritually cleansed. Israel is adulterous not just by being seduced, but by actively enticing partners like a female animal in heat (verses 23-25).

Worse, not only has Israel not received correction, but God rebukes the people: “Your sword has devoured your prophets like a destroying lion” (verse 30). Sadly, Israel and Judah have always rejected God’s true servants—even subjecting them to martyrdom. While that is not happening right now, times are prophesied to get much worse. God also says, “On your skirts is found the blood of the lives of the poor innocents” (verse 34). Today there is little difference. The most innocent are the children. Few children now are sacrificed to fire, but many are murdered, many more unborn children are slaughtered, and society is so twisted, corrupt and degenerate that nearly all children are set on a path of life that leads to death.

Because obedience to God’s absolute laws brings automatic blessings, and disobedience brings automatic penalties, He tells Israel, “You’ve brought this on yourself” (compare verse 17) and “Your own wickedness will correct you” (verse 19). While a national warning, it is incumbent upon each of us individually to respond. If we are living contrary to God’s way, that will eventually catch up with us. Indeed, that is surely producing consequences already. Let us all, then, turn to God now and remain loyal—and avoid the suffering sin brings.

## Proverbs 6

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In this chapter we have a caution against rash debt, rebuke to slothfulness, the character and fate of a malicious mischievous man, an account of seven things which God hates, an exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us, and a repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom.

It is the excellency of the word of God that it teaches us not only divine wisdom, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion; and this is one good rule, To avoid debt, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

We must look upon debt as a snare and decline it accordingly, “It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though it be one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency, but much more to strike the hands with a stranger, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest.” Or the stranger here with whom the hand is stricken is the creditor, “the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, that is, thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time, know that thou art snared with the words of thy

mouth; it was easily done, with a word's speaking; it was but setting thy hand to a paper, a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognizance entered into.

But it will not be so easily got clear of; thou art in a snare more than thou art aware of." See how little reason we have to make light of tongue-sins; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind: they are often snares. If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed, to get out of it. It sleeps for the present; we hear nothing of it. The debt is not demanded; the principal says, "Never fear, we will take care of it." But still the bond is in force, interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will and perhaps may be hasty and severe, the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family, to pay that which thou didst neither nor drink for.

And therefore deliver thyself; rest not till either the creditor give up the bond or the principal give thee counter-security; when thou art come into the hand of thy friend, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten or give ill language (that will provoke and make ill worse), but humble thyself, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to him, and give him all the fair words thou canst; engage thy friends to speak for thee; leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thy adversary and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast got through. "Give not sleep to thy eyes till thou hast delivered thyself. Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed, as a roe or a bird delivers herself out of this snare of the fowler or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve." See what care God, in his word, has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them.

Solomon, in these verses, addresses himself to the sluggard who loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash debt. He speaks here to the sluggard by way of instruction. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is to take him to school himself, for, if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him (dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teachers) and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire.

Observe,

1. The master he is sent to school to: Go to the ant, to the bee, so the Septuagint. Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instruction to ourselves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

2. The application of mind that is required in order to learn of this master: Consider her ways. The sluggard is so because he does not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or the works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise

3. The lesson that is to be learned. In general, learn wisdom, consider, and be wise; that is the thing we are to aim at in all our learning, not only to be knowing, but to be wise. In particular, learn to provide meat in summer; that is, We must prepare for hereafter, and not mind the present time only, not eat up all, and lay up nothing, but in gathering time treasure up for a spending time. Thus provident we must be in our worldly affairs, not with an anxious care, but with a prudent foresight; lay in for winter, for straits and wants that may happen, and for old age; much more in the affairs of our souls.
4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, which will aggravate our slothfulness and neglect if we idle away our time. She has no guides, overseers, and rulers, but does it of herself, following the instinct of nature; the more shame for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, to direct us in it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.

Solomon here gives us the characters of one that is mischievous to man and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned, that do nothing, much more those that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a naughty person that is here spoken of, Heb. A man of Belial; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it.

How a man of Belial is here described. He is a wicked man, that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he walks and works his designs with a froward mouth, by lying and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He says and does every thing, very artfully and with design. He has the subtlety of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management, with his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers. He expresses his malice when he dares not speak out (so some), or, rather, thus he carries on his plot; those about him, whom he makes use of as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has ways of concealing what he does, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve; those only shall be let into the secret that would do anything he would have them to do. He is a cunning man, and upon the trick; he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be.

## Acts 3

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In this chapter we have a miracle and a sermon: the miracle wrought to make way for the sermon, to confirm the doctrine that was to be preached, and to make way for it into the minds of the people; and then the sermon to explain the miracle, and to sow the ground which by it was broken up. The miracle was the healing of a man that was lame from his birth, with a word speaking ([Acts 3:1-8](#)), and the impression which this made upon the people, [Acts 3:9-11](#). The scope of the sermon which was preached here upon was to bring people to Messiah, to repent of their sin in crucifying him ([Acts 3:12-19](#)), to believe in him now that he was glorified, and to comply with the Father's design in glorifying him, [Acts 3:20-26](#). The former part of the discourse opens the wound, the latter applies the remedy.

Verses 1–11

We were told in general (Acts 2:43) that many signs and wonders were done by the apostles, which are not written in this book; but here we have one given us for an instance. As they wrought miracles, not upon everybody as everybody had occasion for them, but as the Holy Spirit gave direction, so as to answer the end of their commission; so all the miracles they did work are not written in this book, but such only are recorded as the Holy Ghost thought fit, to answer the end of this sacred history.

The persons by whose ministry this miracle was wrought were Peter and John, two principal men among the apostles; they were so in Yeshua's time, one speaker of the house for the most part, the other favourite of the Master; and they continue so.

Peter and John had each of them a brother among the twelve, with whom they were coupled when they were sent out; yet now they seem to be knit together more closely than either of them to his brother, for the bond of friendship is sometimes stronger than that of relation: there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother. Peter and John seem to have had a peculiar intimacy after Yeshua's resurrection more than before, John 20:2. The time and place are here set down. 1. It was in the temple, whither Peter and John went up together. 2. It was at the hour of prayer, one of the hours of public worship commonly appointed and observed among the believers. Time and place are two necessary circumstances of every action, which must be determined by consent, as is most convenient for edification. With reference to public worship, there must be a house of prayer and an hour of prayer: the ninth hour, that is, three o'clock in the afternoon, was one of the hours of prayer among the believers; nine in the morning and twelve at noon were the other two. See Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10.

The patient on whom this miraculous cure was wrought is here described, Acts 3:2. He was a poor lame beggar at the temple gate.

1. He was a cripple, not by accident, but born so; he was lame from his mother's womb, as it should seem, by a paralytic distemper, which weakened his limbs; for it is said in the description of his cure (Acts 3:7), His feet and ankle bones received strength. Some such piteous cases now and then there are, which we ought to be affected with and look upon with compassion, and which are designed to show us what we all are by nature spiritually: without strength, lame from our birth, unable to work or walk in God's service.

2. He was a beggar. Being unable to work for his living, he must live upon alms; such are God's poor. He was laid daily by his friends at one of the gates of the temple, a miserable spectacle, unable to do anything for himself but to ask alms of those that entered into the temple or came out. There was a concourse,—a concourse of devout good people, from whom charity might be expected, and a concourse of such people when it might be hoped they were in the best frame; and there he was laid. Those that need, and cannot work, must not be ashamed to beg. He would not have been laid there, and laid there daily, if he had not been used to meet with supplies, daily supplies there.

Note, Our prayers and our alms should go together; Cornelius's did, Acts 10:4.

The gate of the temple at which he was laid is here named: it was called Beautiful, for the extraordinary splendour and magnificence of it. 3. He begged of Peter and John (Acts 3:3), begged an alms; this was the utmost he expected from them, who had the reputation of being charitable men, and who, though they had not much, yet did good with what they had. It was not many weeks ago that the blind and the lame came to Yeshua in the temple, and were healed there, Matt. 21:14. And why might not he have asked more than an alms, if he

knew that Peter and John were Yeshua's messengers, and preached and wrought miracles in his name? But he had that done for him which he looked not for; he asked an alms, and had a cure.