

Sermon Notes from the Church's Ministry Among Jewish People

10th Sunday after Pentecost – Year C

RCL Readings – Isaiah 5:1–7; Psalm 80:1–2, 8–19; Hebrews 11:29–12:2; Luke 12:49–56

ACNA Readings – Jeremiah 23:23–29; Psalm 82; Hebrews 12:1–14; Luke 12:49–56

RCL Readings

Introduction. As we continue in our Sundays after Pentecost, we are challenged regarding the true nature of the gospel and the effect it should have on the life of disciple-followers of Yeshua.

Common Theme. Our readings today challenge us to recognise the serious position we are in, the importance of choosing God's way and the Messiah's salvation, or we will face the certain judgment for all those who reject him. God has made his people his vineyard and is looking for "sweet grapes" from our lives, not sour ones, even if it results in suffering and separation from family and friends.

Isaiah 5:1–7. My Vineyard. It is not immediately obvious who is speaking here, and "only gradually does the audience realise that it is they themselves that are being rebuked" (JSB). It is clearly poetic in genre and similar in vein to the words of the lovers in the Song of Songs. Verse 1 refers to "his vineyard" and verse 3 to "my vineyard," so it seems it is Judah (or Jerusalem, or maybe, the prophet speaking on their behalf) who is singing in verses 1–2 and the Lord who is interjecting in verse 3. The words *yādīd* (יָדִיד) and *dōd* (דָּוֶד) seem to be synonyms of "love" or "beloved," and come from the same root as the name David (*d-v-d*, דָּוִד). So, "Israel, viewing herself as the Lord's lover, refers to herself as his vineyard. The metaphor has sexual connotations, for it pictures her capacity to satisfy his appetite and to produce children. See Song 8:12" (NET, Isa 5, note 2, also Songs 8:12, note 40). Alter says: "This Parable of the Vineyard would become an early warrant for reading the Song of Songs as an allegory of the love between God and Israel. The lover here is clearly God, and the vineyard over which the lover labors is the people of Israel. In the Song of Songs, the body of the beloved is represented metaphorically as a vineyard."

There seems to be a play on words in verse 2 with the words for vineyard (כֶּרֶם, *kerem*) and hill/horn (קֶרֶן, *qeren*) alliterating. The word for "horn" here is probably referring to a hill. In Hebrew, it is followed with an idiomatic expression "a son of fat/oil," which is strange in English, but in Hebrew "fat" is often an idiom for "rich" or "bountiful." Hence, the NET translation: "on a fertile hill."

The Lord invested everything necessary in Israel, his vineyard, and waited with expectancy. The contrasting terms in v. 5 ("grapes ... wild-grapes," *anāvim* ... *be-ushim*, בְּאֲשִׁים ... עֲנָבִים), imply the Lord expected edible grapes but got wild, sour grapes instead.

The Lord then takes up the song (vv. 3–6) and laments over the response of his people and the judgment that will come for their "wild-grape" behaviour. The prophetic judgment in verse 5 refers to Judah, being overrun by invading armies.

Verse 7 uses an *inverted parallelism* to bind together the parallel terms: "house of Israel" with "people of Judah" and "vineyard of the Lord of Hosts" with "a plant of his delight."

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For a vineyard of the Lord of Hosts (is) the house of Israel

And the people of Judah (is) a plant(ing) of his delight.

What dramatic and vivid descriptions for Israel! Israel is a vineyard created by the Lord of Hosts and a planting motivated by his good pleasure and also intended to bring him delight!

Then the next two lines in the verse show *direct parallelism* and also poetic alliterations or wordplay.

He waited for justice (*mish-pāt*) & behold, disobedience (*mis-pāch*)

for righteousness (*tse-dā-qāh*) & behold, outcry (*tse-ā-qāh*)

Alter attempts to keep alliteration in his English translation (if not exactness) with: “He hoped for justice, and, look, jaundice, / for righteousness, and, look, wretchedness.”

The verb “he waited” does double-duty for both lines and then the striking wordplay that is only audible in the Hebrew: *mishpat* and *mispach* then *tsedeqah* and *tse-a-qah*. The exact meaning of *mispach* is not certain, as it only occurs here, but it is obviously chosen for the wordplay and must indicate something that is “wild-grapish,” compared with justice! Also, the word for righteousness or righteous action is a wordplay on the word for outcry, which probably refers to the outcry of the oppressed, who have not benefited from the edible grapes of righteousness in society that the Lord was also looking for!

Psalm 80:1–2, 8–19. Watch over this Vine. Regarding the psalm’s title, Alter translates: “For the lead player, on the *shoshanim*, an *eduth*, an Asaph Psalm.” *Shoshanim* and *eduth* may have musical or literary meanings. *Shoshanim* may be a musical instrument or a tune, and *eduth* may mean “a testimony” here.

Initially, the psalmist refers to the Lord as the shepherd of Israel, leading his people like a flock of sheep (“Joseph” refers to the Northern Kingdom, Ephraim and Manasseh), but clearly, the metaphor of shepherd is more regal than pastoral, as it continues with a call to (literally) “the one sitting/enthroned on the cherubim” to reveal his splendour. This is pointing back to the holy of holies in the tabernacle and temple, where the Lord’s glory is manifest above the ark of the covenant between the two cherubim. NET says: “Cherubim possess both human and animal (lion, ox, and eagle) characteristics (see Ezek 1:10; 10:14, 21; 41:18). They are pictured as winged creatures (Exod 25:20; 37:9; 1 Kgs 6:24–27; Ezek 10:8, 19) and serve as the very throne of God when the ark of the covenant is in view (Ps 99:1; see Num 7:89; 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15). The picture of the Lord seated on the cherubs suggests they might be used by him as a vehicle, a function they carry out in Ezekiel 1:22–28.” The psalmist appeals to this one enthroned on the cherubim to “go for our salvation,” implying him moving out from his celestial throne-room in battle, as in 1 Samuel 4:4 and 2 Samuel 6:2.

The tribes mentioned in verse 2 may refer to the Northern Kingdom here. Specifically, they were the sons of Rachel (Joseph and Benjamin) and grandsons (Joseph’s sons: Ephraim and Manasseh). The tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin were encamped under one banner according to Numbers 2:18–24 (JSB). Or it may be referring to the Northern Kingdom, represented by Ephraim and Manasseh,

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and the Southern Kingdom, represented by Benjamin, which bordered Ephraim northwards and Judah southwards.

From verse 8, the psalmist uses the same metaphor of Israel as a vineyard as in Isaiah 5 above (also see: Ezek 17:6–10; Hos 10:1). Interestingly, here the psalmist assumes Israel was a vine back in Egypt, and the Lord uprooted her and planted her in the land, where she blossomed and filled the land. However, the psalmist recognizes that Israel is now suffering ruin and assumes the Lord has forsaken Israel. The context may be “Judah, threatened with defeat in the eighth century by the Assyrians and subsequently conquered by the Babylonians in 586 BCE” (JSB). Initially, the psalmist does not seem to realise the cause (as we have seen above in Isa 5), so he cries to the God of Hosts (v. 14) to return and take care of this vine. As he continues to spell out the reality, he recognizes that the suffering is actually the Lord’s judgment because he is displeased with them (lit: “the rebuke of your face”; מַעֲרַת פְּנֵיךָ). However, it is not hopeless, as he recognizes Israel is (literally) “the man (*ish*) of your right hand, and the son of man (*adam*) you have strengthened for yourself.” The singular “man” here may well refer to Israel collectively (or could refer to the king as the one at God’s right hand, or to the Davidic dynasty. Also, King Saul was from Benjamin (*ben-yamin*, son of the right hand, 1 Sam 9:1). The words used in verse 15 are similar where “root” and “shoot” are parallel to “man” and “son” (*ben*) here (see also Gen 49:22, used of Joseph as “a son/shoot of fruit-bearing”).

The phrase in the last verse seems to be three proper nouns: Lord, God, Hosts (or Armies). Usually, the phrase used is “God of Hosts” but not so here. It is as if the psalmist is praying to Yahweh, Elohim and the Armies (of heaven) to respond to his prayer on behalf of Israel. NET suggests ‘tze-vā-ōt here could refer to the Lord God and suggests “Invincible Warrior.” This refrain of supplication is used at the beginning, middle and now at the close (vv. 4, 7, 14, 19; Alter).

The prayer in the last two verses is beautiful: “Make us alive and in your name we will call ... Cause your face to shine and we will be saved.” NET says: “The idiom ‘cause your face to shine’ probably refers to a smile (see Eccl 8:1), which in turn suggests favour and blessing (see Num 6:25; Pss 4:6; 31:16; 44:3; 67:1; 89:15; Dan 9:17).”

Hebrews 11:29–12:2. Keep your eyes on Yeshua. This passage breaks into a long section running from 10:19 that exhorts the believers in Yeshua to “hold unwaveringly to the hope we confess” (10:23) and “not to throw away your confidence” (10:35) because “we ... are among those who have faith and preserve their souls” (10:39). The section then proceeds in the whole of chapter 11 to set out the nature of faith and the “great cloud of witnesses” to faith, down the ages. Beale comments: “The writer uses two literary devices ... (1) ‘by faith’ repeatedly, focusing attention on the primacy of faith, (2) *an example list* ... by impressing the audience with overwhelming evidence that a desired pattern of action is best” (Beale, 984).

JANT gives a helpful extended note on “The Heroes of the Faith” (p. 421). It says the list resembles lists of biblical heroes in other Jewish literature, “but it reflects some unusual choices ... Instead of focusing on the hero’s leadership roles, Hebrews emphasizes the characters as largely set apart from the people.

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Generally speaking, the heroes in Hebrews have three characteristics: (1) Near-death experience ... (2) Ability to see the future and act faithfully in light of that knowledge ... (3) Alienation: The heroes are portrayed as alienated from the people of their generation ... The heroes are not distinguished *by* their comrades ... they are distinguished *from* them.” Beale supports this, referring to the ideas of Eisenbaum “that the value normally placed on these people as national heroes has been transformed into another value: they were faithful as the marginalized. Thus ... good examples to Christians who are struggling with marginalization, giving them a biblical ancestry without national identity” (Beale, 984).

We break in at 11:29, with Israel crossing the Red Sea “by faith,” after leaving Egypt; and then we jump 40 years to the battle of Jericho and them marching round the walls for seven days “by faith,” and seeing the walls fall down; and then to the outsider Rahab (also Matt 1:5; Jas 2:25) who sided with God’s people, again “by faith.” And many more examples, just hinted at in passing, but all showing the way God’s people down the ages have shown strong commitment and courage and endured incredible sufferings “to obtain a better resurrection” (11:35). And the amazing thing, the writer says, is that their faithfulness would only finally be realized “together with us” (11:39–40), as it required the fulfilment of all God’s promises in Yeshua the Messiah. So NET concludes: “The expression *these all were commended* forms an *inclusio* with Heb 11:2: The chapter begins and ends with references to commendation for faith” (NET, note 43).

Given this, the writer says, we who have been privileged to enter into salvation through Yeshua should follow the example of the “great cloud of witnesses” and “run with endurance the race set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Yeshua, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.” Yeshua is the greatest and fullest example of all, as he “endured the cross, disregarding its shame,” and (quoting from Ps 110:1 for the fifth time) “has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God” (also 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12). Beale says: “The movement of Christ from heaven to earth, to death and resurrection, to exaltation has been called the ‘Way of the Son’ ... and here provides strong encouragement for those who are suffering under persecution by demonstrating the outcome of Christ’s perseverance” (Beale, 985). The implication is that it is only through endurance “by faith” will we be able to persevere through trouble and suffering, to enter into the good of the ultimate joy set before us!

Luke 12:49–56. Division because of Decision. This passage is part of the second section of the book of Luke. The first section (1:1–9:50) is about the *Coming* of the Messiah from heaven to earth, and the second section (9:51–24:53) is about the *Going*, or the *Exodus*, from earth to heaven. From 9:51 “he resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem.” Of course, the goal was not Jerusalem, but *via* Jerusalem. The Messiah’s “exodus” (9:31) was to be via crucifixion, but ultimately he was to be “taken up” (9:51) into heaven in glory. But Jesus has invited us to be his followers and to join us on this journey (9:23). So our reading is part of Jesus’ teaching to his disciples on this “going.” The sub-section is from 10:38 to 13:21, which goes into detail on the importance of us “judging aright life’s necessities, priorities and proportions” (Gooding, 206) as we join him in this journey.

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Gooding says: “At the beginning of this present movement (12:13–53), we found Christ refusing to be ‘a judge and divider’ over men (12:14) during his time on earth. [Then, secondly] at 12:41–48, he has been pointing out that at his second coming, he will most certainly act as judge and divider over all men. Now in this final [third] section of the movement he indicates that there is a sense in which he is already in this present age the supreme divider of men: contrary to popular opinion he has not come to bring peace on the earth, but fire and division” (Gooding, 246).

This is not in conflict with Ephesians 2:17 and similar passages, where Paul says Christ came to preach peace, but this is Jesus preaching to make the choice clear to Israel after two years of teaching and signs. “Decision must be made: for Christ or against him (11:23), for God or the devil (11:15–20), for salvation or perdition, for heaven or hell. Deciding to follow Christ in this life may end up bringing division even in families” (Gooding, 247). But note that such a divisive decision would not be forced on them till his “baptism” (12:50), his sufferings, death, burial and resurrection. The parallelism between verses 49 and 50 is very regular:

A fire	I came	to bring on the earth ...
but		
a baptism	I have	to be baptised with ...

Jesus came (past, in his incarnation) to bring a fire that will eventually purify the wheat from the chaff. But (contrast), now, before that, I have (present) a baptism to be baptized with, and I am constrained from anything else until it is fulfilled. This is his grace, to go through the baptism of an atoning death, in order to give many the opportunity to be saved. To quote Gooding: “Through the Messiah’s baptism he would make a way for all to be rescued from the fire!” (p. 247). But it needs a decision that will mean division from those who don’t choose Yeshua!

Messiah’s mission statement here, “*I have come to bring fire on the earth,*” looks to the purging and division Jesus causes. (For other mission statements, see Luke 3:9, 17; 9:54; 17:29; and for fire, see 5:32; 7:34; 9:58; 12:51; NET, note 128). Beale says this statement also echoes passages in the Hebrew Scriptures “that speak of fire as a figure of judgment (Jer 43:12; Ezek 15:7; Hos 8:14; Amos 1:4–14; 2:2, 5; Nah 3:13; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2–3; cf. *1 En.* 18:15; 102:1; *2 Bar.* 37:1; 48:39; *4 Ezra* 13:10–11; *Pss. Sol.* 15:4–5; *Jub.* 9:15; 36:10; 1QH^aXVI, 20)” (p. 332).

The figure of the *baptism* is variously interpreted, as some see a reference (1) to martyrdom or (2) to inundation with God’s judgment. The OT background, however, suggests the latter sense: Jesus is about to be uniquely inundated with God’s judgment as he is rejected, persecuted, and killed (Ps 18:4, 16; 42:7; 69:1–2; Isa 8:7–8; 30:27–28; Jonah 2:3–6; NET, note 130; also Beale, 332). Beale, referencing others regarding Isaiah 53:10, says Jesus may be combining “the two meanings of the Hebrew verb *dikkā*, ‘crush’ and ‘cleanse, purify,’ in the image of ‘baptism’ which signifies death, asserting that it is the will of God to ‘crush’ his servant so that ‘the many’ will be ‘cleansed’ on account of the vicarious death of the righteous servant” (Beale, 332). Also, Jesus seems to allude to and interpret Micah 7:6 in verses 51–53. “The breakdown of the solidarity of society in general, and of the members of households

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in particular, that the prophet [Micah] laments is interpreted as the result of Jesus' message and ministry ... Jewish texts apply Mic 7:6 to the messianic days (cf. *Jub.* 23:19; *1 En.* 99:5; 100:1–2; *2 Bar.* 70:6; 1Q14)" (Beale, 333).

But *time* is of the essence, says Jesus in verses 54–56. *A cloud rising in the west* refers to moisture coming from the Mediterranean Sea. *The south wind* comes from the desert and thus brings scorching heat. (NET, notes 136, 138). How strange this is, that they could see and interpret the signs in nature regarding heavy rain (*ombros*) or a burning heat (*kausōn*) coming, but they did not seem to have the *nous* to recognise the coming fire of judgment and make the appropriate decision about what to do in preparation. They could interpret the earthly signs but not the sign of the time (*kairos*), the opportunity or appointed time to decide was *now*, even if it resulted in division from family and friends!

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ACNA Readings

Introduction. The Lord is present. It has been 2,000 years since the ascension of our Lord to the right hand of the Father. Because of this, it is easy to forget that the Lord is presently working in the world, and he has not gone far off. Through the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son are constantly with us, the Holy Spirit comforting us and interceding for us. He is near to us and brings us close to the Father and the Son through his indwelling. The Holy Spirit is also working in the world, condemning the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. When the Son returns to judge the living and the dead, because of the Holy Spirit, none will have an excuse for the Lord has spoken to the world concerning this judgment.

Common Theme. The common theme throughout the lectionary readings concerns the ideas of judgment upon the earth. On the one hand, the Lord enters into judgment against those who are opposed to him. On the other hand, he disciplines his children upon the earth in this age. In a world filled with corruption, this is a message of hope for the Lord is not idle and will judge his enemies. On the other hand, the people of God ought not to expect that they will escape the Lord's notice either. Indeed, the

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Lord also enters into discipline with his people, which should serve as a warning to us that we are not above reproach. However, while the Lord makes himself an enemy against those who oppose him, he makes himself a father to his children.

Jeremiah 23:23-29. The reading from Jeremiah concerns the Lord's omniscience and imminence. The false prophets taught that the Lord was like the local deities – localized and one from whom a person could hide. These prophets lied in his name and sought to draw people away from God. They claimed to have received dreams from God. The Lord reveals that these false prophets lied to cause the people of Judah to forget God, just as the prophets of the northern kingdom of Israel had done (v. 13). Judah's attitude towards the Lord set themselves on the same path as Israel.

This is significant as earlier in the same chapter, the Lord had promised Judah that he would redeem all of Israel and Judah from the nations where they had been scattered. He would do so by the Messiah, the righteous branch of David (vv. 5-6). He would do this after judgment upon the false shepherds abusing the flock in both Israel and Judah.

In response to the lies of the false prophets, the Lord issues a challenge: let their words be pitted against the words of the Lord. The false prophecies of those who sought to lead God's people astray would fall to pieces before the power of the word of the Lord (v. 29). By doing so, the words of the false prophets were shown to be empty as chaff, whereas the word of the Lord is as wheat which sustains the people of God. The word of the Lord is also one of power, which consumes the chaff with fire and crushes it as one breaks rocks. Great judgment awaits those who lie in the name of the Lord.

Psalms 82. The superscription names Asaph as the author of this psalm, which is part of a group of psalms attributed to Asaph.¹ Asaph was a priest of the sons of Korah and prophet of the Lord during the days of Solomon's temple. His words, therefore, are not to be regarded as mere poetry but as the words of a prophet to the people of God.

In the context of this psalm group, the nation of Israel is crying out for the Lord's deliverance as they are beset by their enemies. Within this cry, there is hope, that by returning to the Lord and trusting in him for their salvation, Israel will receive the deliverance for which she is longing. The warning given through these psalms is that nobody can stand before the Lord when he is in judgment over them, thus all ought to repent before that day. In the psalm immediately preceding this one, Israel is promised deliverance upon returning to the Lord. In Psalm 82, the Lord shows his working to bring this repentance about by judging Israel's rulers.

¹ Psalms 73-83 are all of Asaph. All of Book III of the Psalter (73-89), apart from 86, are of the Sons of Korah. Thus, this whole unit could be called the Korahite Psalter.

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There is some dispute over who the “gods” are in this passage. Some have seen these as divine beings, the angels over the nations who have not followed the Lord and instead acted wickedly. There are biblical examples of this angelic office being held by rebellious beings, such as the Princes of Persia and Greece (Dan 10:13, 20). As such, it cannot be ruled out. However, the Lord’s representatives are often compared with God as well, such as the prophet Moses (Exod 4:16) and the judges of Israel (Judg 5:8). Other times in the Hebrew scriptures, the judges are said to represent God (Exod 22:28). Thus, considering that the judgment against them is concerned with the rulings that corrupt judges might give, and Jesus’ use of the passage (John 10:34-26), makes the identification as human judges the most likely one in this psalm.

The warning in this passage is that nobody will escape the judgment of God, not even the judges of his people. They viewed themselves as gods, great rulers, and above judgment. Yet, like any prince, they would experience death as God is their judge, and he is not corrupt as they were. The Lord will execute justice, including even those in high authority. Those who are not with the Lord have set themselves against him.

Hebrews 12:1-14. The lesson from the Book of Hebrews concerns the discipline of the Lord toward his children. The discipline in this case is the persecution that they have been facing. From the phrase, “you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood” (v. 4), this persecution was social. The historical setting of the book sheds some light on this. Since the temple services are spoken of as still present, that this was a second-generation group of believers, and the persecution of Jewish believers was so severe, it is believed that the letter was written in the 60s AD. It was during this time that the spirit of rebellion against Rome was spreading amongst the Jewish people and lines in the sand were being drawn. The Jewish followers of Jesus were in a tight spot as they were being urged to reject their faith in Jesus and instead join with their people, denouncing Jesus as the Messiah. The fact that such urging resulted in the death of James, the brother of the Lord, indicates that the Jewish leadership was hostile to the Jewish followers of Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews urges his readers to keep running the race set before them, namely continuing in the faith despite the hardships they have been facing from their fellow Jewish brethren. The motivation is to follow the Messiah himself who was persecuted unto death by his Jewish brothers. The result for him was glorification at the right hand of the Father. This was the prophesied fate of the Messiah in his first coming according to the prophet Isaiah (Isa 53). A similar end awaits those who follow Messiah to the end. Here, the writer quotes from the book of Proverbs in explaining that the discipline, in the form of persecution, they are experiencing is not for their harm but their good.

When the Lord disciplines his children, it is as an earthly father who is trying to raise his child. To the child, this discipline might seem cruel and mean-spirited. However, the ideal father disciplines not out of a desire to harm their child but out of a desire for their child to become a better person from it. There are

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two outcomes from such discipline for people of God. First, discipline develops respect for God. A child who is disciplined well, in the correct manner and extent, has great respect for his authority generally. Exceptions can always be found, but it is a general truth. Indeed, western society is currently experiencing the results of children with no discipline in the form of offspring who run the household instead of their parents. Second, discipline reassures that the child of God is indeed his child. If there is no discipline, then it means that the child does not actually belong to God but is still outside the family.

All prosperity and no hardship in this age is not necessarily a sign of blessing but might be a curse. This is important for Christians today to remember. In the west, we have historically experienced great prosperity and little persecution. As the western culture in our day shows itself to be increasingly hostile to Christianity, it is a temptation to believe that the Lord is abandoning his people. This passage, however, may teach us something different. Though we likewise have not yet, as a community, resisted to the point of shedding blood (v. 4), perhaps this is a form of discipline from the Lord so that we might grow in maturity. As a community, let us attend his lessons which, “yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it” (v. 11b).

Luke 12:49-56. The lesson from the Gospel concerns the divisive nature of following Jesus. In this lesson, Jesus reveals to his disciples, and the crowds surrounding them, that his ministry would not unite the people together. Rather, his ministry would cast a fire on the earth and this fire would divide the people against one another. The means of this fire would be the baptism he would undergo, namely, the cross (Heb 12:2). Their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah would bring a judgment of division upon them.

That the Messiah's initial work would cause such a division was prophesied in the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the most important prophecies of the suffering Messiah, whom the Rabbis have named the Messiah Son of Joseph, is that of Isaiah 53. In this passage, the Jewish people are looking back at the tragedy of their rejection of him, “Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted” (Isa 53:4). The coming Messiah would not be particularly well received amongst his people, at least not at first. There would be a contingent of followers (Isa 53:10), but he would be a division amongst his people and not initially a uniter.

This division would not merely be various houses and clans against one another but would divide even the households themselves. Father and son, mother and daughter, and in-law parents and in-law children would war against one another over the person of Jesus after his crucifixion and resurrection. As regards the Jewish people today, this is still true. There are few more incendiary events in the life of a Jewish family than one of their own coming to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. It has left many without families and cast out of their communities. The same, of course, can happen to non-Jewish families as well. When one comes to faith in the Messiah, Jew or Gentile, all others lay outside of the new family that they have been grafted into. However, for Jewish followers of the Messiah, the Church must be ready to be his or her new family.

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Towards Israel in those days, Jesus chastised them for their hypocrisy. They thought themselves wise, able to predict the weather by the signs of the earth, and quite accurately. This is something modern meteorologists often fail to do much to our frustration. Yet, though they knew how to interpret temporal matters, they were blind and did not know how to read the signs of the Messiah's appearing.

The same is still true today. We, as a culture, believe ourselves to be wise and yet we are fools. We believe ourselves rich, yet we are poor. We believe ourselves to be clothed with the finest of silk and yet are clothed with rags if not completely naked. We seek meaning in everything but God. While we may know how to interpret temporal matters, we still do not know how to interpret the times and seek to find salvation in anyone and anything besides the Lord.

About RCL the author. Dr Paul Hocking has had a varied career in education, leadership, and management development, planting and pastoring of a social-enterprise church, supporting the leadership of many churches and Christian charities under the auspices of Evangelical Alliance Wales, and directing the Cymru Institute for Contemporary Christianity (2010–2019). He has qualifications in Microbiology, Public Health and Action Research, and a PhD in the Hebrew Bible focusing on the composition of the book of Leviticus. He has publications in health services management and the Hebrew Bible, including two papers for CMJ on the Decalogue and Leviticus. Paul is married with two adult children.

About ACNA the author. Aaron Gann earned his BA in Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute and is currently studying for his M. Div. at Shepherds Theological Seminary in Cary, North Carolina. He and his wife, Rebecca, live in Raleigh with their two cats and serve at Redeemer Anglican Church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Aaron is an aspirant discerning a call to ordained ministry within the Anglican Church in North America in the Diocese of Christ Our Hope. Aaron has taught on various topics such as the Book of Psalms, Messianic Prophecy, Eschatology, and the non-pagan origins of the traditional church festivals. He is passionate about the Jewish toots of the Christian Faith, encouraging and nurturing biblical literacy, reaching the Jewish people with the Gospel of Christ, and developing within the Church a biblically informed love for Israel and the Jewish people.