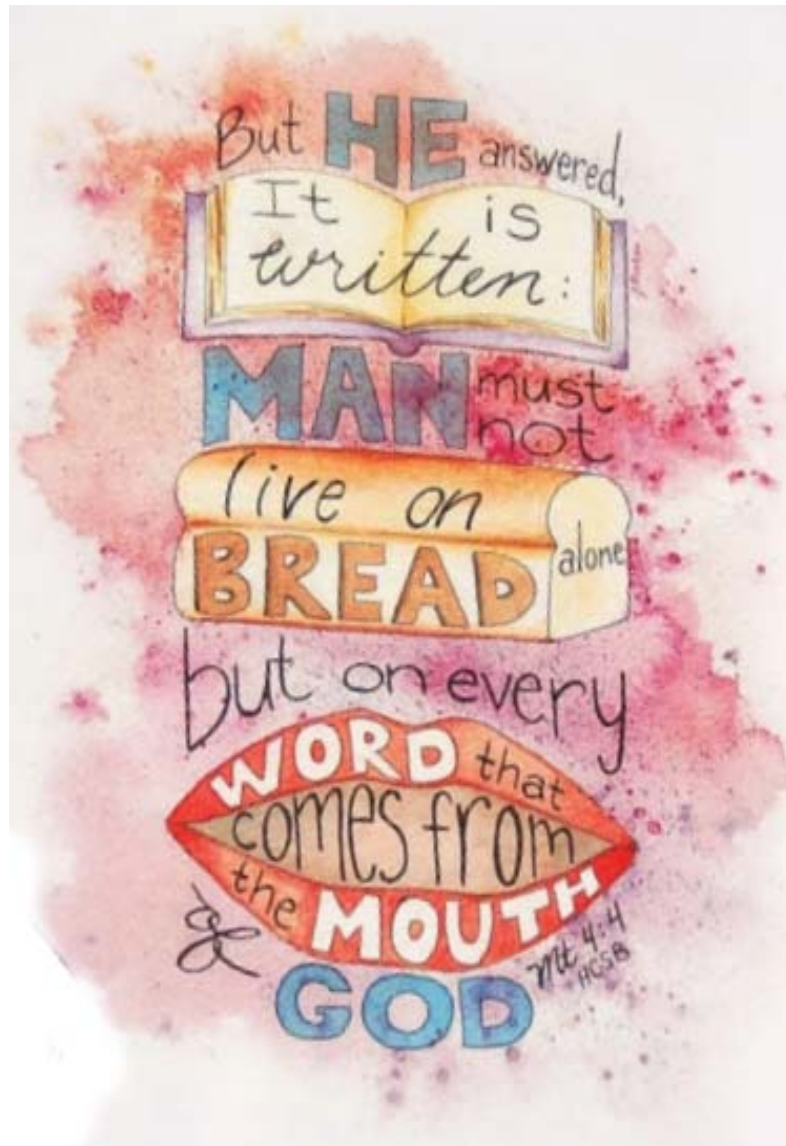


Daily Devotional

June 2018



Foreword

We will be spending time this month in the Epistle of James, then the Gospel of John, and finish the month in the book of Jeremiah. We will cover everything from the very practical in James, through the closing chapters of the Gospel of John, to the prophetic in Jeremiah.

As usual, when a topic in our daily reading requires more than one day's discussion, I will give you readings in other portions of Scripture to augment our understanding of the lessons.

In keeping with this month's cover Scripture, I trust each bit of daily nourishment from the word of God will feed your soul.

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).

The Epistle of James

Friday, June 1: Read James 5

James 5 is chock full of practical advice that covers a half dozen different circumstances. Let's consider the first six verses today. At first blush, they seem to apply to the rich who have "*hoarded wealth*" and "*failed to pay*" the workmen their wages. Let me suggest a way to broaden the application. James is all about living a life, as Christians, where our works are consistent with the Christian faith. Whatever our personal circumstances, there is going to be a challenge to produce works in keeping with our faith. For the rich, it is not to get too caught up in material things:

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.
I Timothy 6:10

But this doesn't apply solely to wealth—how about academic achievement or athletic ability? Consider how God addresses this in Jeremiah 9:23:

"Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord. . ."

In fact, even having too little can be a problem in that it might tempt us to steal and so dishonor the Lord. (Proverbs 30:8-9) Do you see the point? Our individual circumstances can cause us to get our eyes off the Lord. If we do, we are going to break the connection that is meant to exist between what we believe and what we do. James is using a ready example of the temptation faced by the rich. I am suggesting we look at our own circumstances, and ask the Lord to examine us, to:

. . .see if there be any offensive way. . .and lead (us) in the way everlasting. Psalm 139:23-24

If we do this examination, He will reveal!

The Epistle of James

Monday, June 4: Read James 2

I asked you to read James 2 again because it succinctly underscores the message of James' Epistle:

*As the body without the spirit is dead,
so faith without deeds is dead.*

We have already avoided the mistake of thinking this is a test of salvation, and now realize that it is meant to be guidance for the saved child of God. James is making a very clear statement of God's intent for the Christian life. For there is to be a very clear connection between what we believe and what we do. For example, we shouldn't for a minute fool ourselves into thinking that we have made spiritual things a priority in our lives if we are neglecting the study of God's Word and the gathering together with God's people. This is an example of a broken faith/works relationship in need of restoration. When James says, *faith without works is dead*, he tells us that there is often a *separation* between what we believe and what we are doing that needs to be corrected.

Once again, he is not telling lost people they need to be saved, he is telling believers they need to make sure that their walk is consistent with their beliefs. Now look at how James closes his epistle:

*My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth
and someone should bring him back, remember this:
Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way
will save him from death and cover over
a multitude of sins. James 5:19-20*

These last two verses are an excellent test of whether or not we have grasped the message of the book. How would you explain them? We'll consider this question further tomorrow.

The Epistle of James

Tuesday, June 5: Read Proverbs 27

As we continue our study of the link between faith and works, look at the scripture that ended yesterday's devotional on the facing page. Let's break down exactly what James is telling us:



- *My brothers.* . . . James is talking to fellow believers. So then the reference to *one of you*, means if a believer should wander from the truth.
- How does a believer wander from the truth? James has mentioned a number of ways, perhaps most dramatically *friendship with the world*. (James 4:4)
- What does it mean to *turn a sinner from the error of his way*? It means he repents of his thought, word, or deed and confesses his sin in order to come back into fellowship with God. How might we cause someone to repent? By, in love, communicating the sinner's transgression against God and the potential consequences.
For faithful are the wounds of a friend. Proverbs 27:6
- What does it mean to *save him from death*? There are at least six different deaths in the Bible, all involving separation of some kind. At a minimum, to bring a sinning brother or sister back into fellowship with God is to save him or her from the death of broken fellowship. It could go on to include physical death which might result from divine discipline. One thing we can be sure it does not mean is eternal separation (death) from God in the Lake of Fire. Why not? For the child of God has *crossed over from death to life!* (John 5:24)

In short, the book of James ends in as practical a manner as it begins—a call to walk by faith personally and to encourage those who have wandered to do so as well!

Finishing the Gospel of John

Wednesday, June 6: Read John 18:1-27

In Verse 3 we see that an interesting group is coming to arrest Jesus:

So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers, and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees.

Thus, we have at least one representative from among Jews, Gentiles, and his closest companions—all coming in unbelief. Like a number of other passages in John, it shows us that unbelief can be a very difficult *obstacle* for a lost person to overcome.



Do you remember the infirm man of Chapter 5? He was healed by Jesus, and yet, rather than even one word of thanksgiving, he *tattles* on Jesus to the religious leadership. To show you the challenge of unbelief in this chapter, look again at Verses 4-6.

Finishing the Gospel of John

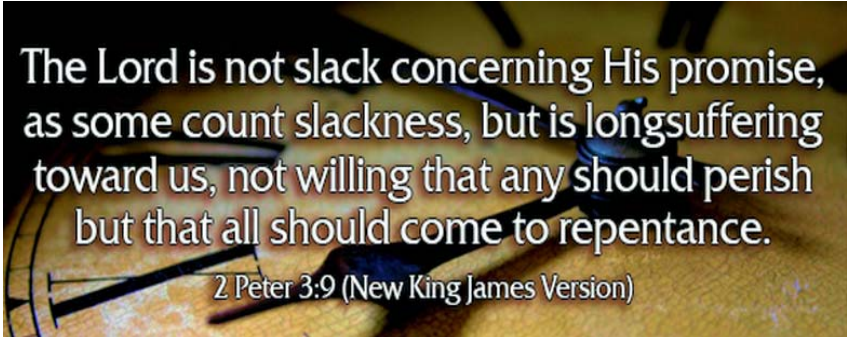
Wednesday, June 6: Read John 18:1-27

(Continued)

Jesus asks those who have come to arrest Him who they want, they reply "*Jesus of Nazareth.*" Jesus then replies with three short words: "*I am He.*" Now at this point the text does not give much by way of elaboration, but it does tell us that this mixed group, "*drew back and fell to the ground.*"

Here is what happened. When Jesus said to them, "*I am,*" the same reference to deity that we have seen throughout the Gospel of John, all of those gathered to arrest Jesus were involuntarily pushed back and thrust to the ground. For the word translated *fell* means to be thrust down or to fall prostrate in worship. In short, this group was forced to *bend the knee* to the one they had come to arrest.

They should have turned in faith and begged for mercy. Instead they picked themselves up off the ground, and continued right on in unbelief. That's what a hardened heart looks like. How many of our family and friends persist in their unbelief in the same way? Pray for the ministry of the Spirit and the Word of God to soften and convict. For our loving God is *not willing that any should perish*. . .



The Lord is not slack concerning His promise,
as some count slackness, but is longsuffering
toward us, not willing that any should perish
but that all should come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 (New King James Version)

Finishing the Gospel of John

Thursday, June 7: Read John 18:28-40

The second half of this chapter is full of high drama. We have Peter's denial in fulfillment of the prophetic word of Jesus; the Jews pushing for the death penalty under Roman law, again in fulfillment of prophecy; and then the brief dialogue between Pilate and Jesus at the close of the chapter. Let's particularly look at this last item today.

This is a significant moment in the life of Pilate. If we compare the selections in Matthew 27, Luke 23, Mark 15, and here in John, we can see that Pilate is being pressured by the Jews, against his better judgment, to crucify Jesus. Pilate's wife has revealed a vision in which she is emphatic that Jesus is innocent and he is on the verge of having a riot on his hands in Jerusalem. It is at this point he comes face to face with Jesus.



Finishing the Gospel of John

Thursday, June 7: Read John 18:28-40

(Continued)

Pilate is in a jam and trying to decide what to do when he begins a short discussion with Jesus. Jesus, as He does throughout the Gospel of John, challenges Pilate to engage with Him on the spiritual level:

"My kingdom is not of this world. . .you are right in saying I am a king. . .Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me." Verses 36-37

Consider closely that last phrase! The whole world has just been divided into two sides: those on the side of truth and those on the side of error. Jesus is on one side, the side of truth, and Satan is on the other side. Those who respond to the truth of who Jesus is and why He came will have life, those who do not respond will remain under the wrath of God. (John 3:18)

This is Pilate's chance to both get saved and deal with the dilemma he is facing—just like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, and a host of others. What does Pilate do? He says, "*What is truth?*" and walks away. How ironic—the Way, the Truth, and the Life are standing right in front of him and he walks away and, in turn, bends to the pressures of this world.

As I have pointed out many times now in the Gospel of John, the one thing keeping us from a relationship with God is unbelief. It is a mighty obstacle to overcome, even when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is standing right in front of a person.

Pray for the Spirit to soften the hearts of those with whom you share the Word of Truth.

Finishing the Gospel of John

Friday, June 8: Read John 19:1-30

This chapter makes clear the complicity of the Jews in the crucifixion of Jesus at the hands of the Romans. For what we see is the legal judgmental authority, Pilate, doing everything he can to release Jesus. While at the same time, the Jewish religious leadership is doing everything it can to have a Jewish man crucified on the day of preparation for Passover, one of their holiest religious celebrations



Eventually, Pilate caves to the relentless pressure and gives the order for Jesus, an innocent man, to be crucified. (John 19:4)

Finishing the Gospel of John

Friday, June 8: Read John 19:1-30 (Continued)

A couple of things to note about this.

1. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD is clearly tied to the Jewish rejection of their Messiah for when Jesus wept over Jerusalem, He said:

"They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Luke 19:41-44

2. The unfolding of these events at the end of Jesus' time on earth in no way indicates that things had somehow gotten away from Him. During our study of John we have already seen that Jesus has told His disciples that He is *"going to the Father"* (John 16:17) and that He lays down His life of His own accord only to take it up again. (John 10:17-18)

Perhaps the clearest statement of what is happening here can be found in Acts 2:23:

This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross.

In short, we are responsible for the decisions we make, while at the same time God is working all things together to achieve His desired ends. As a point of application, how much better to choose to be on the side of those who receive by faith what God is doing, than on the side of those who reject and bring judgment upon themselves. Blessing in both eternity and time are at stake.

Finishing the Gospel of John

Monday, June 11: Read John 19:31-42

There are two ways to look at this second half of John 19. One is to look at circumstances and to conclude that with the burial of Jesus the *jig is up!* It was an exciting time of miracles, teaching, and spiritual awakening, but now, with its leader and founder dead, this offshoot of Judaism is finished. But there is another way to look at it that comes from the hope contained in the text of our passage.

For there are two men in the narrative that should be reason for our encouragement. First, Joseph of Arimathea, who, in straight-forward language, is declared to be a disciple of Jesus. Now this doesn't automatically mean he was a believer, but look at his actions. He went to Pilate to ask to care for the body of Jesus, after He had just been executed as a criminal. It took great courage to face both the Romans and the likely outrage of the Jewish leaders. There are always those who will make something out of His being a *secret* follower. He was not the first, nor will he be the last! The question is, had he placed his faith in Christ as Savior? I would suggest there is no other reasonable explanation.

Then how about Nicodemus? When we left him in Chapter 3, he had much to think about, but nothing was said about any kind of response to his dialogue with Jesus. But something happened along the way, for here is this important teacher in Israel coming forward to prepare the body of Jesus for burial, even providing the mixture of myrrh and aloes. These two men were, in effect, the pallbearers of our Lord. They had put their faith in Him. They no doubt did not understand the coming bodily resurrection, but their faith prompted them to act, and no doubt their "*grief will turn to joy.*" (John 16:20) So too will the sorrow of all who put their faith in Him.

Finishing the Gospel of John

Tuesday, June 12: Read John 20

How many times have I have asked you to read this chapter—at least three or four by now! We need to look at it one more time because there is a thread that runs throughout the chapter that we don't want to miss. It is the same thread that runs throughout John's Gospel—that of a call to faith. Let me remind you of the four strands about which the Gospel of John is constructed:

- Jesus is God and Savior.
- Belief in this Jesus changes everything!
- There is intimacy, congruence, and single-mindedness of purpose within the Trinity!
- Unbelief is the one thing still keeping man from relationship with God.

Notice how belief is still an issue, even in Chapter 20:

- John believed (Verse 8)
- Thomas refused to believe (Verse 25)
- Jesus rebukes the unbelief of Thomas and he believes (Verses 27-28)
- Jesus pronounces a blessing upon those who will believe in the future (Verse 29)
- We are told that belief in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God leads to life (Verse 31)



Continued on the next page.

Finishing the Gospel of John

Tuesday, June 12: Read John 20 (Continued)

Do you see how clearly faith—trusting in God—is the issue for both saved and unsaved alike? Verses 30-31 make it very clear that eternal life is on the line dependent upon whether or not one will trust in who Jesus is (the eternally existent Son of God) and what He has done (acted as God's *Anointed One* in providing redemption from sin).

But it is also equally clear that the Christian life is dependent upon faith in Jesus as our risen Savior. Thomas lost out, for a time, on both the peace of the Lord and the Holy Spirit, in part, because of His unbelief. Exactly the same thing can happen to you and me should we forsake a dependent walk upon the Lord.

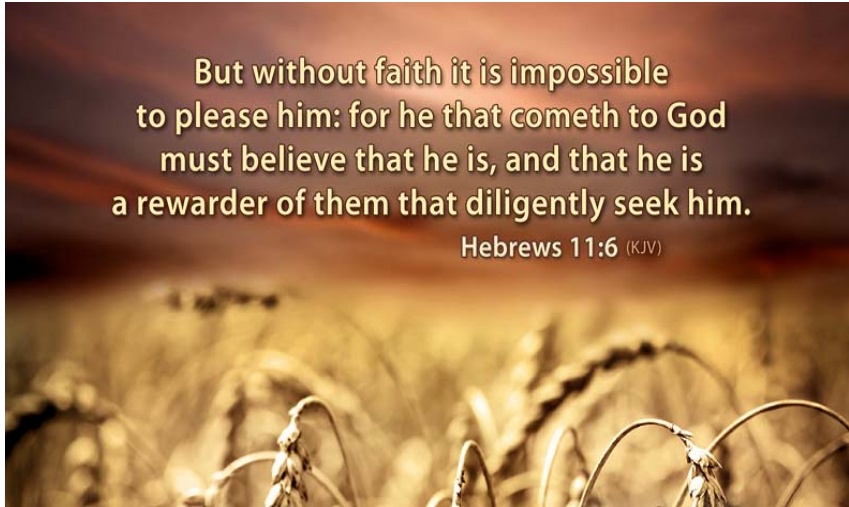
"For my righteous one will live by faith"

Habakkuk 2:4

...without faith it is impossible to please God.

Hebrews 11:6

Learn to trust Him as you spend time in His Word and gather with His people!



But without faith it is impossible
to please him: for he that cometh to God
must believe that he is, and that he is
a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:6 (KJV)

Finishing the Gospel of John

Wednesday, June 13: Read Hebrews 2

There is an astonishing piece of truth from John 20 that we don't want to miss. Did you notice how in Hebrews 2:10 it talks about "*bringing many sons to glory?*" Then, in the very next verse:

Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. Hebrews 2:11

Just as God intended, Jesus is the "*firstborn among many brothers.*" (Romans 8:29) Consider these astonishing statements. If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are a child of God! (John 1:12) But the imagery goes much further. Jesus went to the cross as the representative man and the *last Adam*. Then He was raised from the dead that He might bring many sons to glory.

We often focus on salvation as being the receipt of eternal life, which it most certainly is, but God's plan of salvation includes so much more. As we saw in John 20, throughout His earthly ministry Jesus has been promising life to those who will believe, but now following the resurrection, consider His words to Mary:

"Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and Your God." John 20:17

Notice, He calls those who have believed, *My brothers*; and then twice He refers to God the Father as *My Father and your Father*. What a remarkable work has been accomplished by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that any member of the human race, who will but trust in Him, can be brought into such a family relationship with the Creator of this universe and call Jesus brother!

Finishing the Gospel of John

Thursday, June 14: Read John 21

To me this chapter holds one of the most tender calls to ministry in the Bible. It is fair to say that Peter has really stumbled. After three years of training, and despite a pledge to never forsake Jesus, he crumbled at the first sign of pressure—not once, but three times. He has learned the hard lesson of what happens when one trusts in the flesh—one's own resources and strength. God never intended for us to live the life of a disciple from that source. On the contrary, as we have seen in Chapter 20, Jesus has given His band of dispirited disciples His peace, and then His Spirit to strengthen and sustain them.

Now there are those who, if this happened in our day, would claim Peter was never saved to begin with because of his denial of the Lord. And yet, when you read the Lord's dialogue with him beginning in Verse 15, there is none of that. What Jesus does instead is take this man who has learned his own strength is insufficient for the call to discipleship and calls him to ministry. Jesus does not berate or question his salvation, He simply asks Peter three times, "*Do you love me?*"

Peter's brokenness is evident in his answer. For Jesus asks about love at the highest plane—agape love, while Peter acknowledges his love at a lower plane—that of friendship love. Peter has been cured of trusting in his own strength. Consider how Jesus handles this. He doesn't chew Peter out for his failure, rather He calls Peter to ministry. *Feed My sheep, care for them, feed them.*

I consider this about the right mix of the pastor's' time—first and foremost it is his job to feed God's people, while remembering to care for them as well—all in the strength that He, and He alone, provides.

Return to Jeremiah

Friday, June 15: Read Jeremiah 29

By this point, the Babylonians have pillaged the land, forced two deportations upon the population, and put a puppet regime in place. Israel has been reduced to a vassal state. Still the people are resisting the will of God. For God tells them through Jeremiah in Verses 1 and 4-9 to submit to their discipline by settling in and prospering in their new land. However, in Jeremiah 28:1-2, we see that false prophets are still proclaiming the exile will be over shortly, while others are calling for the imprisonment of Jeremiah. (Verses 26-28) All this despite clear revelation from God that the exile is going to be a lengthy one—seventy years in all! (Verse 10) Now right in the middle of all this, we find Jeremiah 29:11:

*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,
says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not evil,
to give you a future and a hope.*

Notice that the promise tells us not only God's attitude toward the people, but also the fact that He has a future in mind for them. This is a fantastic promise made more so by the fact that it is delivered right in the midst of sin so bad and so persistent that it required the people to be spewed from the Land! What descriptive terms could we apply to a God that deals with rebellious mankind in such a way? How about gracious; One whose mercy endures forever; and One whose love never fails! Some say there is no grace in the Old Testament—only Law—I beg to differ. First, this passage really helps us to learn how committed our God is to that which He has created. Second, aren't you wondering if Jeremiah 29:11 applies to us and to the Church? Give it some thought, and we'll see if we can uncover the answer to that questions.

Return to Jeremiah

Monday, June 18: Read Genesis 15

Jeremiah 29:11 not only tells the Jews that they remain an object of God's affection, but that He has a future for them. To understand that future it is first of all helpful to look backwards in time. After the fall of man and the Noahic flood, God decided to continue His redemptive plan through one man and his offspring—Abraham. You can see the initial proclamation in Genesis 12:1-3.

In Chapter 15, we see a continuation of God's communicating the extent of His plans to Abraham. In Verse 5, He tells the childless Abraham that he will have progeny that are as numerous as the stars in the heavens. He also confirms the promise of giving him the land of Canaan. (Verses 18-21) My favorite part of Chapter 15 can be found in Verses 9-17. God has Abraham bring several animals, split them in half and lay them out opposite each other. In ancient times, this is how two people, or nations, would enter into a solemn agreement. Once the terms of the agreement were established, the two parties involved would walk through the split animals to declare: *May it be to me as it was to these animals, if I fail to live up to the terms of our agreement!*

As you can see, this is way beyond a handshake! Now here is the part that is such a blessing: In Verse 12, Abraham falls into a deep sleep and in Verse 17 two symbols that represent God—think fire and smoke on Mount Sinai—pass between the animal carcasses. Do you see? God is saying I will keep the covenant independent of any work on the part of Abraham or His offspring. We call this an unconditional covenant, one that is dependent solely upon the faithfulness of God and not upon the faithfulness of man. Give thanks that our God is a *promise-keeping* God!

Return to Jeremiah

Tuesday, June 19: Read Jeremiah 31 and 33

We also need to look forward to understand the promises God has made to national Israel. A careful reading of Jeremiah Chapters 31 and 33 will reveal the following:

- God is not only going to bring back the Southern Kingdom from exile, but He also plans to bring back the Northern Kingdom. This is repeated multiple times in these chapters, as well as many times within the text of the minor prophets. It is difficult to fully comprehend the reality of this miracle alone, for most of the Jews of the Northern Kingdom have been so thoroughly scattered, and so completely amalgamated, that in our day, they don't even know they are Jewish!
- God is going to put a king on the throne, who by title, could be none other than the Lord Jesus Christ— *The Lord Our Righteousness*. Continued on the next page.



Return to Jeremiah

Tuesday, June 19: Read Jeremiah 31 and 33
(Continued)

- The certainty of these promises being fulfilled is on a par with the certainty of the sun coming up tomorrow morning and going down tomorrow night. In other words, we have more promises from God that are unconditional in nature.

And then we have the great promise of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31:

*"Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord,
"when I will make a new covenant with
the house of Israel and with the house of Judah
(note both kingdoms). . .
I will put My law in their minds,
and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God,
and they shall be My people. . .they shall all know Me,
from the least of them to the greatest of them,"
says the Lord.*

So, here is the closing question, has anything like the above happened following the exile? Has all of Israel been regathered, has Jesus Christ taken His place upon the throne, and does all Israel know the Lord?

If not, then these are unconditional promises yet to be fulfilled!



Return to Jeremiah

Wednesday, June 20: Read Romans 11

Right in the middle of the book of Romans, Paul spends Chapters 9-11 talking about the present plight and certain future of the Jewish people. I mention this because there is much talk in Christian circles that ignore the truths laid out in these three chapters, as well as the unconditional promises that God has made to the Jewish people. This false theology, often referred to as *Replacement Theology*, is gaining traction because it is being promoted by some high profile Christians despite the lack of a Biblical basis. In essence, it takes the position that the Church has replaced Israel, and therefore all the promises made to Israel have in some sort of allegorical sense been transferred to the Church! (How exactly is it that the Church is going to have a king on the throne or hold title to land?)

The Scriptures in general, and Romans 11 in particular, refute this position. Here is all you need to do to prove to yourself that this idea of *replacement* is not Biblical. Read Chapter 11 carefully, and see if it is describing one thing replacing another (the Church replacing Israel) or is it in reality contrasting two distinct entities? If God's plan continues to unfold with two completely distinct groups—Jew and Gentile (Israel and the Church)—then there is no replacement going on.

Look at how Chapter 11 begins:

...has God cast away His people? Certainly not!

In Verses 16-24, there is a detailed discussion of the natural branches (Israel) and the wild branches (Gentiles) as two distinct and separate groups.

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Return to Jeremiah

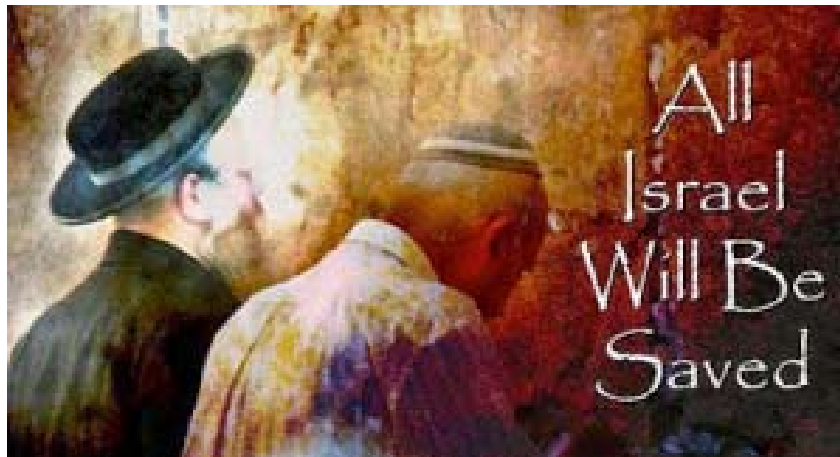
Wednesday, June 20: Read Romans 11
(Continued)

And then in Verse 25, we read:

For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Right now, the Jews are displaying a hardness of heart until the fullness of the Gentiles come in. Come into what? Why, come into the Church, that mystery that was hidden in ages past and is now revealed. Then look at how the text concludes—eventually

...all Israel will be saved. Verse 26



In context, that reference to Israel could never be the Church that is made up of all who have already been saved. But rather, it is a reference to the Jewish people. To teach that the Church has replaced God's chosen people, according to the standard given in Scripture, is to be *wise in your own opinion* and *ignorant of the mystery* of God's plan for the ages. (Verse 25)

Return to Jeremiah

Thursday, June 21: Read Ephesians 5

God has made certain promises to Israel: a land of their own, a king to rule on the throne of David, and a time of peace, prosperity, and universal justice. God has also made certain promises to the Church: a spiritual body of which Christ is the head, a process of purification after which the Church will be presented as the Bride of Christ (look carefully at Ephesians 5:25-32), and a joyous celebration referred to as the wedding supper of the Lamb. Are these promises the same? Not even close, and to try to make them so requires doing a great deal of injury to one or the other.

Now we can answer the question we raised several days ago: "Does Jeremiah 29:11 apply to the Church?" Since it is a promise made to national Israel, and she is distinct from the church, then the answer has to be, "No, not directly!" However, once we understand the pattern of Jeremiah 29:11—God's attitude of peace (shalom) and plans for the future—can we apply that same pattern to the Church? Absolutely! In the same way God has made promises to Israel, He has made promises for the Church: to perfect us, work through us, and joyously celebrate with us. Here is the key thing for you to realize—to dismiss the promises made to Israel because of her unfaithfulness is to dismiss the promises made to the Church. For you need look no further than the church in America to see our lack of faithfulness. No, the faithful God, who we trust to fulfill His development of His Church, is going to be equally faithful to Israel. For the consummation of God's redemptive plan rests on His faithfulness and His alone. Praise God that He has thoughts of peace toward us and plans for our future. May we take the strength He provides to follow after Him.

Return to Jeremiah

Friday, June 22: Read Jeremiah 31

I want us to have firmly in mind the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34:

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord,
when I will make a new covenant with
the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—
not according to the covenant that I made
with their fathers in the day that I took them
by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt,
My covenant which they broke, though
I was a husband to them, says the Lord.
But this is the covenant that I will make
with the house of Israel after those days,
says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds,
and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God,
and they shall be My people.
No more shall every man teach his neighbor,
and every man his brother,
saying, "Know the Lord,"
for they all shall know Me,
from the least of them to the greatest of them,
says the Lord.
For I will forgive their iniquity,
and their sin I will remember no more.*

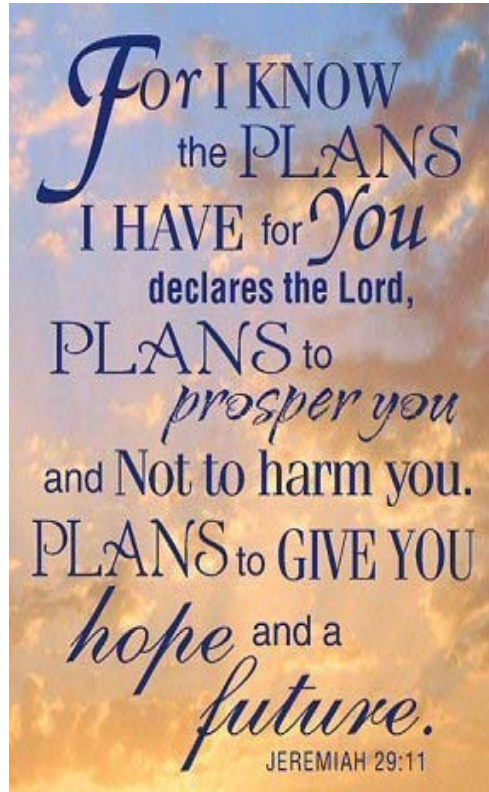
By way of introduction, here are a few things for you to consider about this New Covenant:

- Relationship with God is now clearly defined in terms of the inward versus the external. It is not what you *do*, but rather what you *are* in heart and mind!

Return to Jeremiah

Friday, June 22: Read Jeremiah 31 (Continued)

- This New Covenant will be grounded in *His ways and His thoughts*, for that is the broad meaning of the word *law*.
- Notice the intimacy (personal nature) of the relationship that man is going to have with God.
- Note the universality of the relationship that man is going to have with God.
- And finally, note the underlying basis for this relationship—the removal of sin as an issue. This should be understood in sharp contrast to the Mosaic Law's repeated and ongoing efforts to deal with sin with no power to deal with it.



Don't you find this New Covenant compelling, attractive, and perhaps even a bit frightening? Just think of knowing the omnipotent, sovereign creator of the universe in this intimate and personal way!

Return to Jeremiah

Monday, June 25: Read Jeremiah 33

Nothing like the covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34, has ever actually occurred among God's people. The Jews returned from exile under governors like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah. They remained under Persian control for a time, were overrun by Alexander the Great, and suffered greatly under Syrian-based Seleucid rulers. They had a short period of autonomy under the Hasmoneans, and then came under Roman dominion. Do the Jews have the kind of spiritual life described in Jeremiah 31 at any time during this period? The good news is that exile seemed to have cured them of idolatry, but their spiritual life turned into something that Jesus described in this way:

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness." Matthew 23:27

With the dispersal of the Jewish nation from 70 AD until 1948, it is easy to document that nothing like New Covenant reality has yet occurred among the Jews. In fact, the Jewish people are the recipients of quite a few unfulfilled promises! Have the promises of God failed, or been redirected? The short answer was in today's reading:

This is what the Lord says: "If you can break My covenant with the night, so that day and night no longer come at their appointed time, then my covenant with David my servant—and My covenant with the Levites who are priests ministering before Me can be broken. . ." Jeremiah 33:25-26

Do you see? God is committed, and it does great violence to the meaning of language to make David and the Levites the Church! So does the Scripture have an explanation for us? Absolutely!

Return to Jeremiah

Tuesday, June 26: Read Revelation 19

So when are these many promises to Israel going to come to fruition? In part, when Jesus comes for a second time! For the two advents of Jesus Christ are thoroughly documented in Scripture. Consider Isaiah 9:6-f:

For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given. . .and the government will be upon His shoulders. . .of the increase of His government will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Jesus was born, but He has certainly not been a political figure nor ruled on the throne of David. But He will when He returns! Perhaps you are thinking, "That would have to be an extraordinary and spectacular event!" Yes it would! Perhaps like we read about in Revelation 19:11,

And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

Revelation goes on to talk about Jesus reigning on this earth for one thousand years—from Jerusalem. All of the Old Testament promises we have mentioned, including certain aspects of the New Covenant, will be fulfilled for Israel during the time of Christ's reign, often referred to as the Millennial Kingdom. For much of Christendom, the return of Christ has become a vague time of things improving on earth.

In reality, God has made very specific promises which are focused upon the nation of Israel. They are the kinds of promises that require a nation, a kingdom, and a great King. If the Word means what it clearly says, then these promises have not yet been fulfilled. But they will be, when Jesus returns as the *King of kings and Lord of lords.* " Maranatha Lord Jesus!

Return to Jeremiah

Wednesday, June 27: Read Titus 2

Now in contrast to the idea of Christ coming for a second time, physically and bodily as He did the first time, there are many who allegorize His coming. That is, they explain that it is symbolic of other real events. For example, there are many Christian denominations that teach we are now in the Christ's Millennium kingdom reign and have been since the cross. They explain that the time since the cross exceeds 1000 years (a millennium) by allegorizing the time factor. Furthermore, for us to be in the time period of Christ reigning, the following are taught:

- Christ is reigning (from heaven) right now.
- Because Christ is reigning, things on earth are steadily improving, and the role of the Church is to foster and promote this improvement.
- Since Christ is ruling, Satan is currently bound.
- The Church has replaced Israel.

As you weigh the plausibility of this view, consider some of the great Millennial promises such as:

... the earth will be flooded with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Isaiah 11:19

Does this seem to fit the day in which we live? As one man quipped, "If Satan is bound, he certainly has a long leash because he is causing a lot of mischief." With this brief commentary, I hope you see the bankruptcy of this view. How much better to fall in line with the plain sense of Scripture which talks about living uprightly, while:

... we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. . . Titus 2:13

This was written by Paul and it was post-cross. He was under no illusions whatsoever that he was then living in the Millennial Kingdom and neither should we be.

Return to Jeremiah

Thursday, June 28: Read Philippians 3

In the third chapter of Philippians, Paul lays out his religious credentials—knowing they are as good as anyone's. He notes that all his credentials might be a reason why he could:

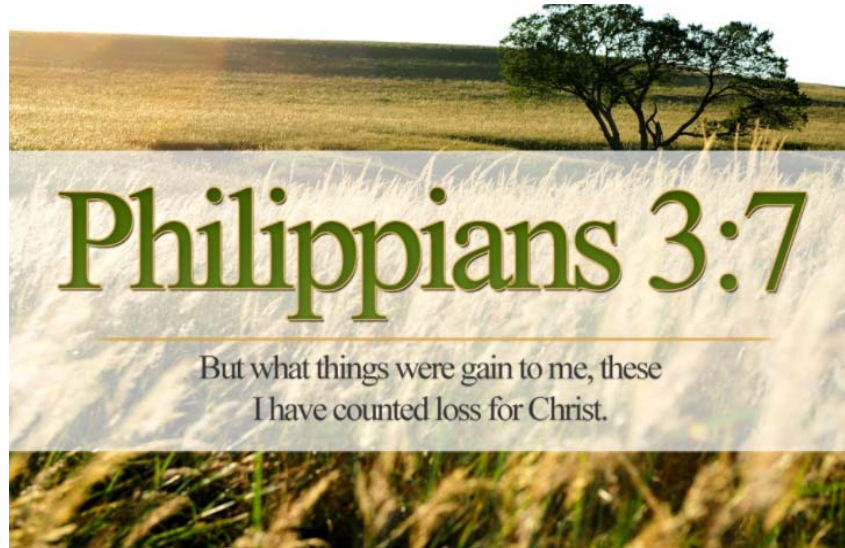
...have confidence in the flesh. Philippians 3:4

As a Christian, Paul goes on to state:

*But what things were gain to me,
these I have counted loss for Christ.*

Philippians 3:7

All these credentials that he could lay claim to, he declares to be "*rubbish*" in contrast to what He has in Christ through faith.



What he has, as the result of his faith, is a kind of righteousness that makes him acceptable before God. All of this is what God gave to Paul and gives to us as the result of turning to Christ in faith. Continued on the next page.

Return to Jeremiah

Thursday, June 28: Read Philippians 3 (Continued)

But then, Paul makes a very important shift. He stops describing what God has given to him, and starts a listing of what he desires to receive from God! Today let's focus on the very first item on Paul's list:

...that I may know Him... Philippians 3:10

How is it possible for a human being, even one who has placed his or her faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, to really know the Lord Jesus Christ? That question might be difficult for some, but not for us as we are in the middle of a study of Jeremiah. And, we know that desire didn't start with Paul. It is part of the express intent and purposes of God as laid out in the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31! For it is His desire that we would *all know Him from the least to the greatest*. Jeremiah 31:34

Furthermore, the book of Hebrews makes it clear that Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant. Hebrews 8:13 and 10:15-18 expand the covenant's scope to include not just Israel, but also the Church. Do you see it? It is not about one time, or one writer of Scripture. God wants a daily, personal, vertical relationship with His creation.



If this is what God wants, then we know that in grace He provides the means. So there you have our focus for the last day of this month and into next month's devotions.

Return to Jeremiah

Friday, June 29: Read Ephesians 1

Before we focus on how to go about the pursuit of *knowing Christ*, let's spend a moment looking at the context of the verse we introduced yesterday, Philippians 3:10. The Greek word translated *know* is the verb *ginosko* which means to know, to know by experience, and to become acquainted with. It is in the active voice which means that Paul was producing the action. In other words, to know Christ means we have to make the choices and take the steps necessary to do so. Now in the context Paul also wants to know the power of the resurrection. You will find that very same idea in our reading for today.

. . .that you may know. . .what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. . .

Ephesians 1:18-20

Philippians 3:10 adds something that is going to seem very strange to us—the desire to share in the sufferings of Christ. This too is documented elsewhere in Scripture:

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him.

Philippians 1:29

Now at this point, let me ask a very sobering question. Do you think every Christian—everyone who has placed his or her faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ—knows Jesus Christ in the way that Paul has in mind? Specifically, does every Christian know the power of the resurrection in their lives and share in the sufferings of Christ? It doesn't come natural to us, does it? That's why it is so important for us to answer the question, "How do we go about doing this?" The lessons in the first days of next month will help answer this question!

VISTOSO

Community Church

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...*John 15:5*

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