

February 2024 Daily Devotional

*As for God, His way is perfect:
The Lord's word is flawless;
He shields all who
take refuge in Him.*

Psalm 18:30



Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

There is lots of diverse content in this month's readings! We'll continue to look at the prophetic, by seeking to be encouraged by understanding God's plans for the future. Then, we begin a new collection of readings in Leviticus—focusing on the feast days and offerings. Finally, we'll continue our readings in Matthew with an opportunity to read through Jesus' teachings and His actions leading up to the crucifixion.



I trust your year is off to a good start "*in the Lord*" and in His Word!

In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Keven Redig'. The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'K' and a long, horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Keven Redig

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

Reading Ahead

Thursday, February 1: Read Matthew 18:15-35

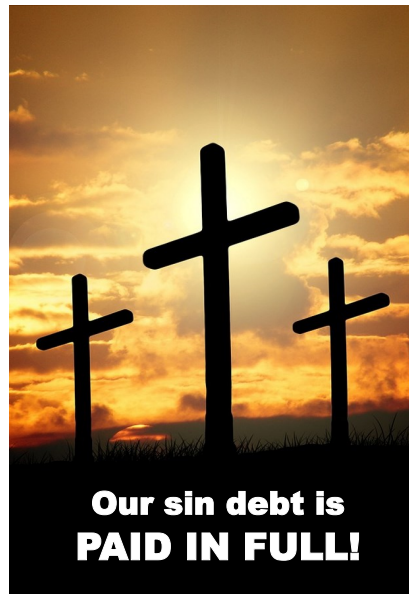
In today's reading, we have two separate lessons on forgiveness. I want to go right to Jesus' summary of what He wants us to know:

"This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Matthew 18:35

First, note the term *brother*. When connected with the word *church* back in Verse 17, I take it that this is a lesson on forgiveness within the fellowship of believers—within the local church. The parable of the king who wanted to settle accounts is very helpful in providing a picture of what can go wrong in the Church, and it is actually a very simple problem, though it is also very common.

Here is the situation: Every child of God has had their sin debt wiped completely clean! If I had more space, I could develop how God dealt with both the imputed sin of Adam and our nature to sin. Suffice it to say that the issue of sin, in its totality, has been dealt with through Jesus' death on the cross! As Romans 5:9 makes clear, the wrath of God has been dealt with forever for those who place their faith in who Christ is and what He has accomplished on the cross.



Continued on the next page.

Reading Ahead

Thursday, February 1:

Read Matthew 18:15-35 (Continued)

To be clear, what did it take to redeem you and me from our lost condition? Nothing short of:

... the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

I Peter 1:19

Could anything else but the Blood of Christ have provided our forgiveness?

None of them can by any means redeem [either himself or] **his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.**

Psalm 49:7 Amplified

What a glorious thing to stand forgiven before God! Now, picture this: The brand new believer, not fully appreciative of the immensity of his or her forgiveness in Christ, finds something objectionable in a brother or sister. What usually happens is that we tend to find fault with something in another with which we ourselves don't struggle. The next thing you know, we are on a crusade to straighten out the life of another and, if that person doesn't respond, we get the church involved. This is not how spiritual growth occurs. This is not how we rid our lives of the baggage that we may have brought into the Christian Life. That's why we are admonished:

Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

Romans 14:4

It is one thing to come alongside and help a brother or sister, it is quite another thing to *rough them up* over some area of perceived sin in the life. Now do you see the point of today's reading? How dare we forget the immensity of the forgiveness we have in Christ when dealing with other members of the fellowship!

Back to *Reading Ahead!*

Reading Ahead

Friday, February 2: Read Genesis Chapter 50

As you recall our thesis, believers in Jesus Christ can be greatly encouraged in the day in which we live by *Reading Ahead*, that is occupying ourselves with what is yet to come in the plan of God. As I have been showing you, the very end of the story is that God is going to make *all things new!* Anticipating an eternity in a glorious new creation, apart from sin, death, or suffering of any kind, should certainly be encouraging! As part of developing this truth I drew your attention to something that God delights to do:

"... I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done ..."

Isaiah 46:9-10

Let me ask a question: What kind of track record does God have? When He declares what is to come, have any of those things actually come to pass? Hundreds of them!



Continued on the next page.

Reading Ahead

Friday, February 2:

Read Genesis Chapter 50 (Continued)

You see, much of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written and hundreds of prophecies have already been fulfilled. Let me show you an example and at the same time show you the benefit of reading ahead!

Then Joseph said to his brothers, "I am about to die. But God will surely come to your aid and take you up out of this land to the land He promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." And Joseph made the sons of Israel swear an oath and said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up from this place."

Genesis 50:24-25

What is going on in this passage? Joseph knew the prophecy contained in Genesis Chapter 15, that the descendants of Abraham would become slaves in Egypt, and would be so for the best part of 400 years before God would bring them back to the land of Canaan. He knew that God would restore them to the land He had given them as a permanent possession. Joseph believed that God was going to do exactly what He said He was going to do, and on the timetable He had revealed! So how did it turn out?

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him because Joseph had made the sons of Israel swear an oath. He had said, "God will surely come to your aid, and then you must carry my bones up with you from this place."

Exodus 13:19

After 400 years of enslavement to the Egyptians, God provided a mighty exodus of His people. And, as you can see, Moses took the bones of Joseph with the Israelites when they left, just as Joseph had asked.

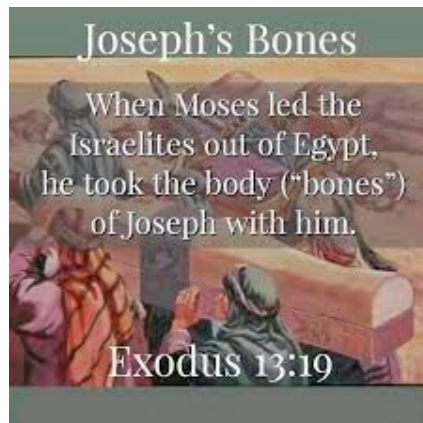
Reading Ahead

Monday, February 5: Read Hebrews 11:1-22

Yesterday we saw that Joseph knew prophecy. He knew enslavement was coming for the Israelites and cruel suffering. But, he also knew God was going to orchestrate a return to the land He had promised to the Jewish people. He wanted his bones buried in the land of promise. This is such a significant act of faith on the part of Joseph, that we find the following in the Book of Hebrews:

By faith Joseph, when his end was near, spoke about the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and gave instructions about his bones. Hebrews 11:22

As you may know, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews is one example of faith after another on the part of God's people. For that reason we often refer to it as the *Hall of Faith!* What got Joseph into the *Hall*? It was making the Israelites promise to watch over his bones and, when they departed for Canaan, to take them along. For 400 years, the bones of Joseph gave testimony to his faith that God would one day deliver His people. Our God found this to be so commendable, He memorialized it in Hebrews Chapter 11. This is one example out of hundreds of how God has *made known from ancient time what is yet to come!*



Continued on the next page.

Reading Ahead

Monday, February 5:

Read Hebrews 11:1-22 (Continued)

You may wonder why I think it is so important to look back at prophecy that has already been fulfilled before we look forward to what is yet to come. The reason is that I want you to know that God has a perfect track record! You see the purpose of the prophetic promises in God's Word is to cause His people to order their lives in keeping with an absolute assurance that God is going to do what He has said He will do. And, He has already shown us that He is more than up to the task.

God is omniscient, omnipotent, and sovereign. Thus, proclaiming an event 400 years before it occurs, and then bringing it to pass, is not hard for Him—even if it involves forming a nation of two million people and bringing them back into their own land!



**Not one of all the Lord's good promises
to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.**

Joshua 21:45

Reading Ahead

Tuesday, February 6: Read Titus Chapter 2

I don't know about you, but I love being reminded to think of history in terms of redemption, reconciliation, and God's intent to make all things new—that changes everything! After considering the perfection of God's *track record* of fulfilled prophecy the past few days, today we begin to look ahead.

So, what kinds of things has God told us are coming? Even a short listing should get our attention:

- The conclusion of the Gentile world history.
- An earthly kingdom established by Jesus over which He reigns.
- The transition from this present world into a new heaven and a new earth!

So where do we start? Let me suggest that there is one object of prophecy that stands above all others, and there is one singular event that should occupy our thinking above all others regarding future events. Revelation 19:10 provides direction:

... For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus.

Or as the Weymouth translation states:

... Testimony to Jesus is the spirit which underlies prophecy!

So let me state it clearly:

Jesus is the focal point—the central object of all pending prophecy!

Continued on the next page.

Reading Ahead

Tuesday, February 6:

Read Titus Chapter 2 (Continued)

If you know anything about prophecy, then perhaps you are thinking, "What about Israel?" Jesus is coming to rule over them! What about a period of great tribulation? His glorious return will put an end to it! What about ...? It does not matter what you might mention—Jesus is central!

The singular event that should occupy our thinking above all others is ***Jesus is coming again!*** I don't know when, and I would never predict a time, but God most certainly wants us to *read ahead* in His Word so that we become fixated on:

The Blessed Hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good.

Titus 2:13-14

So do not get discouraged by the events of our day, express your hope in prayer: *Maranatha—come Lord Jesus!*



Reading Ahead

Wednesday, February 7: Read Acts Chapter 1

If Jesus is the central figure of prophecy and His return is the singular event we should be anticipating, then we certainly need to consider it more fully. Let's start by recalling His First Advent: If you were to search the Bible, you would find at least 109 prophecies associated with the First Coming of the Lord Jesus. Prophecies fulfilled like:

- He would be born of a virgin. (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:22-23).
- He would be a descendent of Abraham ... of the tribe of Judah ... of the House of David (Genesis 12, Genesis 49:10, II Samuel 7:12-13; Matthew 1:1, Hebrews 7:14, Luke 1:31-33).

And the list goes on and on.

- Worshipped by wise men and given gifts.
- Spoke in parables.
- Made a triumphal entry riding on a donkey.
- Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver.
- Crucified between two criminals and buried with the rich.
- Raised from the dead and ascended to glory.

There are 109 prophecies found in 200 locations, uttered decades if not centuries in advance. And, they were all fulfilled in one person—our glorious Savior!

Now, to His return: Is there really going to be a Second Advent? By the way, the words *advent* and *coming* can be used interchangeably. I like the term advent because it

Continued on the next page.

Reading Ahead

Wednesday, February 7:

Read Acts Chapter 1 (Continued)

specifically carries the connotation of the arrival of an important person. I prefer it because it is given that the Lord Jesus is the most important person! As for His return, let's consider His departure:

Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." Then they (the disciples) returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey.

Acts 1:9-12

Is this a confusing passage? Is it difficult to interpret? Do we need to look for hidden meanings? As one Bible interpreter likes to say:

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense ... Dr. David L. Cooper

So what do we have? The disciples watched Jesus ascend up through the clouds. Then they were told that He was going to return in a like manner. Would that not mean down from the clouds until His feet were once again on this earth? That would certainly seem to be the *plain sense of Scripture!*

We will continue tomorrow with the return of Jesus.

Reading Ahead

Thursday, February 8: Read Revelation 19:11-21

As we continue to consider the Second Advent of Jesus Christ, let me state something that might surprise you. Specifically, the First and Second Advents of Jesus have been on the mind of God for a long time. God did not add a Second Coming after the First, for both have always been part of God's plan of salvation. Let me show you:

So the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike His heel."

Genesis 3:14-15

Who is the *offspring of the woman*? This is a reference to the promised Savior. To what does Satan striking at the

Continued on the next page.



Reading Ahead

Thursday, February 8: Read Revelation 19:11-21 (Continued)

heel of the Savior refer? It is a reference to the cross at the First Advent. How about the Savior crushing the head of Satan? This refers to an event that is yet to occur following Jesus' Second Coming!

Here is another passage we hear every Christmas, but hardly ever take the time to deeply consider:

You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. ... For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

Isaiah 9:3,6-7

Unto us a child is born—we know what that is talking about. We celebrate it at Christmas. But what about the rest of the passage? Was any of it fulfilled during the incarnation of Jesus? Was He called *Mighty God*? Was He the head of government reigning from David's throne? Hardly, He was crucified.

So, how are we to understand this? We must understand that God is revealing His plan: The First Advent is the child born in a manger and destined for the cross. The Second Advent is the coming of Jesus as King of kings and Lord of lords. This has always been the plan of God and we need to be in tune with it!

Reading Ahead

Friday, February 9: Read John Chapter 9

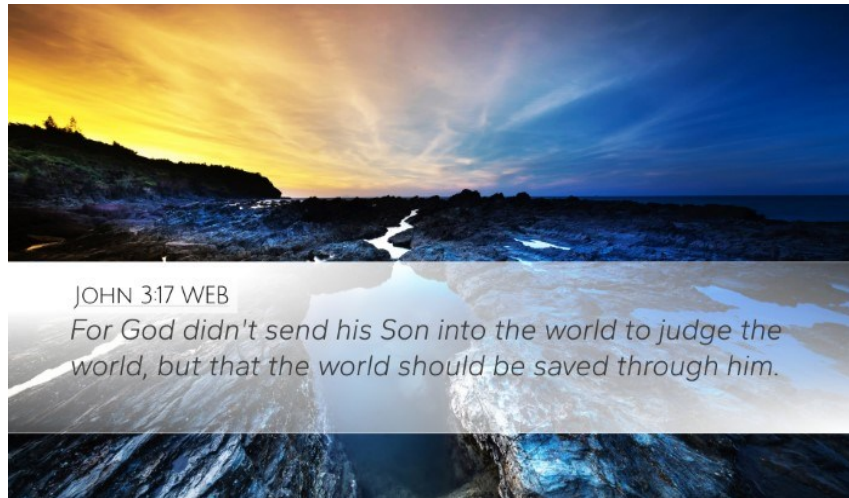
Today I want to focus upon a very, very important distinction between the two Advents of Jesus Christ. Let's start with these precious words describing what has already occurred:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

John 3:17

"... for I did not come to judge the world, but to save it."

John 12:47



Jesus came to save—we rejoice and bear witness to that truth! But what about the following?

"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son."

John 5:22

"And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."

Acts 10:42

Continued on the next page.

Reading Ahead

Friday, February 9:

Read John Chapter 9 (Continued)

Do not grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold, the Judge is standing at the door!

James 5:9

After being told that Jesus came to save rather than to judge, we have three passages that name Him as judge! Is this a giant contradiction? Not at all! The First Advent is centered in His cross and resurrection as the means to save all that would come to Him in faith. But when He comes again, He is not going to be a suffering servant, but a reigning King. Part of His coming to reign is going to be His coming to judge!

“When the Son of man comes in glory ... He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”

Matthew 25:31-33

So why do we read ahead? So that we would know that judgment is coming. You and I live in between the two Advents of Jesus Christ. He has left us here to bear witness to the salvation that is available in Jesus Christ, but also to warn that judgment is coming!

That is why we implore others to *be reconciled to God* (II Corinthians 5:20) before it is too late and there is only judgment to come! For:

... I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

II Corinthians 6:2

And, that salvation is for all who will believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ!

Reading Ahead

Monday, February 12: Read Revelation Chapter 1

There is no doubt about it—Jesus is coming again! Do you remember what the angels told the disciples?

“... This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.” Acts 1:11

The world ignoring it, or trying to suppress it, is not going to make one iota of difference. For one day, perhaps soon:

“Look, He is coming with the clouds,” and “every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him;” and all the peoples of the earth “will mourn because of Him.” So shall it be! Amen. Revelation 1:7

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Reading Ahead

Monday, February 12:

Read Revelation Chapter 1 (Continued)

The angels declared His coming and, when we *read ahead*, it confirms it is going to be just like the prophecies said! As I mentioned, there were at least 109 prophecies fulfilled at the First Coming of the Lord Jesus!

Did you know there are 224 prophecies regarding His Second Coming? Further, there are 300 references to the Lord's Second Advent in the 260 chapters of the New Testament, and 1,527 references in the Old Testament. The world might be oblivious, but God certainly does not want us to be! One more thing for today, I want you to know there are going to be two different reactions to the coming of Jesus. There are those who cannot wait:

... while we wait for the Blessed Hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ ...

Titus 2:13

Then there are those who are going to have a different response altogether!

At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory.

Matthew 24:30

Why would anyone mourn at the coming of Jesus? Based upon both the above Scripture and our readings to date, you should know the answer! They mourn because they are not ready for judgment, and they are not ready to meet face-to-face One with such power and glory! We make sure that we are ready—each one of us—by putting our faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. As we trust in what He did for us on the cross, He becomes our *Blessed Hope* and confidence of a glorious eternity.

Reading Ahead

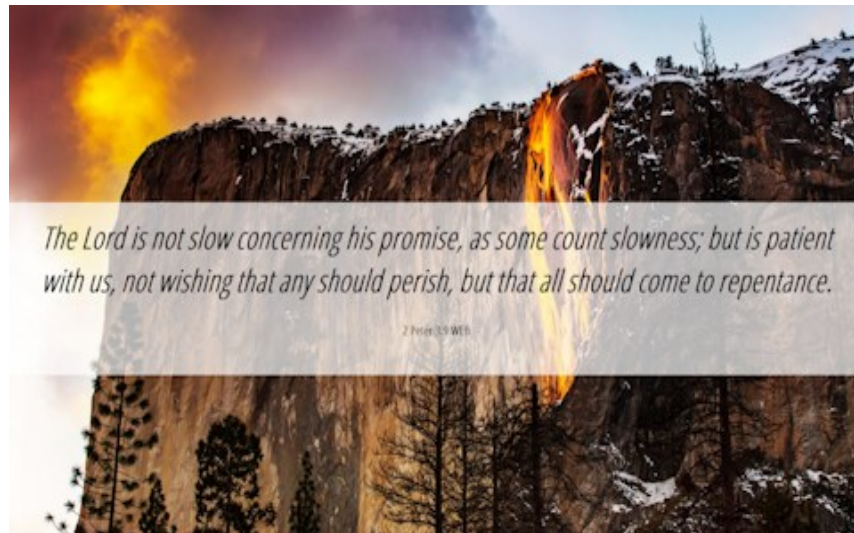
Tuesday, February 13: Read II Peter Chapter 3

By reading ahead we have clearly seen that Jesus is coming again! How should we respond to what we have learned? I have several suggestions:

1. We must avoid skepticism! The world is so cynical regarding the supernatural conspiring to cause us to doubt everything! This must not catch us by surprise:

First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, "Where is this 'coming' He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." ... The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. II Peter 3:3-4, 9

Continued on the next page.



Reading Ahead

Tuesday, February 13:

Read II Peter Chapter 3 (Continued)

Do you know why Jesus has not come back yet? Because God does not want you, your friends and neighbors, and your extended family to perish. He is giving all a chance to turn in faith to His Son!

2. We must also resist the tendency to explain away the Second Advent of Jesus—as One coming in the clouds—by spiritualizing it! There are many voices in our day, including some very influential theologians, that completely dismiss the possibility of the supernatural, starting with the literal resurrection of our Savior. You can just imagine what they have done with the Second Coming!

As a believer in both the Lord Jesus Christ and in a God who can make known the end from the beginning and cause His purposes to stand firm, I don't care what the world has to say when it comes into conflict with the authoritative Word of God! I encourage you to stand firm as well!

It could not be stated any more plainly than it is in God's Word: The glorious appearing ... the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory ... every eye will see Him ... His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives ...

Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne ... from that time on and forever.

Isaiah 9:7

Reading Ahead

Wednesday, February 14: Read Acts Chapter 17

We'll be back in a few weeks to continue reading ahead, and take up another future, yet certain, event on God's prophetic timetable. For today, let's make some application regarding the return of our Lord and Savior:

1. Do you believe the resurrection of Jesus to be a historical fact? If so, then you need to realize it is God's proof that Jesus is coming again:

"Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:31

Judgment is coming, Jesus is the judge, and God's proof is Jesus' resurrection following the crucifixion!

Continued on the next page.



Reading Ahead

Wednesday, February 14: Read Acts Chapter 17 (Continued)

2. So, as Christians, what kind of people should we be?
How about those who long for His appearing!

Now there is in store for me (the apostle Paul) the crown of righteousness ... and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.

II Timothy 4:8

How about those who speed the coming of the Lord?

... You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming ...

II Peter 3:11-12

We speed His coming, not just by the quality of life we live, but also by sharing the Gospel until:

... the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

Romans 11:25

3. Finally, we should most certainly allow His future coming to purify our present lives!

Dear friends, now we are children of God ... we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure.

I John 3:2-3

The First Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ is a historical fact, and His Second Coming is every bit as certain!

I pray that when the trumpet sounds you will be eagerly looking for your Savior and anxious to meet Him face to face!

Lessons from Leviticus

**Thursday, February 15:
Read Exodus Chapter 19**

Your background with respect to the Book of Leviticus likely falls into one of two categories:

1. You know it has to do with *Jewish* rules and regulations but you do not know much else about it.
2. You have tried to wade through it and have been lost in the detail.

Let me organize the opening few chapters for you. We begin by going back to Exodus Chapter 19. God has brought His people out of bondage in Egypt to Mount Sinai. Although they are technically a nation at this point, they are one without a home or much history.

Continued on the next page.



Lessons from Leviticus

Thursday, February 15: Read Exodus Chapter 19 (Continued)

So one of the things that God does at Mount Sinai is make clear the special relationship He anticipates between Himself and His redeemed people:

"Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

Exodus 19:3-6

Here is how the people responded,

... "All that the Lord has spoken we will do." ...

Exodus 19:8

Over the course of time, God revealed to His people, through Moses, a very unusual charter for this newly-formed nation. We call it the Mosaic Law. It was much more of a spiritual charter than you would find in the governing documents of other nations at the time. Why? God was to be the head of this nation, and they were to be to Him a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*—His treasured possession.

From this backdrop, we are ready to move into our study of the Book of Leviticus.

Lessons from Leviticus

Friday, February 16: Read Leviticus Chapter 1

We saw yesterday in Exodus Chapter 19 that the people said:

"All that the Lord has spoken we will do."

Now, in Leviticus Chapter 1, we are going to start to get the Lord's specifics about what the people are to do:

The Lord called to Moses ... saying, "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them ..."

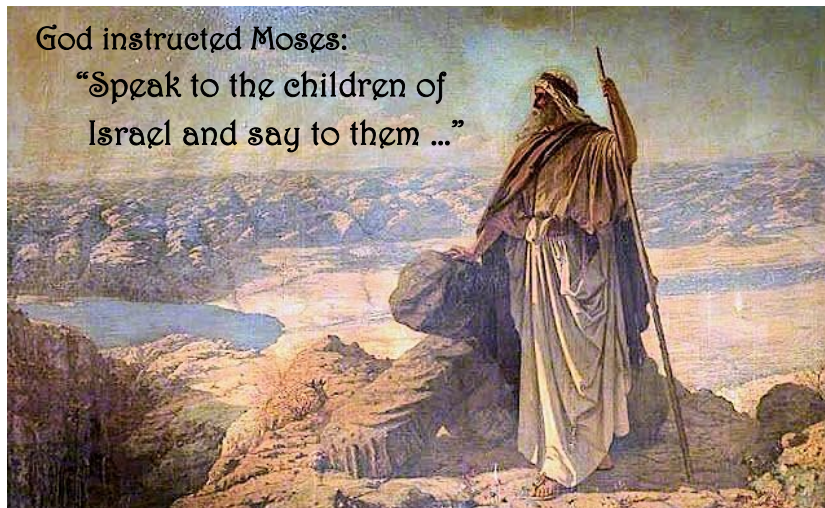
Leviticus 1:1-2

This voice came to Moses from the Tabernacle, a physical location from which the people of God were to know God was with them. What begins is guidance on how the

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God instructed Moses:

"Speak to the children of
Israel and say to them ..."



Lessons from Leviticus

Friday, February 16:

Read Leviticus Chapter 1 (Continued)

people were to offer sacrifices to God. Of course, sacrifices had been offered to God as early as Genesis Chapter 4, but what we have now are very specific guidelines on how five different categories of sacrifice were to be offered to God—three of which were voluntary and two compulsory.

Why the specific guidance? First, every one of these sacrifices was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. What that means is that each one illustrated some aspect of the person and work of Christ. In short, these sacrifices pointed to the One who was to come. For the Jews, it was a challenge to place the truths they were learning into the context of a Messiah to come. Since we have the benefit of hindsight, it is much easier for us to make the connection between the illustration and its fulfillment in Christ.

Before we consider the first of the sacrifices, the *burnt offering*, let me close today by drawing your attention to one more truth. Again, understand that in Leviticus 1:1-2, the Lord told Moses to "*Speak to the children of Israel ...* "

What we have is God speaking to man, in other words divine revelation. As is always the case, we would have no way of knowing what is in the mind of God apart from His *speaking* to us.

That God is speaking to us is what makes it worthwhile to spend some time in the Book of Leviticus—to listen to what God has to say!

Lessons from Leviticus

Monday, February 19: Read Psalm 32

We read in Leviticus Chapter 1 about the first of the *freewill* or voluntary offerings, simply referred to as *the burnt offering*. Note:

- The animal used for the offering was to be without blemish or defect—a type of the sinless perfection of our Lord.
- The one offering the sacrifice was to put his hand on the animal's head, that it would be:

... accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him.

Leviticus 1:4

This gesture symbolized the transfer of the sins from the one offering the sacrifice to the innocent animal. Again, a type of Christ bearing our sin. The concept is further developed in today's reading:

**Blessed is he
whose transgression
is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Blessed is
the man to whom
the Lord does not
impute iniquity ...**

Psalm 32:1-2



You are to lay your hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on your behalf to make atonement for you.

Leviticus 1:4 NIV

SeekGrowLove.com

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Lessons from Leviticus

Monday, February 19:
Read Psalm 32 (Continued)

The idea of atonement is to cover. The Blood of Christ covered or removed our sin from the sight of God. The burnt offering is likely first in the list because it was to be the most frequent sacrifice—every morning, every evening, every Sabbath, the first of every month, and special feast days. Imagine the time and labor and the sheer magnitude of the effort involved in the offering of sacrifices on behalf of an entire nation as they sought forgiveness for sin—all pointing to the work of the coming Messiah.

Consider just how great a high priest Jesus Christ is:



**But this Man,
after He had
offered one
sacrifice for sins
forever, sat
down at the
right hand of
God, from that
time waiting till
His enemies are
made His foot-
stool.**

Hebrews 10:12-13

Jesus sat down
because His work
was finished be-
cause he had
made one sacrifice
sufficient to cover
the sins of all peo-
ple and for all
time!

Lessons from Leviticus

Tuesday, February 20: Read Leviticus Chapter 2

Chapter 2 speaks of a second offering—*the grain offering*. Again, the words in Verse 1, "*When anyone offers ...*", tells us that this too was a freewill offering. A full understanding of the grain offering is beyond the scope of our devotional, but I trust you will be blessed by these insights:

- Verse 4 speaks of the grain offering, when baked in the oven, being of *unleavened cakes*. The transliteration of the Hebrew is matzoh. You will find this same word throughout our reading in Chapter 2, as well as part of the prescription for celebrating the Passover.
- This matzoh bread was to be without leaven. The absence of leaven speaks of removing that which ferments—sin. Again we have a type of the sinless Christ.
- Consider the specifications for the appearance of the matzoh as contained in the rabbinical code: It is to be unleavened, have stripes, and be pierced with holes.

Do you see how this sacrifice offered so often, year after year, spoke of the coming Messiah? And not just Scripturally, but even enmeshed with tradition. For this simplest of breads points to Jesus as the *Bread of Life* (John 6:35) for all mankind. It points to the One who *was pierced for our transgressions ... , crushed for our iniquities, ... by His stripes we are healed*. (Isaiah 53:5)

Are you starting to see why God was so specific with His instructions regarding the sacrificial system that was contained in the Mosaic Law? So many of the details spoke of the Anointed One, the Messiah to come. God wanted His people to have hearts prepared to recognize the Messiah when He did come! Now you can see a real example of how religion blinds man to the message of God!

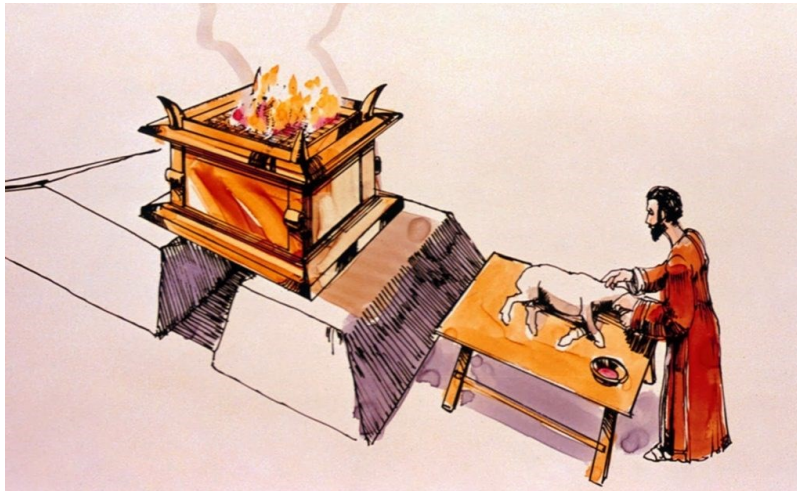
Lessons from Leviticus

Wednesday, February 21:

Read Leviticus Chapter 3

Today's reading covers the third and final of the freewill offerings—*the peace offering*. We are just scratching the surface on the rich content associated with the offerings prescribed by God under the Mosaic Law, but already we should be able to see how much God is teaching His people about the Messiah to come!

- The Messiah is going to be an atonement for the sin of the people (burnt offering).
- The sinless Messiah will be pierced for our transgressions and by His stripes we will be healed (grain offering).



Lessons from Leviticus

Wednesday, February 21:

Read Leviticus Chapter 3 (Continued)

Today we see that the Messiah is the one who will establish peace between God and man.

How important this is, for the sin of man has placed him at odds with his holy Creator and has made him an object of God's wrath. In the peace offering we see once again an offering without blemish (sin), the laying of hands on the offering indicating the transfer of sin and guilt, and the death of an innocent animal. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. (Hebrews 9:22)

Picture a people called upon to offer sacrifices for atonement, for sin, and for peace. Year in and year out they offered these sacrifices in preparation for the One who was to come. Think of the big picture message of atonement, payment for sin and reconciliation that has been reinforced month after month and year after year.

What more could God have done to prepare His people for the sending of His Son? Do not be surprised at the hard-hearted nature of your friend or neighbor as you try to share the good news of the Gospel, for unbelief is a hard obstacle to overcome.

Then, as now, as the light of who Jesus is and what He has done dawns, there will always be those who respond by faith—to His glory and their eternal salvation!

Lessons from Matthew

Thursday, February 22: Read Matthew 19:1-15

If I were to ask, what sin is Jesus addressing in these verses, what would you say? I think if you ponder the passage for a while you will see that Jesus is addressing the misuse of the practice of divorce. Even though it was allowed under the Mosaic Law,

"... it was not this way from the beginning."

Matthew 19:8

Let me suggest that Jesus is telling them that divorce was never God's plan for marriage, and they have taken the practice much further than that allowed under the Mosaic Law. Let me show you something about man in His rebellion. In Romans Chapter 1, it tells us that when mankind, knowing of the existence of God, chooses to act such that:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Romans 1:21



Lessons from Matthew

Thursday, February 22:

Read Matthew 19:1-15 (Continued)

Not only that, God will give:

... them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. Romans 1:24

When we reject God, even the most intelligent move into the realm of darkness in their thinking. This inevitably leads to sexual immorality with its resultant degrading of the body. This is what God says will happen! Now what does this have to do with Matthew Chapter 19? The problem was the misuse of divorce, and in America as part of our turning from God, we have taken that problem even further. What does Romans Chapter 1 allow us to predict? On top of the abuse of divorce, we should look for even greater sexual immorality—and that is exactly what has happened with the increase in homosexuality and ultimately so-called same-sex marriage. Does God have anything to say about that?

"Haven't you read ... 'at the beginning, the Creator made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother, and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?' ... Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate." Matthew 19:4-6

God designed marriage to be a lasting and permanent union. We long ago ceased to properly value this union, and then, in our turning from God, kept right on going into even greater immorality. This is exactly what God said would happen. When you turn from Him, the result is foolishness and immorality as He gives us over to the evil within the fallen heart! This is not a popular explanation in our day, but it would seem to be the truth as found in God's Word.

Lessons from Matthew

Friday, February 23: Read Matthew 19:16-30

This passage is dominated by a dialogue between Jesus and someone we simply refer to as *the rich young man*. Here is what makes this dialogue challenging. In Acts Chapter 16, we have a man who,

**... fell trembling before Paul and Silas ... and asked,
"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"** Acts 16:29-30

They answered him,

... "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved ..."
Acts 16:31

This statement is pretty straight-forward—salvation is by means of faith in the right object—the person and work of Jesus Christ. Now in Matthew Chapter 19, our rich young man asks a very similar question:

... "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Matthew 19:16

We can break Jesus' reply into two parts. First, He says,

"... There is only One who is good ..." Matthew 19:17

Then He goes on to have a longer dialogue about obeying the Ten Commandments. This young man believes his life is faultless when held up against the light of the Ten Commandments. In light of Scripture, this man has deceived himself!

**For the Law was put in charge to lead us to Christ
that we might be justified by faith.** Galatians 3:24

**Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His
sight by observing the Law; rather, through the Law
we become conscious of sin.** Romans 3:20

Lessons from Matthew

Friday, February 23: Read Matthew 19:16-30 (Continued)

Unlike the man in Acts Chapter 16, the rich man in Matthew did not see his need. He thought he was righteous and just wanted to validate his eternal life, rather than having reached the point that Scripture declares:

... there is none righteous, no, not one.

Romans 3:10

So Jesus, knowing the rich young man is not yet ready to see his need, reveals it to him:

... "If you want to be perfect, go, sell all your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. ..."

Matthew 19:21

How did the man respond?

When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Matthew 19:22

One man was on his knees, ready to do whatever it took to be saved! The other had an idol in his heart, and had not yet allowed the Mosaic Law to do its job of proving he was a sinner in need of a Savior! Jesus showed him that which dominated his heart—material things! It is not the giving away of your money that saves, it is placing one's faith in a Savior who died for your sins. If you do not see yourself as a desperately needy sinner, then you are not likely to put your hope in a crucified Savior. Yet, we do not come into restored relationship with the Father through any system of law-keeping or works, but through Jesus!

... "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

John 14:6

Lessons from Matthew

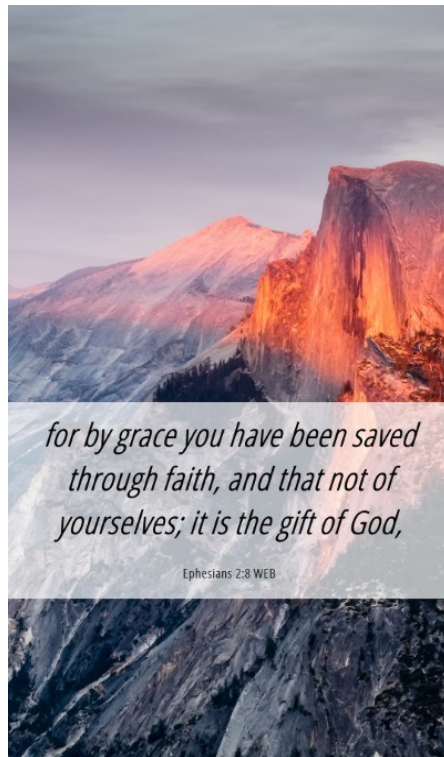
Monday, February 26: Read Matthew 20:1-16

I love today's parable of grace, while at the same time never ceasing to be amazed at the capacity of God's people to find fault with the grace of God! The parable unfolds in a straight-forward manner: A vineyard owner goes out and hires workers for the day, for a wage they all agree upon. For the purposes of understanding what is happening, the vineyard owner hires a group at 6:00 am, and then continues to add more workers at 9:00 am, 12:00 noon, 3:00 pm, and 5:00 pm. Then the owner pays them all for their labor at the end of the workday at 6:00 pm.

Now where it gets interesting is when those who work for one hour receive the promised full-day's wage. That leads all the rest to believe they are going to get more than the agreed-upon wage. When they don't,

"... they began to grumble against the landowner." Matthew 20:11

The landowner in the parable is our heavenly Father, so you and I should recognize that this grumbling is a real problem! What prompted the grumbling? It was seeing God being gracious to others.



Lessons from Matthew

Monday, February 26:

Read Matthew 20:1-16 (Continued)

We love the fact that God saved us by grace—He did all of the work to provide our salvation apart from any merit, worth, or works on our part—we simply receive this precious gift by faith! I have noticed that there are two things that can cause us also to grumble:

1. If we got saved at an early age, and then ordered our life seeking to follow after Jesus—we do not like death-bed conversions! Our rationale—we worked hard for Jesus, why should they have *all the fun* and share in our same salvation! Don't go there, or you have given yourself away! Is your *work* for Jesus really a sacrifice or a blessing? Did they really have *all the fun*? Listen, if there are not people from death-bed conversions in heaven, then it is not really by grace that we are saved!
2. The second thing we don't like is, if we see ourselves as fine upstanding Christians, seeing someone who has made a hash of their Christian Life coming back to the Lord in repentance and enjoying the same salvation that we do!

Surely there should be a two-tiered salvation for those who are faithful (that group always includes us) and those who are not! With this thinking, we have now become just like the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son. (Luke Chapter 15) Let me assure you, self-righteousness is not any more becoming for us than it was for him.

How about if we are simply thankful for God's infinite grace to us, while at the same time allowing Him to measure it out to others in whatever way magnifies His Name? We have a gracious God whose mercy endures forever!

Lessons from Matthew

**Tuesday, February 27:
Read Matthew 21:1-11**

We have been moving through a number of events as Jesus' public ministry comes to a close. However, I do not want you to consider Jesus' *Triumphal Entry* as just another in this series. For this is an extraordinary *bookend* on a week that ends with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is extraordinary for two reasons:

1. The Jews should have been *on the edge of their seats* waiting for the next step in the unfolding of God's plans! Why do I say that? Because of the Book of Daniel!

"Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'sevens' ... After the sixty-two 'sevens', the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing ..."

Daniel 9:25-26

These are *weeks* of years. Seven *sevens* plus sixty-two *sevens* is a total of 483 years. Sir Robert Anderson has shown that the entry of Christ into



Lessons from Matthew

Tuesday, February 27:

Read Matthew 21:1-11 (Continued)

Jerusalem occurred on the very day that the sixty-ninth week of Daniel's prophecy had run out. This is the exact time in which the Messiah was to come. If that wasn't enough, as the crowd gathered, prophecy was being fulfilled right before their eyes:

Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your King comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey ... He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Zechariah 9:9-10

2. If the Jews had been reading ahead, as we are seeking to do in these devotionals, they would have known the time of the Messiah's coming was upon them, they would have seen:

"... the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear ... and good news is preached to the poor."

Luke 7:22

From their Scriptures, the Jews should have also recognized their coming King, riding on a colt, in the prophecy of Zechariah. Instead, the religious leadership of Israel challenges the authority of Jesus, and by the end of the week those calling "*Hosanna*" are shouting "*Crucify Him*."

Lost mankind is so hard of heart in his rebellion! What can we do but thank the Lord for providing a way to be saved in the face of our rejection and, equally, thank Him for His Spirit who convicts us of our deep, deep need!

Lessons from Matthew

Wednesday, February 28:

Read Matthew 21:12-45

We see the heart of the people following Jesus' Triumphal Entry, especially that of the religious leadership. At their first opportunity, they confront the Messiah with:

**... "By what authority are you doing these things?
And who gave you this authority?"** Matthew 21:23

What is the context of their challenge? Jesus has cleansed the Temple from sin and healed the sick—and they don't like it! Same old story. They do not like anything that threatens their hold on power. Jesus is going to confront them with their hardness of heart by means of three parables. This is the religious leadership's last chance to repent, rather than double-down on their hardness of heart.

In Parable One, *The Two Sons*, what is Jesus looking for? He seeks a response of faith:

"The work of God is this, to believe in the One He has sent." John 6:29

There are those from the *down and out of society* who have responded, but not the religious leaders.

In Parable Two, *The Parable of the Land-owner*, the lesson is simple: Israel owes God something and God wants His due! To their great detriment, the religious leaders are still not responding. Let me suggest that the rejection of Israel's religious leadership is going to cause Israel to be set aside, and suffer greatly, until they *call on Him whom they have pierced*, and say, *The Lord is our God*, and so all *Israel will be saved*. (Zechariah 12:10, 13:9, Romans 11:26)

Lessons from Matthew

Wednesday, February 28: Read Matthew 21:12-45 (Continued)

Could Jesus be any more clear?

"Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit." Matthew 21:43

Is the religious leadership coming under conviction and repenting of their sin? The Scriptures tell us the chief priests and Pharisees knew Jesus was talking about them, and

They looked for a way to arrest Him ... Matthew 21:46

This is not at all the response that would have saved their souls. I pray to God that we do not have the same hardness of heart! We have one more parable to consider, and we will do so tomorrow!



Lessons from Matthew

Thursday, February 29: Read Matthew Chapter 22

We made it through two of three parables yesterday, and will look at the third today. As a reminder, following the Triumphal Entry, Jesus continues to calmly and steadfastly confront the people with their need to turn from a religion that has blinded them to their Messiah. So we turn to Parable Three: *The Marriage Feast!* There are many nuances to this parable beyond the space we have, but consider the following:

- The intended attendees at the great feast reject the king's invite.
- The rejection of an invite from the Creator God of all things has dire consequences!
- All who attend must be able to withstand the personal scrutiny of our holy God.

Now let's turn to application:

1. The issue for the human race is not one of failing to receive an invitation!

The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

II Peter 3:9

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

Revelation 22:17

2. Instead, the issue is the exclusivity of the invite:

... "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Me."

John 14:6

Lessons from Matthew

Thursday, February 29: Read Matthew Chapter 22 (Continued)

As well as the need to come into the presence of our God properly attired with His righteousness!

But now the righteousness of God apart from law is revealed ... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

Romans 3:21-22

3. It does not matter if it was the Pharisees of Jesus' day or those counting on their good works and religious affiliation in our day, neither is a response to God's invitation. Religious works will never clothe you with the righteousness of God! Can you see exactly that in the following:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!'"

Matthew 7:21-22

What is the will of the Father? Jesus tells us:

"For My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:40

I can not help telling you, that in this the time of the Church, belief in the Son leads to becoming part of the Bride of Christ. This is one way to make certain you will be attending the Wedding Feast of the Lamb in a glorious day to come!

VISTOSO Community Church



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

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