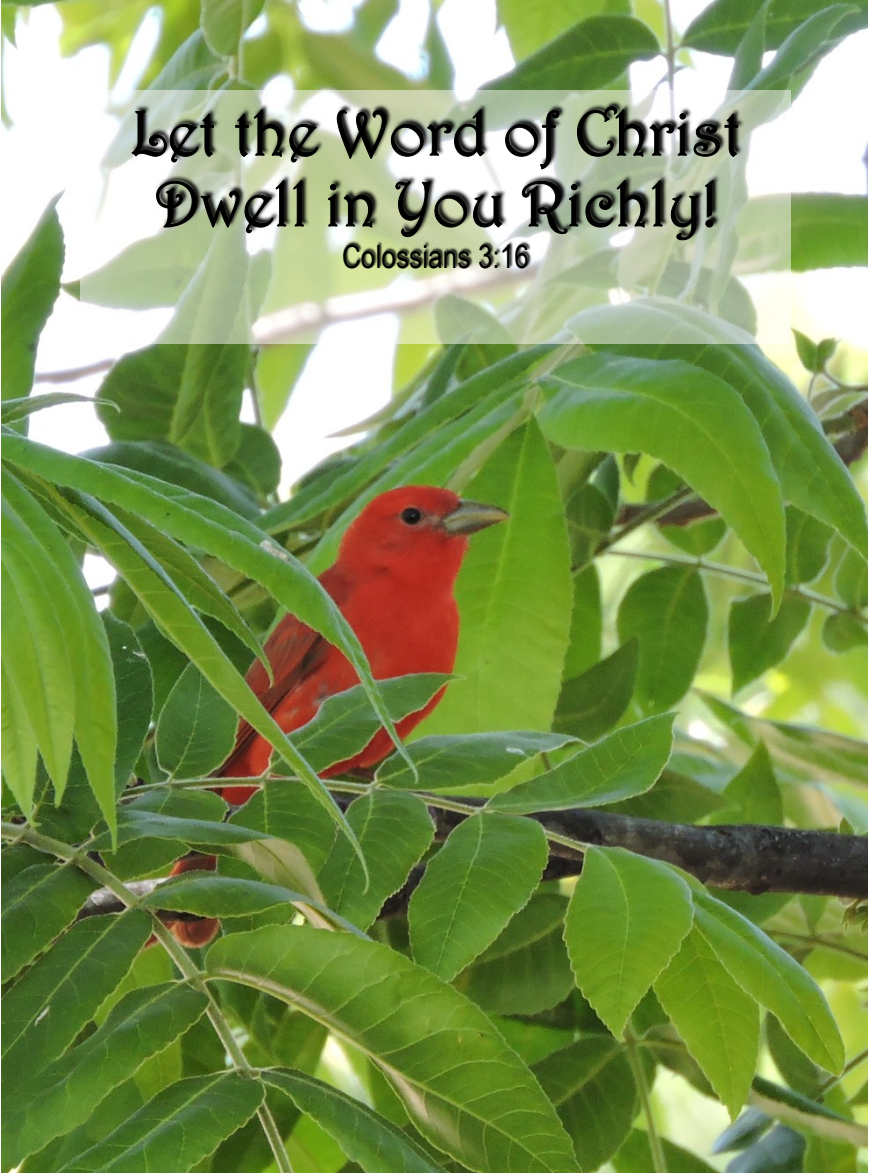


June 2026
Daily Devotional

**Let the Word of Christ
Dwell in You Richly!**

Colossians 3:16

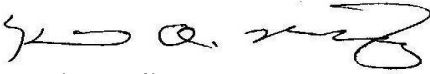


Vistoso Community Church

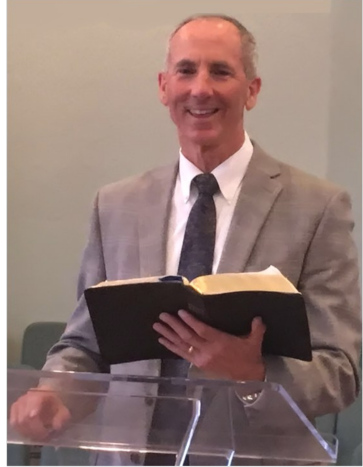
Foreword

How could we be anything other than blessed by spending time this coming month in the Book of Ephesians, the Psalms, John's Gospel, and Romans. The readings and doctrine are quite varied, but the same God stands behind them all. May He bless you by drawing you closer to Himself as you spend time in His Word.

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



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

Lessons in Ephesians

Monday, June 1:

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

Everyone has heard portions of this text of Scripture read at a wedding. Likewise, you will recognize the beginning of Chapter 6 with respect to child-raising. It is almost as if we have reduced the well-known portions of this part of the Book of Ephesians to God's instructions on marriage and child-raising—lifting them completely out of their context. I am not suggesting that they are not valuable in those arenas; I am suggesting that:

To reduce this section to an instruction manual is to miss its placement in a letter from God to the churches about the abundant life meant for all Christians.

Let me remind you again of what we have learned in our study of Ephesians. In the first three chapters of the book we have:

- The development of our marvelous position in Christ, even to being seated with Him in the heavenlies.
- Jew and Gentile made one, being combined into a holy temple of which Christ is the Cornerstone.
- The Church that is designed to display the manifold wisdom of God.
- God's intent that we should know His love in every circumstance, every day, in every success and every failure, that we would overflow with His fullness.

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Lessons in Ephesians

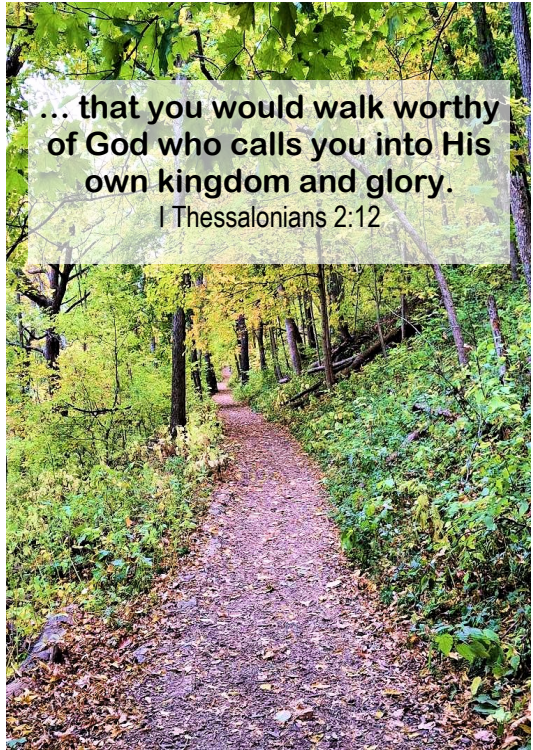
Monday, June 1:

Read Ephesians 5:21-33 (Continued)

Then, in the last three chapters of the book, Paul gets very practical. We are to turn from the practices of the world, taking off the old man and putting on the new which is created to be like Christ in true righteousness and holiness.

The calling on our day-to-day life is breathtakingly high.

For we are to redeem the time, imitate God, be filled with the Spirit, and be renewed in our minds by the Word of God. With all this in mind, we arrive at today's point! With all of this marvelous and undeserved blessing, God is calling and enabling us to live a life that is perfectly consistent with who and what we are in Christ. By necessity, this is a very high quality of life. So naturally, that quality of life is going to show up in our marriages, families, and extended relationships.



... that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

That's what today's reading is about. It describes the *worthy walk* in your home and mine! We will explore the details over the next several days.

Lessons in Ephesians

Tuesday, June 2:

Read Colossians 3:16-41

Ephesians 5:22 says: "*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.*" In our day, you are likely to get an immediate response of, "You've got to be kidding!" Nonetheless, this very same idea was included in today's reading. Actually, the key verse in this section on relationships is:

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21

Think this through with me:

- Submission, one to another, is an umbrella that covers the three relationship categories that follow: husband and wife; father and children; master and servants.
- Notice, it is not couched in terms of *if they deserve it*. On the contrary, it is something that we are to do as unto the Lord!
- Now you might be thinking, "How can everyone submit?" The answer is very straightforward and largely missing from our current culture wars. Relational success is fundamentally dependent upon submission to role and responsibility.

Within this paradigm, the wife is to submit to the husband's leadership in the home. But, at the same time, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church! To do so will, most definitely, require the husband to subordinate the independent use of his time, energy, resources, and thought-life to sacrificially love his wife. Frankly, given the example of Christ which he is to follow, the husband has a much more challenging obligation than does his wife.

Continued on the next page.

Lessons in Ephesians

Tuesday, June 2:

Read Colossians 3:16-41 (Continued)

The exact same thing is true of properly raising children. You cannot nurture and develop them unless you are in submission to their needs at the expense of your own! Are you beginning to see how this works?

In closing for today, two things to note:

1. Isn't this exactly how God would do it? Notice how much different this approach is than the *me-first* attitude of the world.
2. Is it any coincidence that this instruction on functional relationships through submission of self immediately follows the section on the filling of the Holy Spirit? I think not, for that is the only way this type of relationship is going to happen!



Lessons in Ephesians

Wednesday, June 3: Read Ephesians 4:1-13

One point of application from yesterday's text: Show me dissension and discord anywhere in the Church, marriage, or family settings, and I will show you two failures:

1. Walking by the Spirit
2. Subordinating one's own desires

Let me again remind you that the filling of the Spirit and the command to *submit to one another* are both in the text of Ephesians Chapter 5 as well as in today's reading:

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Ephesians 4:2

Subordination of self is necessary to display the humility, gentleness, and the love of I Corinthians 13, then:

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Ephesians 4:3

There is no way to keep the unity of the Spirit apart from the filling of the Spirit. So, what an excellent diagnostic tool we have. The next time you recognize dissension or discord in your marriage, a family setting, or even in church, it is most likely for one of these two reasons. Either, sin has caused the loss of the filling of the Holy Spirit, or there is unwillingness to have a sacrificial spirit.

I am not suggesting that you look for these warning signs in others, rather keep a close watch on yourself. For it is just so easy for us to become self-centered. If we are in the center of discord, that is very likely the problem. Get away for a moment, ask the Lord to point out any areas of sin, confess as needed, and get back to walking in the Spirit. The unity of the Spirit beats discord and dissension every time!

Lessons in Ephesians

Thursday, June 4: Read Proverbs 31

I am not the least bit hesitant to hold up God's guidance for marriage as contained in Ephesians 5, for truly it is something wonderful to behold! In fact, I love this passage for the way it contrasts the marvelous and corrective nature of the Spirit-filled life with the ways of the world!

Let me show you what I mean. As we have seen, the woman is directed to subordinate herself to her own husband as to the Lord—in the same way that the church is to subordinate itself to Christ. This gives us a functional relationship in simple recognition that, within any organization, you cannot go two different ways at the same time. When we get to the man, he is told to love his wife as Christ loved the Church—that means sacrificially and with her best interests in mind. (Men, if you don't have a plan for the development of your wife—you are outside of the will of God in keeping with Ephesians Chapter 5!)

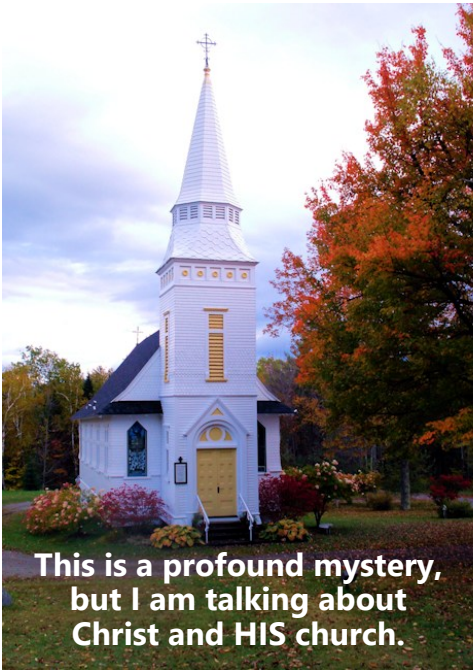
Here is the short version of what we have learned: The woman says, "OK, you lead the way and I'll follow." The man says, "OK, I'll look out for your growth and development—your best interests, so that you are better off under my leadership than outside of it." And, both partners seek to accomplish these commitments through the enablement of the Holy Spirit. Tell me, what does the world have to offer in comparison to that?

The world tells us that marriage is two individuals trying to self-actualize. The Bible talks about function and harmony and then paints a picture of a woman in this kind of setting as within the text of Proverbs 31. What a marvelous outcome for both the man and the woman! God is the author of marriage—why would we think He doesn't know best!

Lessons in Ephesians

Friday, June 5: Read Acts 20

The portion of Ephesians Chapter 5 that has been driving our investigations for the past few days is about the worthy walk as it relates to relationships—particularly marriage. However, in the middle of a section that likens the husband's love for his wife to that of Christ for the Church, we find this statement:



**This is a profound mystery,
but I am talking about
Christ and HIS church.**

**This is a profound
mystery ... Ephesians 5:32**

It most certainly is a mystery how a husband could hope to love his wife as Christ loves His bride. But then the text continues on to say something unexpected in the same verse:

**... but I am talking about
Christ and the Church.**

Not only is God, through Paul, giving us guidance on the marriage relationship, but He is also

revealing something to us about the unique and special nature of the relationship between Christ and His Church. Let's investigate this:

- There is meant to be an intimacy of relationship between the believer and Jesus Christ that is unique and unparalleled in any form of religion!

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Lessons in Ephesians

Friday, June 5: Read Acts 20 (Continued)

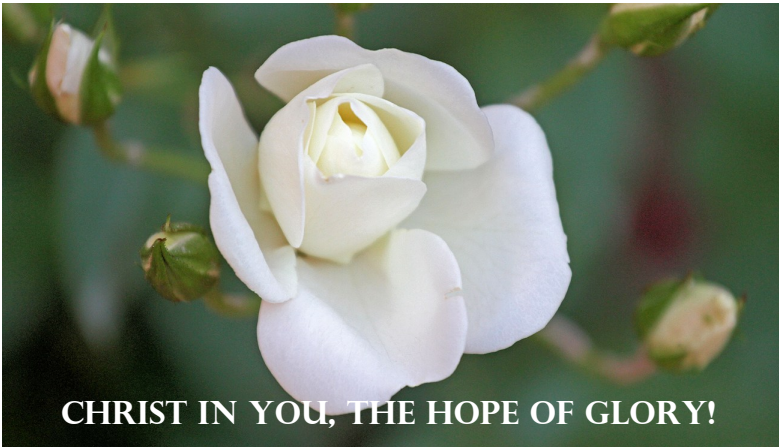
To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

The very God of glory is residing in each and every believer. How amazing!

- Now the above verse speaks to the individual, but our passage in Ephesians expands this to consider the corporate—the Church, the Bride of Christ! It is this Church that God intends to be holy and blameless in His sight—*without spot or blemish*. Consider how precious to Christ is His Church—for it is the Church:

... which He bought with His own blood. Acts 20:28

There is a great mystery here, which we will consider further on Monday.



Lessons in Ephesians

Monday, June 8:

Read Revelation 19:1-14

We ended Friday with the truth that the Church was bought with the blood of Christ and so it is precious to Him. Today, we will see what more we can learn about this precious Bride of Christ.

- The Church has one foundation:

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:11

- The Church is a mystery:

... by revelation He made known to me the mystery ... which in other ages was not made known ... that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery ... that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the Church ... Ephesians 3:3-10

A mystery is something that was hidden in the past (Old Testament) but is now revealed (at Pentecost).

- The Church is a masterpiece. It is neither Plan B nor an afterthought!

For we (the Church) are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:10

Continued on the next page.

Lessons in Ephesians

Monday, June 8:

Read Revelation 19:1-14 (Continued)

- Who do you choose to head up something like the Church?

And He (God) put all things under His (the Lord Jesus Christ's) feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 1:22-23

There is no one else so eminently qualified.

- What do you suppose happens when the Church loses its way?

"Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love ... If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place."

Revelation 2:4-5

- Lastly, with such a glorious standing, what kind of future do you suppose is in store for the Church? We saw a glimpse in today's reading:

Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude ... shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready ... Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!"

Revelation 19:6-9



Blessings from the Psalms

Tuesday, June 9: Read Psalm 14

Within the Book of Psalms, Psalm 14 is written from the perspective of the Jew regarding those who reject the God of Abraham and seek to take advantage of the Jewish people. This psalm is meant to encourage the Jewish people in the face of persecution by their many enemies—not unlike today. It is encouraging for the persecuted to know that: *evildoers never learn, the Lord is a refuge for His people, and the Lord restores the fortunes of His people.*

Note how the Apostle Paul makes use of this very psalm to make a larger point about the human race. In the first three chapters of Romans, he makes the case that mankind is lost and in need of a Savior. He proves this is true for the immoral man (no surprise there), the moral man, and the religious man. He claims that all three categories of mankind are unrighteous before a holy God:

“There is none righteous, no, not one ...” Romans 3:10

Then he goes on to quote extensively from Psalm 14:

“The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

Psalm 14:2-3; Romans 3:11-12

This can be a bitter pill to swallow, especially for the moral or religious individual, but the Bible seems quite clear.

Continued on the next page.

Blessings from the Psalms

Tuesday, June 9: Read Psalm 14

(Continued)

You see the real issue is not whether or not we are better than some other individual, but whether we will be able to stand before a perfectly holy God. Let me suggest that Romans 3 and Psalm 14 make it clear that we will never be able to do so in our own righteousness. That is why God's

plan of salvation includes sharing His righteousness with us:

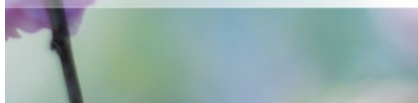
... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. ... Romans 3:22

One more observation: When we reject God's evaluation of our condition, it is like saying God's opinion doesn't matter or acting as if He doesn't really exist. Should we do so, rather than humbling ourselves before a perfectly holy God, we have just played the fool as Psalm 14:1 makes perfectly clear!



ROMANS 3:22 WEB

even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe. For there is no distinction,



Blessings from the Psalms

Wednesday, June 10: Read Psalm 16

I find the story of much of my life in Psalm 16, as well as great encouragement for what lies ahead. Allow me to show you what I mean:

- I have reached the age where I have learned there is really only one safe place:

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Psalm 16:1

- As for my past life:

I said to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."

Psalm 16:2

As I look back, the good things that have come my way—every single one of them—have the Lord's hand upon them.

- I have learned to be careful and choose wisely:

The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods" but in contrast, Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup; You have made my lot secure.

Psalm 16:4-5

- What about challenges that might lie ahead?

I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

Psalm 16:8

Continued on the next page.

Blessings from the Psalms

Wednesday, June 10: Read Psalm 16 (Continued)

- And should you ask regarding my hope for the future?

... my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices ... because you will not abandon me to the grave ... Psalm 16:9-10

In context this is speaking of Jesus. Since I share His life, His home, and will one day have a body like His, my God will not abandon me to the grave either. That's a living hope!

- In summary, allow me to bear witness to my Savior:

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.

Psalm 16:11

The Lord made clear to me the path of my life when I was 20 years old. Specifically, I understood that I was a sinner in need of a Savior—and Jesus was the Savior I needed! He accomplished all of the *work* of salvation at the cross, and my part was to put my faith in the person of Jesus and His finished work. I responded in faith, and my Savior has proved Himself faithful over and over again! There is no Savior like the Lord Jesus Christ!



Blessings from the Psalms

Thursday, June 11: Read Psalm 18

Psalm 18 is David's testimony to the faithfulness of God in his life. If we will trust Him as David did, we too can have a testimony like David's. Allow me to point out a few of the blessings of trusting our great God.

First, David faced so many challenges as a young man—can you imagine having a head of state, with his full army, seeking to kill you? And what did David find?

I love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:1-2

David found that the Lord was willing to be his strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, refuge, shield, salvation, and stronghold. The Lord desires to be all of these things for us as well—if we will just trust Him.

Second, sometimes we find ourselves in desperate need of deliverance:

He reached down from on high and took hold of me; He drew me out of deep waters ... He brought me into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me. Psalm 18:16,19

Third, the world always wants to know why? Why should we trust God rather than ourselves?

As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him. For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God? Psalm 18:30-31

Continued on the next page.

Blessings from the Psalms

Thursday, June 11: Read Psalm 18

(Continued)

There you have it: His way is perfect, His Word is flawless, He is the One true God, and there is no other. Will you find this kind of perfection, refuge, and Savior in the world? If you have looked for it there, then you know the answer is "*No—never!*"

At this point I hope we share the thoughts of the psalmist:

The Lord lives! Praise be to my Rock! Exalted be God my Savior! ... Therefore I will praise You among the nations, O Lord; I will sing praises to Your name. Psalm 18:46,49



Blessings from the Psalms

Friday, June 12: Read Psalm 19

Psalm 19 stands out for the way it beautifully and so powerfully bears witness to two things: God as Creator and the exalted status of His Word. The psalm begins:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.

Psalm 19:1-3

The *Cosmos* declares the glory of God! The very origin of the word *cosmos* refers to an orderly arrangement of something. How ironic that we navigate by the stars and can establish a calendar by them, yet at the same time proclaim in the *halls of learning* that they are nothing but the random outcome of a huge *bang*.

In one fell swoop Psalm 19 makes clear the point of stellar creation. The psalm declares that God is behind such an awesome creation and it declares His corresponding glory.

Then, a dramatic shift occurs in Verse 7, the psalm switches topics to the Word of God. Consider a few of the praises for the Word of God in this psalm:

The law of the Lord is perfect ... The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy ... The precepts of the Lord are right ...

Psalm 19:7-8

And, because they are these things, Psalm 19 Verses 7-8 also tell that they: *revive the soul, are trustworthy, and make wise the simple.*

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Blessings from the Psalms

Friday, June 12: Read Psalm 19

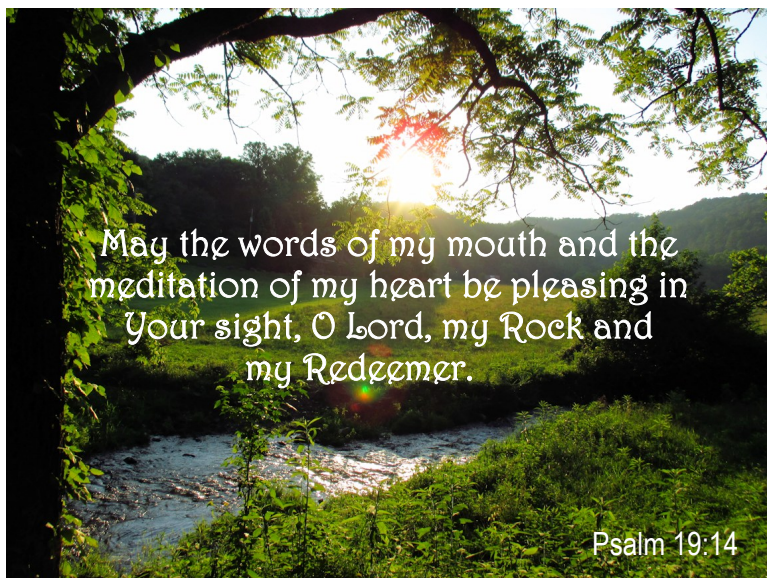
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There is much more! Perhaps you are wondering about all the different terms employed in this psalm: Law, statutes, precepts, and so on. In the Hebrew language there are certainly shades of meaning associated with these words—everything from firm commands to principles. At this point, it is probably best just to think of them as different aspects of God's revelation to man.

The message to us is: Value this Word for what it is—the mind of Christ revealed and preserved for us. With that in mind, it is no wonder the psalmist prayed (and we should too):

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Psalm 19:14



Blessings from the Psalms

Monday, June 15: Read Psalm 27

I Samuel 13:14 reveals to us that Samuel told King Saul:

“... the Lord has sought out a man after His own heart and appointed him leader of His people.”

Acts 13:22 names David as that individual. What an amazing description! What a testimony when God Himself declares an individual to be a man (or woman) after His own heart. What does it take to be seen by God as such an individual?

To begin with, like David, it must be someone who has turned to the Lord for their eternal salvation:

The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? Psalm 27:1

Of course, there are many things we could point to in David's life for consideration, for example, his faith in the Lord, even as a teenager, in overcoming the bear, the lion, and Goliath. We could cite his faith in the promises of God to establish him as king, even though Saul sought his life for years. We could continue to consider his character, ability to lead and inspire others, and many other things. But, let me suggest an often overlooked aspect of David, clearly revealed in Psalm 27, that I would suggest is part of what makes David a man after God's own heart. Consider the desire of David's heart:

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple. Psalm 27:4

Continued on the next page.

Blessings from the Psalms

Monday, June 15: Read Psalm 27

(Continued)

What do you see here in the heart of David? Let me suggest the answer is one of the things that makes him a man after God's own heart! I see a deep desire to be close to God, to see Him as He is, and to know Him more intimately. Let me suggest this is a description of worship.

So, David is a man after God's own heart because of his longing to be caught up in the worship of his God! Do we desire to be a man or a woman after God's heart? Then let me suggest we should equally desire to be caught up in worship. This isn't some kind of mystical experience! It is a desire to, first of all, be in His presence. We can do this because He has called us to *Come* and *Abide*! (Matthew

11:28-29, John 15:4-5)

Once in His presence, we are called to know Him more fully. Isn't that what's on Paul's mind:

I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings ... Philippians 3:10

We can follow the example of both David and Paul as we come to the Word of God on a daily

basis—for it is the *mind of Christ*! It is no wonder we are called to let the Word of God *dwell richly within*. (Colossians 3:16) Psalm 27 is one of my favorite calls to worship. I trust it will call you to mentally *gaze upon the beauty* of your Savior as well.



The Gospel of John

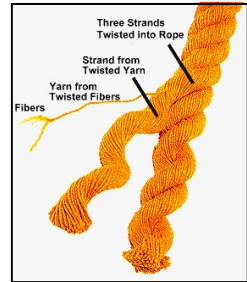
Tuesday, June 16:

Read Ecclesiastes 4

By now you have come to realize my somewhat contrary nature, for today we start a new study in the Gospel of John by reading the fourth chapter of Ecclesiastes. Consider Ecclesiastes 4:12:

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

This passage, in context, is dispensing wisdom regarding the topic of personal defense. However, in order to get the point across, it quickly draws upon an observation we have all seen in practice, specifically regarding the strength found in a multi-strand rope. We are all familiar with the twisting of yarns to form strands and the weaving of strands to form rope. Although the individual yarns may be easily broken, the finished rope is very strong! From this simple principle, we get everything from wire cables strong enough to support massive suspension bridges to towing hawsers strong enough to tow huge tankers.



So what does this have to do with the Gospel of John? In the same way that a *cord of many strands* can provide great strength, John is going to skillfully weave together a number of strands within his gospel account. The person of Jesus, His work as Savior, and the needs of lost mankind are presented with such clarity that you would think God Himself is behind the message! And, of course, He is!

And so now we have the title of our study: *The Gospel of John: A Cord of Many Strands*.

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, June 17: Read John 20

John Chapter 20 not only reveals to us one of the things we can expect to find described throughout John's Gospel (miracles), it also reveals to us several of the *strands*.

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

John 20:30-31



The Feeding of the Five Thousand (The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes) James Tissot

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, June 17: Read John 20

(Continued)

The first thing that we notice is that John was selective in recording just a few (seven) of the many miracles performed by Jesus. The purpose in recording these select miracles was so that his audience—the readers of his gospel—would believe that Jesus is both the divine Son of God and the Savior sent by God. Furthermore, life, eternal life as we shall see, is the blessing given to those who will believe.

There you have it—two of the strands around which John’s Gospel is constructed:

- Jesus is both God and Savior.
- Belief in this Jesus changes everything!

Now clearly John 20:31 is saying that Jesus is the Divine Son of God but what I want you to know, before we even turn to Chapter 1, is that John is going to emphasize this truth over and over again throughout his Gospel. In the same way, the concept of *faith in Christ* is another of the strands around which the entire Gospel is constructed.

By the way, it is not faith in a purely human Jesus, who couldn’t perform miracles and who was a good teacher but a confused man—or any of the erroneous constructs of our day. It is faith in this Jesus, the one revealed in the Gospel of John, the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

The Gospel of John

Thursday, June 18: Read John 1:1-18

If we are right about the strands, wouldn't you expect to see them introduced in Chapter 1? Take a look at Verses 1-3, 14, and 16-18. In these seven verses, you have a flow of ideas that constitute one of the most succinct and content-rich statements of truth in all of Scripture. Let me begin to walk you through it.

- **In the beginning ...** You now have the attention of every Jewish person in the audience, for this is the exact same way their Scriptures begin in Genesis 1:1.
- **... was the Word ...** You now have the attention of Jew and Gentile alike—especially those who had been exposed to Greek philosophy because to the Jew, the *word* was an expression of who God was.

By the Word of the LORD were the heavens made, their starry host by the breath of His mouth. Psalm 33:6

To the Greek, *the word*, or *logos*, was the impersonal essence of the universe. In other words, the order and structure so evident in the universe caused them to believe that something was behind the material. Now follow carefully what John is saying: go back to the beginning of all things and you will find both the Word and God, face-to-face with each other, and that means coequal.

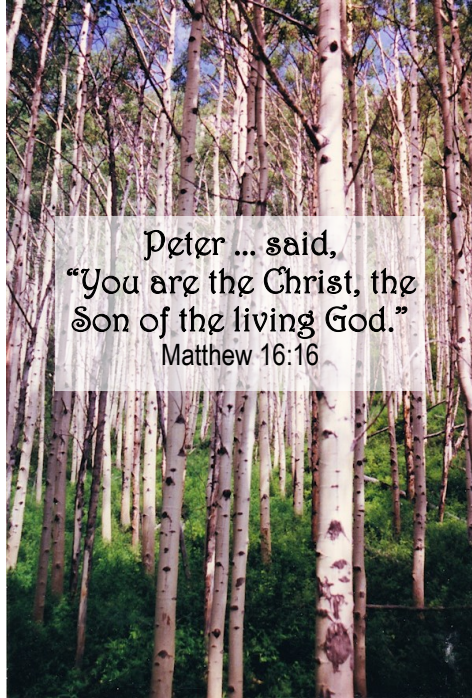
The Gospel of John

Thursday, June 18: Read John 1:1-18
(Continued)

- **Through Him all things were made ...**
The pronoun Him is a reference to the Word, so it is the Logos who created all things. John has made the clearest possible statement about who Jesus is—coequal and coeternal with God (the Father) and the Creator of all things.

Notice how, right from the beginning of the book, John is developing the first strand in his powerful argument meant to draw unbelievers to the Father and strengthen the faith of believers!

Jesus is God and, as we will see later in this chapter, clearly declared to be **Savior!**



The Gospel of John

Friday, June 19: Read I Timothy 6

So far we have a hint of two of John's strands: Jesus is God and Savior and Belief in this Jesus changes everything! Let me introduce you to a third strand in today's reading:

... God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see ...

I Timothy 6:15-16

In our previous reading of John 1:18 we should recall:

No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known.

If we put these together, we have a very important truth. God is Spirit and lives in unapproachable light. However, the glory of God has come to this earth in the person of Jesus Christ. When we see Christ, we see the Father. (John 14:9) One of the roles of the Son is to reveal the Father to us, as well as to carry out the Father's plan of redemption for lost mankind. This brings us to a third strand of John's Gospel: The intimacy, congruence, and single-mindedness of purpose within the Trinity!

Over and over in his Gospel, John makes it clear that, when Jesus speaks, He is communicating the mind of the Father.

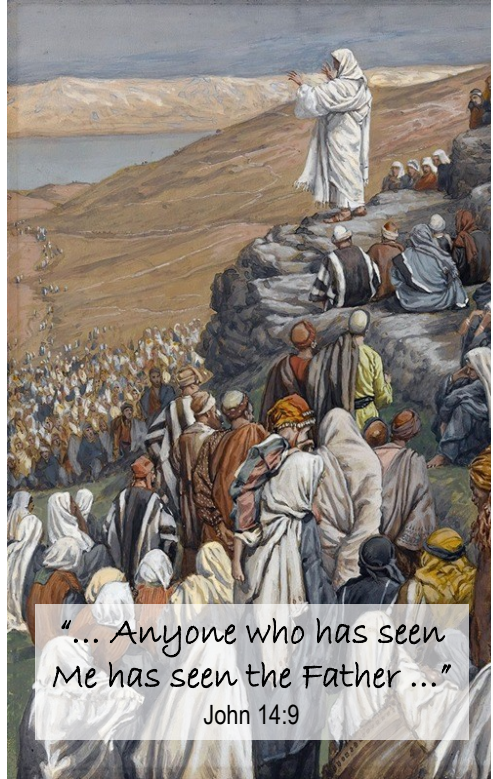
The Gospel of John

Friday, June 19: Read I Timothy 6 (Continued)

When He acts, He is carrying out the will of the Father. Jesus is very direct about this:

“... Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father ... The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work.” John 14:9-10

When Jesus speaks, He is communicating the words of the Father. When He acts, He is carrying out the plan of the Father. When He reveals His heart, He is revealing the heart of the Father, for He and the Father are one!



*“... Anyone who has seen
Me has seen the Father ...”*
John 14:9

The Gospel of John

Monday, June 22: Read John 1:19-51

Consider the declaration of John the Baptist in John 1:29:

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Mankind can only interact with truth stated like this in one of two ways: belief or unbelief! I am not yet saying that John has provided proof that Jesus is the Son of God or that He is the Savior. Rather, I am saying that he has made dogmatic assertions that are not the least ambiguous right from the first chapter of his Gospel. He is going to provide proof in the chapters to come. In the meantime, he is going to continue to unwaveringly make these same claims in one form or another in nearly every chapter. We have only one of two things to do with these claims—believe them or reject them. There is no middle ground!

This brings us to the fourth and final strand about which John has constructed his Gospel: Unbelief is the one thing still keeping man from his relationship with God! We have already seen hints of this earlier in the chapter:

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.

John 1:9-11

By sending His Son to rescue lost mankind, even to the point of going to the cross on our behalf, God has done everything possible to bring us back to Himself! But one obstacle still remains: Will man respond in faith to what God has done?

Look for this issue throughout John's Gospel.

The Gospel of John

Tuesday, June 23: Read John 21

I want to spend a few more days building your appreciation for the Gospel of John. Later, we will again enjoy many more days within the confines of John's gospel.

We have already seen John 20:30-31, which makes it clear that John is going to help develop his message by sharing with us a number of the miracles performed by Jesus, which include

turning water into wine at Cana, the healing of an official's son, healing a crippled man, feeding of the 5000, walking on water, healing a blind man, and raising Lazarus from the dead.



In order to build his case, John is going to include some of the greatest discourses of all Scripture: Christ's discussion with Nicodemus, followed by His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, and, of course, the Upper Room Discourse of John 14-17. Furthermore, there will be dramatic confrontations and singular claims. As an example, in one of these dramatic confrontations, Jesus will tell a crowd that He lived before Abraham and was the one speaking to Moses from the burning bush. (John 8:58) At this point the crowd was ready to stone him, but He walked through the crowd untouched.

Continued on the next page.

The Gospel of John

Tuesday, June 23: Read John 21 (Continued)

There is also a great deal of richness built into the singular claims that Jesus made concerning himself, all of which are built around the framework of the “*I am ...*” statements. As examples, recall: *I am the Bread of Life; I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; I am the Good Shepherd.*



“I am the Good Shepherd.”

In time, we will investigate all of these amazing components of John’s Gospel. Hopefully, we will come to realize how skillfully John has braided these strands together to show, among other things, that Jesus is the Divine representative from the Father. This knowledge is meant to prompt our faith that we might be the recipients of eternal

life. The Gospel of John is packed with truths that are meant to prompt our faith.

I trust that, in the lessons ahead, our investigation of John’s Gospel will prompt or strengthen a faith response in each of our hearts. Let me just close today with a quote from the end of John’s Gospel:

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.

John 21:25

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, June 24: Read II Peter 1

There are those who say, "John's Gospel is so different from the other three that it doesn't really belong or fit." Others say that it was written many centuries after the apostles by one of the schools of theology trying to make a name for itself. What does the Bible say?

... Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

II Peter 1:21

Take any event you like. How often do the accounts of the eyewitnesses of the event corroborate in every detail? The answer is never. In fact, the men and women I know in law enforcement typically prefer physical evidence over eyewitness accounts because they do not have to deal with conflicting details when trying to prove their cases.

Furthermore, what do you think happens when, instead of a single event, you are talking about a period of three years of ministry under ever-increasing scrutiny? You would, of course, expect differences in perspective and personality to show up in written accounts. Perhaps the following quote from famed archeologist William F. Albright will help reveal the shallowness of the thinking of those who find Gospel differences problematic:

One of the strangest assumptions of critical NT scholars and theologians is that the mind of Jesus was so limited that any apparent contrast between John and the Synoptics must be due to differences between early Christian theologians. Every great thinker and personality is going to be interpreted differently by different friends and hearers.

Continued on the next page.

The Gospel of John

Wednesday, June 24: Read II Peter 1 (Continued)

Now in the case of the Gospel of John, it is quite distinct from the other three Gospels which are collectively called the Synoptic Gospels. In fact, the Gospel of John only shares 10% of its content in common with the other three gospels, which is a much lower percentage of content than the other three share with one another. To address this, consider that John's Gospel was likely written much later than the other three—near the end of John's life.

As a result, he had many years to mull over what might be important to include in his Gospel account, especially as it now might apply to the fledgling church. In addition, just consider the items that are unique to John's Gospel:

- Chapter 2: Miracle at Cana
- Chapter 3: Nicodemus Discourse
- Chapter 4: Samaritan Woman Discourse
- Chapter 11: Raising of Lazarus
- Chapter 13: Foot Washing
- Chapter 13: Upper Room Discourse

What an invaluable contribution, and what a blessing to us that God saw fit to move John, through the Holy Spirit, to include these precious accounts in the Canon of Scripture. Although the inauguration of communion is not included in John's account, the washing of the disciples' feet by our Lord, recorded only in John's Gospel, should be of similar value to the Christian!

Readings in Romans

Thursday, June 25: Read Deuteronomy 7:6

We closed our previous reading in Romans 8 with the wonderful truth that absolutely nothing can:

**... separate us from the love of God which is in Christ
Jesus our Lord. ...**

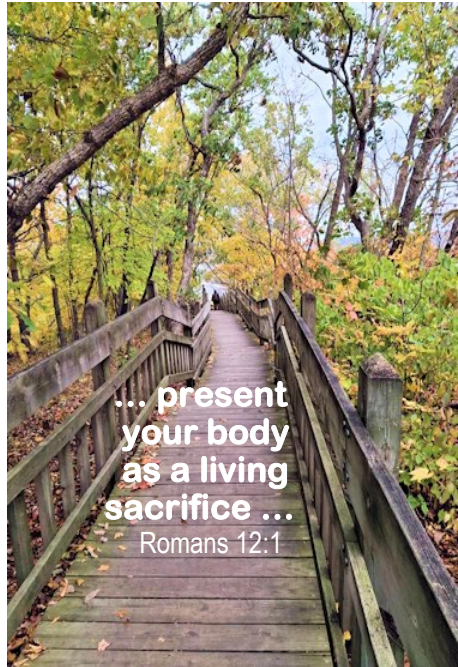
Roman 8:35-39

It is very easy to move directly to the content of Romans Chapter 12 by simply inserting the words: *Because of this:*

**I beseech you therefore,
brethren, by the
mercies of God, that
you present your bodies
a living sacrifice ...**

Romans 12:1

As we shall see, the spirituality of Romans 6-8 flows very naturally into the sacrificial service of Romans 12-14. There is just one difficulty with this analysis—Chapter 12 doesn't immediately follow Chapter 8. There are three chapters intervening, and their content doesn't fit particularly well with what comes before or after.



Continued on the next page.

Readings in Romans

Thursday, June 25:

Read Deuteronomy 7:6 (Continued)

How are we to make sense of this unexpected insertion of a brand new subject:

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved.” Romans 10:1

There is a partial answer. After the thorough explanation of justification in Chapters 3-5, and the in-depth development of New Testament spirituality in Chapters 6-8, the subject is now Israel! It remains so for the entirety of Chapters 9-11. Let’s ask the question: *Why, at the conclusion of perhaps the most comprehensive doctrinal treatise on the Christian Life in the Bible, does the subject of Israel—God’s chosen people—become the focus for three straight chapters?*

Here is the reason I think God directed Paul to insert these three chapters on Israel:

The matter of the Jews and their certain future are part of the Book of Romans because Israel and the Church are separate entities within God’s plans—each with their own storyline. Further, God wants the Church to be very clear on this matter, so He moves from New Testament spirituality, to Israel, and then back to New Testament sacrificial service.

There is simply no way we can miss the importance of Israel’s future when reading through Romans. God made absolutely sure of that! And, of course, we can’t miss it when reading the Old Testament either, as today’s one-verse reading makes clear. So, in the midst of God’s guidance to the Church, let’s remember there is more than one *storyline* in the unfolding of God’s plan of redemption—as we shall see in the days ahead.

Readings in Romans

Friday, June 26:

Read Isaiah 2:2-5, 9:6-7

Yesterday I introduced the idea that both Israel and the Church have their own *storyline*. By that term I simply refer to a readily-discernible place in God's plan for the ages. It is not hard to show you. When it comes to Israel: we have the call of Abraham in Genesis 12; the promise of land, nation, and blessing to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob repeated throughout Genesis; the preservation of Jacob's family in moving them to Egypt, and then God's mighty removal of a nation 400 years later!

We have the history of the kingdom of Israel along with their exile for sin and eventual restoration to the land. Within this history is the First Advent of the promised Messiah and the unfolding of God's salvation for both Jew and



Gentile. We still have the promise of a kingdom over which the Lord Jesus will rule centered in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 2, 9) And, we still have the promise regarding the Jews yet to turn to their Messiah:

And so all Israel will be saved ...

Romans 11:26

Of course, this refers to those who soften their hard hearts and turn to the person and work of Jesus Christ in faith.

Continued on the next page.

Readings in Romans

Friday, June 26:

Read Isaiah 2:2-5, 9:6-7 (Continued)

On the other hand, the Church has its own *storyline*: It began on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2) While Israel is the unfaithful wife, the Church is seen as the *Bride of Christ*. (Ephesians 5). The Church does not have the promise of an earthly kingdom to come, for every church-age saint has become a citizen of heaven. (Philippians 3:20). In the meantime, we simply long for:

... the Blessed Hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, Titus 2:13

These are two quite distinct storylines—each with precious promises of fulfillment for the future. The place we can go astray is to assume, because God is currently working through His Church, that He has somehow forgotten about Israel or permanently set Israel aside. Our God will be faithful to every promise He has ever made, and there are many yet to be fulfilled to ethnic Israel.

Some Bible scholars have even gone so far as to suggest that the Church has replaced Israel. This grievous error is often stated like this on any number of websites that support something called *replacement theology*.

The church is true Israel and Christians are God's true "Jews" today.

Don't fall for this grievous error! As we read through Romans, we are going to find the Bible says no such thing! In fact, the Bible maintains a clear distinction between Israel and the Church to this very day.

Readings in Romans

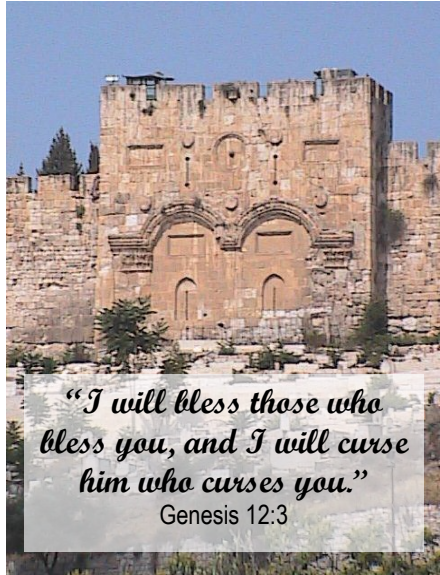
Monday, June 29: Read Ephesians 3:1-12

There is a great deal of confusion among Christians regarding Israel's certain future, and the clear distinctions between the Church and Israel. This is especially problematic should the Church ever begin to side with the world against Israel. If Israel has indeed remained God's chosen people, then to side against Israel would be to side with the world against God. May the Church never be guilty of any such thing!

Let me show you how, in particular, the New Testament treats Israel and the

Church as completely separate entities—each with their own unfolding *storyline*:

First, in God's unfolding plan of redemption, He chose to bless a specific people descended from Abraham. He has made a number of unilateral covenantal promises to them that include status as a nation, land, and a king. (These promises are unilateral because they depend upon God's faithfulness and not Israel's.) These promises are pending. In fact, they are not going to be fulfilled until the return of Jesus Christ.



Continued on the next page.

Readings in Romans

Monday, June 29: Read Ephesians 3:1-12

Second, in the meantime, God is currently working through an entity that was hidden in the past but is now revealed—the Church. God is intent on putting His wisdom on display through the Church:

His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ephesians 3:10-11

God also has plans for the Church to provide a *Bride* for His resurrected Son:

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife ... This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the Church.

Ephesians 5:31-32

Finally, even at this early stage you should notice that one really cannot become or replace the other. Does the Bride of Christ have need of a land, nation, and king? In fact, look at how Paul handles this at the start of Romans:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 1:16

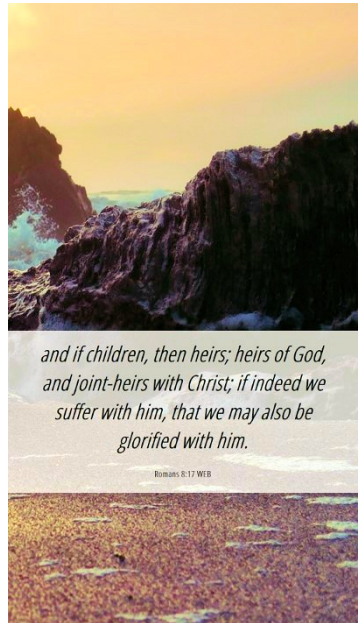
The word translated *Greek* is really the word for Gentile. The contrast is between Jew and Gentile or the composition of Israel and the Church. Although both are saved by the work of Christ, they clearly remain separate entities. More to come!

Readings in Romans

Tuesday, June 30:

Read Revelation 19:11-20:6

We'll carry on where we left off yesterday. First, if we try to either merge Israel and the Church or have one replace the other, we do grievous harm to the plain language of Scripture. For example, Israel is clearly an earthly entity, while the Church is heavenly. Israel is a nation with clearly spelled out geographic boundaries, while the Church is a *body* with world-wide membership. Israel longs for her Messiah to rule over her, the Church has God within and longs to be like Him. Israel longs for the King to come and reign, the Church longs for her Savior to come and gather His Bride to Himself and take her to His Father's house.



There are many more clear distinctions between Israel and the Church. One theologian sums it up this way:

The effort to make the Church all, instead of preserving the true dignity of the Church as the heavenly spouse of the Lord Jesus, lowers her to the position of earthly Israel, a people reigned over, not reigning with Him, His inheritance, not heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Continued on the next page.

Readings in Romans

Tuesday, June 30:

Read Revelation 19:11-20:6 (Continued)

This whole issue is more serious than we might realize when it comes to Bible interpretation. Let me prove that to you by going back to a well-known passage in Isaiah:

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 9:6-7

This passage is clearly understood to refer to Jesus—we read it every Christmas. With this in mind, move all of the way forward to the end of the Bible in Revelation 19:15:

Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter.

Both Isaiah 9 and Revelation speak very clearly about the Lord Jesus coming to literally reign upon this earth over the nations. Yet many theologies dismiss the straight-forward nature of this language, denying that Jesus is coming to rule—and this in fulfillment to a promise to Israel. The reason they deny is that it doesn't fit their theology.

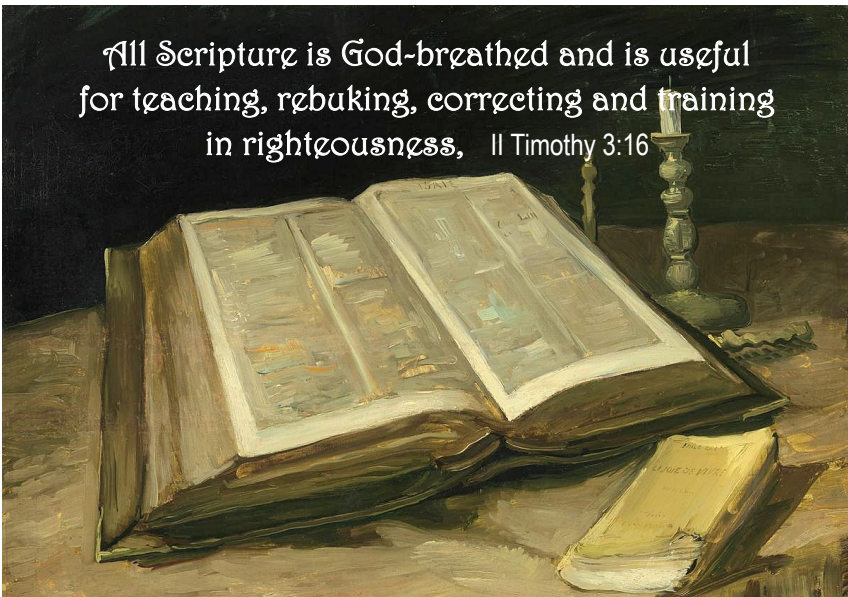
Readings in Romans

Tuesday, June 30:

Read Revelation 19:11-20:6 (Continued)

But here is the problem: Once you start dismissing the most natural interpretation of the language of Scripture, how do you know that any of its promises are true? How can you know that what the Bible says about our sins being forgiven, having a place in heaven, and a future resurrection body like that of our Savior are true? You can't.

Let me suggest that it is a much better approach to simply believe what the Bible clearly seems to say—whether it fits your theology or not!



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

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