

# Daily Office Readings, Year 1

## (Proper 26)

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 3**

### Psalm 64

1 Hear my voice, O God, when I complain; \*  
protect my life from fear of the enemy.

2 Hide me from the conspiracy of the wicked, \*  
from the mob of evildoers.

3 They sharpen their tongue like a sword, \*  
and aim their bitter words like arrows,

4 That they may shoot down the blameless from  
ambush; \*  
they shoot without warning and are not afraid.

5 They hold fast to their evil course; \*  
they plan how they may hide their snares.

6 They say, "Who will see us?  
who will find out our crimes? \*  
we have thought out a perfect plot."

7 The human mind and heart are a mystery; \*  
but God will loose an arrow at them,  
and suddenly they will be wounded.

8 He will make them trip over their tongues, \*  
and all who see them will shake their heads.

9 Everyone will stand in awe and declare God's  
deeds; \*  
they will recognize his works.

10 The righteous will rejoice in the Lord and put  
their trust in him, \*  
and all who are true of heart will glory.

### Psalm 65

1 You are to be praised, O God, in Zion; \*  
to you shall vows be performed in Jerusalem.

2 To you that hear prayer shall all flesh come, \*  
because of their transgressions.

3 Our sins are stronger than we are, \*  
but you will blot them out.

4 Happy are they whom you choose  
and draw to your courts to dwell there! \*  
they will be satisfied by the beauty of your house,  
by the holiness of your temple.

5 Awesome things will you show us in your  
righteousness,  
O God of our salvation, \*  
O Hope of all the ends of the earth  
and of the seas that are far away.

6 You make fast the mountains by your power; \*  
they are girded about with might.

7 You still the roaring of the seas, \*  
the roaring of their waves,  
and the clamor of the peoples.

8 Those who dwell at the ends of the earth will  
tremble at your  
marvelous signs; \*  
you make the dawn and the dusk to sing for joy.

9 You visit the earth and water it abundantly;  
you make it very plenteous; \*  
the river of God is full of water.

10 You prepare the grain, \*  
for so you provide for the earth.

11 You drench the furrows and smooth out the  
ridges; \*  
with heavy rain you soften the ground and bless its  
increase.

12 You crown the year with your goodness, \*  
and your paths overflow with plenty.

13 May the fields of the wilderness be rich for grazing, \*  
and the hills be clothed with joy.

14 May the meadows cover themselves with flocks,  
and the valleys cloak themselves with grain; \*  
let them shout for joy and sing.

## Nehemiah 6:1-19

Now when it was reported to Sanballat and Tobiah and to Geshem the Arab and to the rest of our enemies that I had built the wall and that there was no gap left in it (though up to that time I had not set up the doors in the gates), Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, ‘Come and let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.’ But they intended to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work and I cannot come down. Why should the work stop while I leave it to come down to you?’ They sent to me four times in this way, and I answered them in the same manner. In the same way Sanballat for the fifth time sent his servant to me with an open letter in his hand. In it was written, ‘It is reported among the nations—and Geshem also says it—that you and the Jews intend to rebel; that is why you are building the wall; and according to this report you wish to become their king. You have also set up prophets to proclaim in Jerusalem concerning you, “There is a king in Judah!” And now it will be reported to the king according to these words. So come, therefore, and let us confer together.’ Then I sent to him, saying, ‘No such things as you say have been done; you are inventing them out of your own mind’—for they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, ‘Their hands will drop from the work, and it will not be done.’ But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

One day when I went into the house of Shemaiah son of Delaiah son of Mehetabel, who was confined to his house, he said, ‘Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us close the doors of the temple, for they are coming to kill you; indeed, tonight they are coming to kill you.’ But I said, ‘Should a man like me run away? Would a man like me go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in!’ Then I perceived and saw that God had not sent him at all, but he had pronounced the

prophecy against me because Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. He was hired for this purpose, to intimidate me and make me sin by acting in this way, and so they could give me a bad name, in order to taunt me. Remember Tobiah and Sanballat, O my God, according to these things that they did, and also the prophetess Noadiah and the rest of the prophets who wanted to make me afraid.

So the wall was finished on the twenty-fifth day of the month Elul, in fifty-two days. And when all our enemies heard of it, all the nations around us were afraid and fell greatly in their own esteem; for they perceived that this work had been accomplished with the help of our God. Moreover, in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters to Tobiah, and Tobiah’s letters came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him, because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah son of Arah: and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam son of Berechiah. Also they spoke of his good deeds in my presence, and reported my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to intimidate me.

## Revelation 10:1-11

And I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire. He held a little scroll open in his hand. Setting his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, he gave a great shout, like a lion roaring. And when he shouted, the seven thunders sounded. And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down.’ Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and the land raised his right hand to heaven

and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it: ‘There will be no more delay, but in the days when the seventh angel is to blow his trumpet, the mystery of God will be fulfilled, as he announced to his servants the prophets.’

Then the voice that I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, 'Go, take the scroll that is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.' So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, 'Take it, and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.' So I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.

Then they said to me, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings.'

## Matthew 13:36-43

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, 'Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.' He answered, 'The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

### Psalms 68

1 Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; \*  
let those who hate him flee before him.

2 Let them vanish like smoke when the wind drives it away; \*  
as the wax melts at the fire, so let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

3 But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; \*  
let them also be merry and joyful.

4 Sing to God, sing praises to his Name;  
exalt him who rides upon the heavens; \*  
Yahweh is his Name, rejoice before him!

5 Father of orphans, defender of widows, \*  
God in his holy habitation!

6 God gives the solitary a home and brings forth  
prisoners into freedom; \*  
but the rebels shall live in dry places.

7 O God, when you went forth before your people, \*  
when you marched through the wilderness,

8 The earth shook, and the skies poured down rain,  
at the presence of God, the God of Sinai, \*  
at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

9 You sent a gracious rain, O God, upon your  
inheritance; \*  
you refreshed the land when it was weary.

10 Your people found their home in it; \*  
in your goodness, O God, you have made provision  
for the poor.

11 The Lord gave the word; \*  
great was the company of women who bore the  
tidings:

12 "Kings with their armies are fleeing away; \*  
the women at home are dividing the spoils."

13 Though you lingered among the sheepfolds, \*  
you shall be like a dove whose wings are covered  
with silver,  
whose feathers are like green gold.

14 When the Almighty scattered kings, \*  
it was like snow falling in Zalmon.

15 O mighty mountain, O hill of Bashan! \*  
O rugged mountain, O hill of Bashan!

16 Why do you look with envy, O rugged mountain,  
at the hill which God chose for his resting place? \*  
truly, the Lord will dwell there for ever.

17 The chariots of God are twenty thousand,  
even thousands of thousands; \*  
the Lord comes in holiness from Sinai.

18 You have gone up on high and led captivity  
captive;  
you have received gifts even from your enemies, \*  
that the Lord God might dwell among them.

19 Blessed be the Lord day by day, \*  
the God of our salvation, who bears our burdens.

20 He is our God, the God of our salvation; \*  
God is the Lord, by whom we escape death.

21 God shall crush the heads of his enemies, \*  
and the hairy scalp of those who go on still in their  
wickedness.

22 The Lord has said, "I will bring them back from  
Bashan; \*  
I will bring them back from the depths of the sea;

23 That your foot may be dipped in blood, \*  
the tongues of your dogs in the blood of your  
enemies."

24 They see your procession, O God, \*  
your procession into the sanctuary, my God and my  
King.

25 The singers go before, musicians follow after, \*  
in the midst of maidens playing upon the hand-  
drums.

26 Bless God in the congregation; \*  
bless the Lord, you that are of the fountain of Israel.

27 There is Benjamin, least of the tribes, at the  
head;  
the princes of Judah in a company; \*  
and the princes of Zebulon and Naphtali.

28 Send forth your strength, O God; \*  
establish, O God, what you have wrought for us.

29 Kings shall bring gifts to you, \*  
for your temple's sake at Jerusalem.

30 Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds, \*  
and the peoples, a herd of wild bulls with its calves.

31 Trample down those who lust after silver; \*  
scatter the peoples that delight in war.

32 Let tribute be brought out of Egypt; \*  
let Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God.

33 Sing to God, O kingdoms of the earth; \*  
sing praises to the Lord.

34 He rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; \*  
he sends forth his voice, his mighty voice.

35 Ascribe power to God; \*  
his majesty is over Israel;  
his strength is in the skies.

36 How wonderful is God in his holy places! \*  
the God of Israel giving strength and power to his  
people!  
Blessed be God!

## Nehemiah 12:27-31,42-47

Now at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they  
sought out the Levites in all their places, to bring  
them to Jerusalem to celebrate the dedication with  
rejoicing, with thanksgivings and with singing, with  
cymbals, harps, and lyres. The companies of the  
singers gathered together from the circuit around  
Jerusalem and from the villages of the  
Netophathites; also from Beth-gilgal and from the  
region of Geba and Azmaveth; for the singers had  
built for themselves villages around Jerusalem. And  
the priests and the Levites purified themselves; and  
they purified the people and the gates and the wall.

Then I brought the leaders of Judah up on to the  
wall, and appointed two great companies that gave  
thanks and went in procession. One went to the  
right on the wall to the Dung Gate; and Maaseiah,  
Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah,  
Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with

Jezrahiah as their leader. They offered great sacrifices that day and rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. The joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

On that day men were appointed over the chambers for the stores, the contributions, the first fruits, and the tithes, to gather into them the portions required by the law for the priests and for the Levites from the fields belonging to the towns; for Judah rejoiced over the priests and the Levites who ministered. They performed the service of their God and the service of purification, as did the singers and the gatekeepers, according to the command of David and his son Solomon. For in the days of David and Asaph long ago there was a leader of the singers, and there were songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. In the days of Zerubbabel and in the days of Nehemiah all Israel gave the daily portions for the singers and the gatekeepers. They set apart that which was for the Levites; and the Levites set apart that which was for the descendants of Aaron.

## Revelation 11:1-19

Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, 'Come and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months. And I will grant my two witnesses authority to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, wearing sackcloth.'

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; anyone who wants to harm them must be killed in this manner. They have authority to shut the sky, so that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire.

When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will make

war on them and conquer them and kill them, and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that is prophetically called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. For three and a half days members of the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb; and the inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and celebrate and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to the inhabitants of the earth.

But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and those who saw them were terrified. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, 'Come up here!' And they went up to heaven in a cloud while their enemies watched them. At that moment there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

The second woe has passed. The third woe is coming very soon.

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.'

Then the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshipped God, singing, 'We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign. The nations raged, but your wrath has come, and the time for judging the dead, for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints and all who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying those who destroy the earth.'

Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and

there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

## Matthew 13:44-52

‘The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

‘Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

‘Have you understood all this?’ They answered, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’

## WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5

### Psalms 119:73-96

73 Your hands have made me and fashioned me; \*  
give me understanding, that I may learn your commandments.

74 Those who fear you will be glad when they see me, \*  
because I trust in your word.

75 I know, O Lord, that your judgments are right \*  
and that in faithfulness you have afflicted me.

76 Let your loving-kindness be my comfort, \*  
as you have promised to your servant.

77 Let your compassion come to me, that I may live, \*  
for your law is my delight.

78 Let the arrogant be put to shame, for they wrong me with lies; \*  
but I will meditate on your commandments.

79 Let those who fear you turn to me, \*  
and also those who know your decrees.

80 Let my heart be sound in your statutes, \*  
that I may not be put to shame.

81 My soul has longed for your salvation; \*  
I have put my hope in your word.

82 My eyes have failed from watching for your promise, \*  
and I say, "When will you comfort me?"

83 I have become like a leather flask in the smoke, \*  
but I have not forgotten your statutes.

84 How much longer must I wait? \*  
when will you give judgment against those who persecute me?

85 The proud have dug pits for me; \*  
they do not keep your law.

86 All your commandments are true; \*  
help me, for they persecute me with lies.

87 They had almost made an end of me on earth, \*  
but I have not forsaken your commandments.

88 In your loving-kindness, revive me, \*  
that I may keep the decrees of your mouth.

89 O Lord, your word is everlasting; \*  
it stands firm in the heavens.

90 Your faithfulness remains from one generation to another; \*  
you established the earth, and it abides.

91 By your decree these continue to this day, \*  
for all things are your servants.

92 If my delight had not been in your law, \*  
I should have perished in my affliction.

93 I will never forget your commandments, \*  
because by them you give me life.

94 I am yours; oh, that you would save me! \*  
for I study your commandments.

95 Though the wicked lie in wait for me to destroy  
me, \*  
I will apply my mind to your decrees.

96 I see that all things come to an end, \*  
but your commandment has no bounds.

## Nehemiah 13:4-22

Now before this, the priest Eliashib, who was appointed over the chambers of the house of our God, and who was related to Tobiah, prepared for Tobiah a large room where they had previously put the grain-offering, the frankincense, the vessels, and the tithes of grain, wine, and oil, which were given by commandment to the Levites, singers, and gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests. While this was taking place I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of King Artaxerxes of Babylon I went to the king. After some time I asked leave of the king and returned to Jerusalem. I then discovered the wrong that Eliashib had done on behalf of Tobiah, preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God. And I was very angry, and I threw all the household furniture of Tobiah out of the room. Then I gave orders and they cleansed the chambers, and I brought back the vessels of the house of God, with the grain-offering and the frankincense.

I also found out that the portions of the Levites had not been given to them; so that the Levites and the singers, who had conducted the service, had gone back to their fields. So I remonstrated with the officials and said, 'Why is the house of God forsaken?' And I gathered them together and set them in their stations. Then all Judah brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses. And I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses the priest Shelemiah, the scribe Zadok, and Pedaiiah

of the Levites, and as their assistant Hanan son of Zaccur son of Mattaniah, for they were considered faithful; and their duty was to distribute to their associates. Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and do not wipe out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

In those days I saw in Judah people treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day; and I warned them at that time against selling food. Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of merchandise and sold them on the sabbath to the people of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I remonstrated with the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? Did not your ancestors act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.'

When it began to be dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the sabbath. And I set some of my servants over the gates, to prevent any burden from being brought in on the sabbath day. Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem once or twice. But I warned them and said to them, 'Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you.' From that time on they did not come on the sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the sabbath day holy. Remember this also in my favour, O my God, and spare me according to the greatness of your steadfast love.

## Revelation 12:1-12

A great portent appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pangs, in the agony of giving birth. Then another portent

appeared in heaven: a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, so that he might devour her child as soon as it was born. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. But her child was snatched away and taken to God and to his throne; and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there she can be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming,  
‘Now have come the salvation and the power  
and the kingdom of our God  
and the authority of his Messiah,  
for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown  
down,  
who accuses them day and night before our God.  
But they have conquered him by the blood of the  
Lamb  
and by the word of their testimony,  
for they did not cling to life even in the face of  
death.  
Rejoice then, you heavens  
and those who dwell in them!  
But woe to the earth and the sea,  
for the devil has come down to you  
with great wrath,  
because he knows that his time is short!’

## Matthew 13:53-58

When Jesus had finished these parables, he left that place.

He came to his home town and began to teach the people in their synagogue, so that they were astounded and said, ‘Where did this man get this wisdom and these deeds of power? Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas? And are not all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all this?’ And they took offence at him. But Jesus said to them, ‘Prophets are not without honour except in their own country and in their own house.’ And he did not do many deeds of power there, because of their unbelief.

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6

### Psalm 74

1 O God, why have you utterly cast us off? \*  
why is your wrath so hot against the sheep of your  
pasture?

2 Remember your congregation that you purchased  
long ago, \*  
the tribe you redeemed to be your inheritance,  
and Mount Zion where you dwell.

3 Turn your steps toward the endless ruins; \*  
the enemy has laid waste everything in your  
sanctuary.

4 Your adversaries roared in your holy place; \*  
they set up their banners as tokens of victory.

5 They were like men coming up with axes to a  
grove of trees; \*  
they broke down all your carved work with hatchets  
and hammers.

6 They set fire to your holy place; \*  
they defiled the dwelling-place of your Name  
and razed it to the ground.

7 They said to themselves, "Let us destroy them  
altogether." \*  
They burned down all the meeting-places of God in  
the land.



8 There are no signs for us to see;  
there is no prophet left; \*  
there is not one among us who knows how long.

9 How long, O God, will the adversary scoff? \*  
will the enemy blaspheme your Name for ever?

10 Why do you draw back your hand? \*  
why is your right hand hidden in your bosom?

11 Yet God is my King from ancient times, \*  
victorious in the midst of the earth.

12 You divided the sea by your might \*  
and shattered the heads of the dragons upon the  
waters;

13 You crushed the heads of Leviathan \*  
and gave him to the people of the desert for food.

14 You split open spring and torrent; \*  
you dried up ever-flowing rivers.

15 Yours is the day, yours also the night; \*  
you established the moon and the sun.

16 You fixed all the boundaries of the earth; \*  
you made both summer and winter.

17 Remember, O Lord, how the enemy scoffed, \*  
how a foolish people despised your Name.

18 Do not hand over the life of your dove to wild  
beasts; \*  
never forget the lives of your poor.

19 Look upon your covenant; \*  
the dark places of the earth are haunts of violence.

20 Let not the oppressed turn away ashamed; \*  
let the poor and needy praise your Name.

21 Arise, O God, maintain your cause; \*  
remember how fools revile you all day long.

22 Forget not the clamor of your adversaries, \*  
the unending tumult of those who rise up against  
you.

## Ezra 7:1-26

After this, in the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of the chief priest Aaron— this Ezra went up from Babylonia. He was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses that the Lord the God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all that he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was upon him.

Some of the people of Israel, and some of the priests and Levites, the singers and gatekeepers, and the temple servants also went up to Jerusalem, in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes. They came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king. On the first day of the first month the journey up from Babylon was begun, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, for the gracious hand of his God was upon him. For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach the statutes and ordinances in Israel.

This is a copy of the letter that King Artaxerxes gave to the priest Ezra, the scribe, a scholar of the text of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes for Israel: ‘Artaxerxes, king of kings, to the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven: Peace. And now I decree that any of the people of Israel or their priests or Levites in my kingdom who freely offers to go to Jerusalem may go with you. For you are sent by the king and his seven counsellors to make inquiries about Judah and Jerusalem according to the law of your God, which is in your hand, and also to convey the silver and gold that the king and his counsellors have freely offered to the God of Israel, whose dwelling is in Jerusalem, with all the silver and gold that you shall find in the whole province of Babylonia, and with the freewill-offerings of the people and the priests, given willingly for the house of their God in Jerusalem. With this money, then, you shall with all diligence buy bulls, rams, and lambs, and their grain-offerings and their drink-offerings, and you shall offer them on the altar of the house of your

God in Jerusalem. Whatever seems good to you and your colleagues to do with the rest of the silver and gold, you may do, according to the will of your God. The vessels that have been given you for the service of the house of your God, you shall deliver before the God of Jerusalem. And whatever else is required for the house of your God, which you are responsible for providing, you may provide out of the king's treasury.

'I, King Artaxerxes, decree to all the treasurers in the province Beyond the River: Whatever the priest Ezra, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, requires of you, let it be done with all diligence, up to one hundred talents of silver, one hundred cors of wheat, one hundred baths of wine, one hundred baths of oil, and unlimited salt. Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be done with zeal for the house of the God of heaven, or wrath will come upon the realm of the king and his heirs. We also notify you that it shall not be lawful to impose tribute, custom, or toll on any of the priests, the Levites, the singers, the doorkeepers, the temple servants, or other servants of this house of God.

'And you, Ezra, according to the God-given wisdom you possess, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province Beyond the River who know the laws of your God; and you shall teach those who do not know them. All who will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgement be strictly executed on them, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment.'

## Revelation 14:1-13

Then I looked, and there was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion! And with him were one hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps, and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who

have been redeemed from the earth. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins; these follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been redeemed from humankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless.

Then I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation and tribe and language and people. He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgement has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water.'

Then another angel, a second, followed, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.'

Then another angel, a third, followed them, crying with a loud voice, 'Those who worship the beast and its image, and receive a mark on their foreheads or on their hands, they will also drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and they will be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name.'

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus.

And I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.'

## Matthew 14:1-12

At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus; and he said to his servants, 'This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him.' For Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in

prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been telling him, 'It is not lawful for you to have her.' Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet. But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and she pleased Herod so much that he promised on oath to grant her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, 'Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.' The king was grieved, yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison. The head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, who brought it to her mother. His disciples came and took the body and buried it; then they went and told Jesus.