

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR DECEMBER 2023
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You will find reading the Bible rewarding and encouraging,
but reading the Bible is not always easy!

These guidelines may help you.

Before you read each passage, ask God to speak to you through His Word.

Set aside a special time each day to read the Bible, and stick to it!

Make use of your Bible index to find readings – every Bible has a contents page.

Pray that what you have read will help you live according to God's wishes.

December 1st Deuteronomy 18:9-15

The prophecy in this passage is in v.15. Today's passage speaks of a prophet, a prophet sent by God, and a prophet who belonged to the people. Such prophecies are meaningless unless we see their fulfilment in the birth and life of Jesus of Nazareth.

December 2nd Psalm 2

This whole matter of Messianic prophecy is rather like a jigsaw puzzle. As the pieces are fitted together, the picture gradually emerges. The king is to be installed in Zion (v.6), but v.7 clearly tells us that this king is to be in relation to God as a son is in relation to his father. King, Prophet, Son – the picture is building up.

December 3rd Psalm 45:1-7

This king's rule will last forever. Is there any other kingdom in the whole world, which will last to the end of time? Notice also the integrity that is to be such a hallmark of this kingdom. Has there ever been an earthly kingdom that was totally free of corruption? Notice again the close relationship that is to exist between this king and God – 'God, your God, has chosen you'.

December 4th Psalm 68:15-20

'Our God is a God who saves, who rescues us from death'. What a ridiculous statement that must have seemed impossible when first made. Who on earth can possibly rescue us from the final enemy of all? It is only in the light of the resurrection of Christ that such a verse comes to have any meaning or any reality.

December 5th Psalm 69:16-28

Every saint of God has known these times when it seemed as though God's face was turned away – times when it seemed as though the whole world was going in a direction directly opposite to the will and purpose of God. This is an experience which only those who have felt it can understand. Christ came in love but was offered only the poison of hate and violence. The last part of that verse was particularly significant to those who knew the events of Christ's final hours in this earthly life.

December 6th Psalm 110

Again we read words which are echoed in the New Testament – compare v.1 with Luke 20:41-44. We are faced with the question, 'is this merely a coincidence, or is there some

pattern behind all this?’ If it is only a coincidence, then why are there so many ‘coincidences’ in the Bible? There must come a point when we have to decide that these ‘coincidences’ are happening too often to be what they seem.

December 7th

Psalm 118:15-29

In wisdom God has given us freedom either to accept Christ, or to reject Him. Ours is the choice. Many do reject Christ. They are free to do so, but they do not realise the consequences of their action. (Matt. 10:33) Christ is not any old teacher who may or may not be believed. Christ is to be the chief cornerstone of our lives. Remove the cornerstone and the whole structure of our life collapses.

December 8th

Psalm 132:1-12

David was the greatest king Israel ever had. He was great, and he made Israel great. After his death, Israel never again knew the glory that had been hers during that glorious reign. Indeed the day was to come when Israel lost her royal family and knew both exile and oppression. The psalmist never forgot a promise that God had once made. It took a long time for that promise to be fulfilled – but it **was** fulfilled! When God makes a promise, God will keep it.

December 9th

Isaiah 2:1-5

‘Making a better world for our children to live in’, is a cry that is often heard. Do we ever pause to consider what kind of a world we really want our children to live in? What is our vision of the ideal world? Do we look forward to everyone earning hundreds of pounds a week for twenty minutes’ work, and every family comfortably accommodated in their own ‘Buckingham Palace’? Isaiah is looking for a world where God’s house stands supreme (v.2); a world where people rejoice in walking in God’s ways (v.3); a world where no weapons of war ever exist (v.4). Is this an impossible dream conjured up by a madman? Or is this possible?

December 10th

Isaiah 9:2-7

Many people find the Bible difficult. Different verses seem to say different things, and it is not always easy to see the connection. Verse 2 speaks of people in great darkness and depression; v.3 reveals them as being now full of happiness and joy; v.4 and 5 explain that the cause of their darkness and sorrow has been destroyed; then v.6 and v7 speak of a child who will become a great ruler. Each verse is easy enough to understand, but what is the connection between them? Again it is only when we turn to the life of Christ that we see the meaning of it all; the Baby who was a divine King, and under His rule all people are delivered from the oppressing forces of sin and evil, and know the joy and peace and freedom from all ill.

December 11th

Isaiah 11:10-16

Isaiah ‘sees’ a day coming when a new king will gather his scattered people, and re-establish the kingdom. We may not think such a vision very remarkable, but it occurred at a time when it seemed utterly impossible. Many must have decided that Israel was finished and her people scattered forever. Not only does Isaiah foresee their restoration, but also a time when they would conquer others.

December 12th

Isaiah 25:1-9

‘The Sovereign Lord will destroy death for ever’. To those who first heard these words they must have seemed utter lunacy, but for us who know the resurrection they are a glorious prophecy. Time and time again the saints of the Old Testament could see that which would only be fulfilled with the coming of Christ.

December 13th

Isaiah 28:14-22

‘Faith that is firm is also patient’. Throughout this month we are looking at various prophecies in the Old Testament, all of them pointing forward to the birth of Christ. Some of these prophecies were made five or six hundred years before Jesus was born; others were made a thousand years before the birth. Many must have come to feel that these prophecies would never be fulfilled. It seemed such a long time, but God always acts at the right time, even though that right time may be long delayed. Faith must not only be strong, but also patient.

December 14th

Isaiah 42:1-9

The main significance of these verses is not in any particular prophecy but in the conviction that everything that happens, happens according to the plan and purpose of God. How many people keep their fingers crossed and hope that ‘Maybe it will never happen?’ This is God’s world, and He rules over it. Everything happens according to God’s purpose and not for our convenience or according to our expectations. The birth of Christ was not a lucky chance, it was according to the foreknowledge and plan of God.

December 15th

Isaiah 49:1-7

‘Before I was born’ – twice these words appear in this passage. Before each of us is born, God has a plan for us; sadly, so many rebel against that plan.

December 16th

Isaiah 32:7-15

So many of the prophecies we have been reading this past fortnight have been about a coming king. Now the mood changes dramatically. Isaiah now begins to paint a picture about a suffering servant. Here is one of the great mysteries of our Christian faith that Christ the King who sits at the right hand of the throne of God, and Christ the Suffering Servant who endured unspeakable torment before dying on Calvary are both the Son of God.

December 17th

Isaiah 53:1-12

These verses are more commonly associated with Easter than with Christmas. Yet these two great Christian festivals mark the beginning and the ending of the same physical life. Not only the birth, but the whole life of Christ was foretold centuries before He was born.

December 18th

Isaiah 55:1-11

Isaiah does not make any specific reference to Christ in these verses, yet who other than Christ can give the water of life to the thirsty, or provide for the poor and needy, or satisfy those whose lives are empty? Who other than Christ can say, ‘Come to me, and you will have life?’ (v.3). How else can the wicked turn to God and find mercy except

through Christ? (v.7). Who, other than Christ, can utter a word, and it will not fail? (v.11).

December 19th Isaiah 59:9-21

These words were written 2,500 years ago, and yet they are more up-to-date than a book written yesterday! Are they not a picture of today's society? And in v.13 we find the cause of it all, 'We have rebelled against you, rejected you and refused to follow you'. Is it any wonder that so many of our national, local and industrial leaders are simply not believed? 'So he will use his own power to rescue them (i.e. the oppressed) and win the victory'. This is what Christmas is all about – God entering the human situation in power and in judgement.

December 20th Isaiah 61:1-7

Here are blessed words – words Christ took and read in the synagogue in Nazareth. Notice His words to His startled hearers, 'This passage of scripture has come true today, as you heard it being read'. For Christ those words of Isaiah were like a manifesto outlining His programme and mission. Such was their prophetic accuracy.

December 21st Micah 5:2-4

All this month we have been reading about a great King who was to come. God never works in a vacuum. All God's promises are fulfilled in time and in space and today we read of the 'place' where these promises are to be fulfilled. Notice that the King is not to come to some great capital city but to 'one of the smallest towns in Judah'. How often God works this way! Our human standards of judgement are not always the standards God uses.

December 22nd Zechariah 9:9-13

Again we see the humility of this coming King, not riding on a great war-horse but on a donkey. Notice also that His mission is to make peace. Wherever there is war, fighting, bitterness, violence or suspicion, God's will is not being done in that place. Yet evil is such that it must be opposed and destroyed it will not quietly go away. So God's people are called, not to fight one another, but to fight all that is contrary to God's Holy Will.

December 23rd Zechariah 12:1-14

Oceans of tears have been wept for the millions who have died in wars, disasters and holocausts ever since the world began, but no single death has had a greater impact upon the whole of human history than that of one Man who died on a Roman Cross in a relatively obscure country 2,000 years ago. The descendants of the royal line are to be filled with the spirit of mercy and the spirit of prayer. Today millions live in terror of the threat of war. Its effect upon human society is beyond all imagination. And great threats still may come from man's inventive mind, but the greatest power the world can ever know is the power of the Holy Spirit of God expressed through the lives of Spirit-filled men and women of every generation.

December 24th Malachi 3:1-5

For centuries God's prophets had been preparing people for the coming of a great King. Now His coming is near, but 'who will be able to endure the day when He comes?'. He will be like 'strong soap' what a way to describe God's own Son! Yet the whole work of Christ was to cleanse His people from their sin and to purge out all evil. When that is done then 'the offerings... will be pleasing to Him, as they used to be in the past'.

December 25th Matthew 1:18-25

For a month we have been reading of a coming King who would purge out all evil and at whose death coming generations would mourn. Yet today we read of the birth of a little Baby! It is almost as though God has a sense of humour! Notice the problems that the Baby's birth brought for Joseph. Faith is not perfect understanding of the will of God. Faith is perfect obedience even when one's mind is full of doubts and questions.

December 26th Luke 2:8-20

How wonderful that those to whom came the news of Christ's birth, and the first visitors to the cradle, were not great High Priests nor highborn noblemen, but ordinary shepherds straight from their place of work. Maybe it was their work that qualified them for this great honour, they were 'taking care of their flocks', and so they were very close to the Great Shepherd who is forever taking care of His flock.

December 27th Matthew 2:1-2

Now it is the turn of the wise men to visit the Child-Christ. We may scoff at those who 'studied the stars', but in the only way they knew these men were seeking God and God did not fail them. Is this why so many wise men today never see Christ because they do not look for Him? Even the chief priests and teachers of the Law discovered where God's Son was to be born once they started looking at God's own Word. We do not see, because we do not look or else, in looking we direct our gaze to all the wrong places!

December 28th Matthew 2:13-23

We often think of the fiendish forces unleashed against Christ on Calvary, but they are already directed against Him whilst still in infancy. Yet this should not surprise us. Wherever there is a man or woman of God, even a little Babe, there also will be an attack by Satan. Here is a truth to which we pay so little heed, and yet it is so true. Even a smell of holiness will immediately arouse a Satanic attack. Christians must never say 'It won't happen to me'. It will! Just as it did Christ.

December 29th Luke 2:22-38

Simeon and Anna who is described as 'very old'. How long they had been waiting for the Lord's promised Messiah to appear we do not know. How many sleepless nights had they spent in prayer? Never forget to praise God for those quiet saints of every generation. They never reach high office in the Church; often they are unknown but their devotion is known to all in the Kingdom of Heaven.

December 30th John 1:1-18

Here is one of the mountain peaks in the whole of Scripture. For a month we have read of the prophecies. For the past few days we have read of the facts of the birth. Now John places these facts and these prophecies together 'The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us' (v.14). How sad then that so many did not recognise the Word (v.10). Some, however, did recognise and receive Him, and look at the tremendous blessing they received (v.12).

December 31st

Psalm 92:1-15

Another year draws to its close. For some it will have been a year of indescribable joy, while for others it has brought deep sorrow. Yet, whatever our personal circumstances, it has been another year of grace. Let us give thanks to God for all that God has given to us whether it be sorrow or joy. It is indeed good to give thanks to the Lord.

A Happy and blessed New Year to You!