

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR JANUARY 2023  
**Compiled by Rev Dr J Jack for the Congregation of Duddingston Kirk**

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.

**January 1<sup>st</sup>                      John 1:19-28**

John was baptizing and had a potent message that was making the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem take note. They were trying to find out who he was. In 1946 a nomadic shepherd found some ancient parchments near the Dead Sea. These have become known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Jews who had broken away from the main stream religion in Jerusalem to establish a new order produced them. We think that John was one of these.

**January 2<sup>nd</sup>                      John 1:29-34**

John was baptizing with water but his message was that Jesus was to baptize with the Holy Spirit that he himself had received and this made him the Son of God. Many today think that Jesus was a disciple of John and then after the baptism of Jesus, Jesus broke away from John. It is John who recognizes that here is the Son of God.

**January 3<sup>rd</sup>                      John 1:35-42**

The first two disciples of Jesus had been already disciples of John the Baptist. One of the first disciples was Andrew who immediately recognizes that here is the Christ, the Messiah. This is Andrew's message to his brother Simon. We see right from the beginning of Christ's ministry those who recognize who he really is and then go off to tell others of this great thing that God has done.

**January 4<sup>th</sup>                      John 1:43-51**

Already we are beginning to see the Word of Jesus spread through the countryside. These men that Jesus encounters are immediately taken by his being, "there is nothing false in Him", they declare.

**January 5<sup>th</sup>                      John 2:1-12**

This first miracle in Cana is about the changing of people rather than the changing of water into wine. Verse 11 is the key to its understanding. For where the glory of Jesus is revealed then belief and faith immediately follow. Where God is revealed within a marriage then that marriage/relationship can be transformed from something as ordinary as water into something as beautiful as the best wine that you have ever tasted.

**January 6<sup>th</sup>                      John 2:13-21**

The moneychangers were there to enable foreign worshippers to change money to buy their sacrifices in the local money. The animals purchased for sacrifice were then taken

into the temple to be slaughtered and with their death so too the death of the individual's sin. But all of this system was open to corruption and Jesus was rejecting this. The authorities quite rightly ask on what authority does he have to do such a thing. His answer is reference to him being the Son of God therefore it is God's authority he has.

**January 7<sup>th</sup>                      John 2:23-25**

Jesus knew what was in their hearts and still today sees what is in our hearts. When we speak of God as the great Judge who will sit on the throne of judgement condemning sinners to eternal damnation, we are really thinking about our own form of judgement. For what we do that is contrary to the ways of God is already known by God and therefore we bring judgement upon ourselves.

**January 8<sup>th</sup>                      John 3:1-8**

Nicodemus is one of the establishment. He was one of the strict law-abiding groups who opposed any kind of change. Nicodemus is observant enough to recognize that in Jesus here was someone who was different and perhaps had something worthwhile to say. Nicodemus comes in the darkness of night for the fear of being seen by his fellow Pharisees. Jesus recognized that Nicodemus was searching for truth and advises him that he must be reborn of the Spirit.

**January 9<sup>th</sup>                      John 3:9-17**

Throughout John's Gospel Jesus is seen to be encountering those with closed minds that did not understand his message. The gospel writer makes use of this technique to explain to his readers what Jesus was meaning. However, Jesus would have encountered those unwilling to change their ways, those who thought that they had already it all worked out and those whose heart were so hardened that they were closed to the truth.

**January 10<sup>th</sup>                      John 3:18-21**

There is a very clever play on words here. Light is used as a symbol of goodness, whereas darkness is seen as a symbol of covering up evil. There is a tension between those who like darkness because of their evil and their hatred of the light. Notice that they do not just avoid the light but they hate it! Later we will see that Jesus calls himself that light.

**January 11<sup>th</sup>                      John 3:22-30**

John's disciples are becoming jealous at the rise in importance of Jesus. They see Jesus as having been subservient to John and therefore should be subject to him. But John sees himself as a best man to Jesus the bridegroom. The group who lived at Qumran and wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls ritually washed themselves in a form of baptism four times a day. Here is further evidence that John was likely to have been an Essene at Qumran.

**January 12<sup>th</sup>                      John 3:31-36**

The gospel writer is wonderful in taking us from the cosmic and universal to the individual. He tells us that it is Jesus who is from God and from heaven and all above. He has come to the individual that through faith that individual can gain eternal life.

**January 13<sup>th</sup>**

**John 4:1-10**

The Samaritans were despised by the Jews and viz. versa. The customs of the day would not have allowed a Jew to speak to a Samaritan (hence the surprise of Jesus story about the Good Samaritan). Another taboo would have been for a man to speak to a strange woman. But Jesus ignores all man make customs knowing that what really matters is obeying the laws of God. He does this to offer this woman life-giving water, even although she is non-Jewish, a Gentile.

**January 14<sup>th</sup>**

**John 4:11-15**

Again we see the gospel writer leaning on the ignorance of the one who encounters Jesus in order to fully explain to us what the message is. We therefore have the woman thinking in material matters while Jesus speaks of spiritual matters.

**January 15<sup>th</sup>**

**John 4:16-30**

Through this discourse the woman is led by Jesus into thinking about spiritual matters. Jesus proves to her that he knows what her life is all about by the way he can tell her how many times she has been married. It is the woman who raises the subject of the Messiah that allows Jesus to tell her that he is the Messiah.

**January 16<sup>th</sup>**

**John 4:31-42**

Like a pebble being thrown into a pond of water and causing ripples, then the message of Jesus was spread by word of mouth from one neighbourhood to the next. Instead of being an enemy the Samaritan woman had become a friend and believer begging Jesus and his disciples to stay with her. Such is the power of God.

**January 17<sup>th</sup>**

**John 4:43-54**

Cana lies at the other side of Lake Galilee from Capernaum. Jesus was some distance from the Government Official's house. But this tells us that the Government Official had enough faith to travel a great distance to find Jesus. Like the *water into wine* story the miracle causes faith to become alive.

**January 18<sup>th</sup>**

**John 5:1-18**

There were spa wells around Jerusalem that would bubble up from time to time. It was thought that they had healing properties but only when they erupted. This poor man was too ill to get into the waters when they bubbled and thought that he would never be healed. It is in his moment of despair that Jesus brings healing. Rather than be pleased, the Jewish authorities evoke a law that prohibits anyone to carry their mat on the Sabbath. Jesus is found to be at fault under their law. They now want to get rid of him.

**January 19<sup>th</sup>**

**John 5:19-29**

This is a very stark passage about either being with God or without God. There is no middle way. Jesus teaches that eternal life comes from faith in God and He has been sent to reveal this to us. This message is so simple and yet so challenging. It is easy to say, but hard to carry out. It can completely change your life!

**January 20<sup>th</sup>**

**John 5:30-47**

Jesus is telling them that it is God who witnesses to who he really is. All they have to do is read the scriptures to find out about him. Jesus is appealing for those who heard him, to believe. This was no easy task. For like today there were many skeptics and those who had their own ideas and fads. Then there were those who were so stuck in the old familiar ways that their minds were closed to even the Word of God. It seems that not much has changed in the ways that people think in the last 2000 years.

**January 21<sup>st</sup>                      John 6:1-15**

This gospel was written to change people, not inanimate objects. One interpretation of this story stems from the fact that a little boy has brought a picnic with him. It is very likely that others had brought provisions but were unwilling to share them because there were so many people. It is the faith of the little boy who comes forward to feed five thousand men with five little rolls and two fish that causes the others to open their lunch boxes and share their food also. The miracle then becomes one of changing peoples' attitudes and encouraging sharing and caring for each other.

**January 22<sup>nd</sup>                      John 6:16-24**

Storms can quickly come and go in this region of Israel. Jesus comes walking on water to his disciples meeting their need in the most unlikely conditions. We must never forget that our God is a God who can meet all of our needs even when we think that it is impossible for an answer to be found.

**January 23<sup>rd</sup>                      John 6:25-40**

Jesus describes himself as the bread of life. Bread is the most basic food of any diet. Without a basic diet of food we die. Belief in Jesus is so basic to our spiritual health that without it we would die spiritually.

**January 24<sup>th</sup>                      John 6:41-59**

Today many are still asking the question found in verse 42. How can Jesus be the Son of God if he was born of Joseph and Mary? Read again Jesus answer! Jesus makes reference to the body and blood sacrifice on the cross and of the Lord's supper but again his hearers are thinking not in spiritual but material terms. The gospel is encouraging us in faith and to think in spiritual ways that are the ways of God.

**January 25<sup>th</sup>                      John 6:60-71**

By now some were finding the teaching of Jesus too difficult and were turning away. We have already been thinking how simple the faith is, the difficulty is in applying it to our lives.

**January 26<sup>th</sup>                      John 7:1-9**

Jesus recognized that the world hated him because he was telling it that its ways were bad. No one likes being rebuked and told that they are getting it wrong. Today we masquerade around telling each other of free speech and the right to do what we like. This is not God's way, for like a loving mother wanting to bring her child up to do what is right she will rebuke that child when needed. She does this out of a sense of duty and of love.

**January 27<sup>th</sup>                      John 7:10-24**

Jesus manages to get back into the Temple at the festival of Shelters and teach the people in the Temple courtyard. He refers to the healing of the disabled man on the Sabbath that still seems to be causing the authorities trouble. Note also reference to his 'brothers'. It is believed that Mary had other children apart from Jesus, although Jesus was her eldest.

**January 28<sup>th</sup>                      John 7:25-31**

The debate continues as to whether Jesus is the Messiah or not. Jesus was living at a politically difficult time for the Jews. The Romans had occupied the country and expected to apply Roman ways but the Jews had strong religious beliefs and would not conform. The Jewish Middle classes had struck up a deal with the Romans and promised to keep order if they could retain their status and wealth. Jesus was a threat to this promised order.

**January 29<sup>th</sup>                      John 7:32-36**

Here is another example of Jesus speaking in spiritual terms but being understood in material terms. This gospel is written for the reader to spot these double meanings and to be able to be on the inside meaning that is, to understand the way Jesus intended.

**January 30<sup>th</sup>                      John 7:37-44**

The writer of the gospel again plays upon the ignorance of the crowds. They say openly that the Messiah will come from Bethlehem. We, who have read the other gospel accounts, know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem therefore fulfilling that prophecy. A case is being presented to us that leaves neither doubt nor objection that this is the Messiah. All that is missing is the faith of the reader, and even that can be put right by the one who believes!

**January 31<sup>st</sup>                      John 7:45-52**

Jesus is now thoroughly implicated and has caused such a disturbance through his teaching and miracles that the authorities are worried. Their concern is that they could lose control of the people and the Romans would come in and take over. They also did not want to lose their wealth to the Romans who were prepared to put up with this deal so long as the taxes were paid.