

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR MAY 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.

THE PSALMS

May 1st

Psalm 86:1-17

The marks of true prayer are (a) awareness of one's weakness (verses 1-2) (b) a plea for God's mercy (verses 3-7) (c) acknowledgment that there is "No God like You O Lord" (verses 8-10) (d) a willingness to follow in God's ways (verses 11-14) (e) a sense of trust and reliance on Almighty God (vv 15-17).

May 2nd

Psalm 108:1-13

The very first words of this Psalm sum it up. The Christian is not spared the pains, sorrows and trials of this earthy life as some quite wrongly suppose. There is a sense in which the believer is more aware than others the pains and sorrows and trials of this life. But those who believe have a great advantage- because they know that through these tribulations they will be supported and can trust in the One who will not fail them. They can walk through the dark shadow of this life serene in the light of God's love.

May 3rd

Psalm 91

The theme of this Psalm is the same as yesterday's, but there is one difference. Psalm 108 was about what might be called the difficulties of life whereas this Psalm is about the one who is engaged in a real spiritual warfare. It does us well to remember that these Psalms were written, not by someone in a sitting in a study, but by who had in their own lives the spiritual struggle in all its pain and all its danger.

May 4th

Psalm 34

How many people have stopped worshipping in church because they say "I got nothing out of it"? In worship the emphasis must always be on the one who is worshipped and never on the one who worships. God is the focus of our spiritual life – not self. In this Psalm we see clearly how God is placed at the center. When God is at the center of our lives then and only then will we begin to understand and enjoy the glory of God's blessing.

May 5th

Psalm 112

This Psalm describes some of the blessings a God-honouring believer may enjoy. How many blessings can you count in this Psalm?

May 6th

Psalm 147

One of the wonders of our God is that God created the vast Universe and yet God also cares for the least important of us. God heals the broken-hearted and also God decided the number of stars in the sky! God raises the humble; but God also spreads clouds over the sky. Our God is the creator of all yet God's ear is open to every cry of the vilest sinner.

May 7th Psalm 130 and Psalm 131

Perhaps Verses 3-4 of Psalm 130 sums up the whole of our Christian life. If we could understand fully what these two verses mean then so much else of our faith would become clear to us.

May 8th

Psalm 23

Often called the Scottish psalm this psalm used to be sung at all family gatherings. Perhaps our ancestors could relate to pastoral nature of it.

THE ASCENSION

May 9th

Acts 1:6-11

To the person who prefers to rely on human wisdom and human experience, this passage is sheer nonsense, but to the spiritually mature man or woman of faith it is full of precious truth. Here we find the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit (verse 8); here is the commission for us to be witnesses throughout the entire world (verse 8); it is here that our Lord returns to the Father's Heavenly Presence (verse 9) and here is the promise that Christ will one day return (verse 11).

May 10th

Hebrews 8:1-6

Two great doctrines of the Christian faith are the Resurrection and the Ascension. If Christ rose from the dead it means that he is alive now at this very moment. If Christ rose to the presence of his Father in Heaven it means that He is there now at this very moment. To put it crudely, we have, at the very throne of God, one who is aware of all human life – its pain and its fear.

May 11th

Hebrews 7:23-28

Today we read of some of the great statements of the Faith (a) Jesus lives for-ever (b) Jesus does not pass on his work to someone else (c) He is able to save those who come to God through Him (d) He lives ever to plead with God for us (e) He is Holy (f) the sacrifice he offered was Himself (g) He has been made perfect forever.

May 12th

Hebrews 4:14-16

The Ascension means that the risen Christ is now in the eternal presence of the living God. If we look to Christ as of God's Spirit. Here we are touching on both the greatest weakness and the greatest need of the Church in our own time.

May 13th

1Corinthians 12:1-11

When the Holy Spirit comes upon a person then certain gifts of that power are imparted. There are many gifts of this spirit. Gifts are imparted to the use of the individual for the

good of all. Christ who has given each of us a gift and we have discovered each our own particular gift or gifts. We must then endeavour to exercise these gifts within the local Congregation and not use that gift for personal advantage to gain personal esteem but for the strengthening of the body of Christ.

May 14th 1Corinthians12:1-11

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May 15th Ephesians 4:11-16

It is God who gives gifts and these gifts vary. They are given to build up the body of Christ i.e. the Church. Notice how this leads on to spiritual growth and development. We are not meant to remain spiritual children not even in spiritual adolescence we are meant to be mature and Christ-like. That is why these gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given to us. We dare not neglect them.

May 16th Galatians 5:16-26

Verses 19-21 describe the life in which the Spirit is absent. By contrast verses 22-24 describe the life in which the Spirit is in control. Study these verses and decide which list more accurately describes your own life and notice that there is no neutral ground, no middle way.

THE HOLY TRINITY

May 17th John 14:1-14

A doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not always easy to understand. Some, especially Jehovah's Witnesses, point out correctly that the word Holy Trinity does not occur in the New Testament. Nevertheless there are many passages in the Bible which point to an inter-relation between God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

May 18th John 14:15-26

We read today of Jesus introducing the person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, Father and Holy Spirit (or helper) can be seen here as three separate persons. Look at verse 26 – the Holy Spirit will be sent by the Father in the name of Christ and the Holy Spirit will enable us to remember all that Christ has ever taught us.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

May 19th Acts 2:1-13

Without spiritual perception this passage does not make sense. Jesus promised his Disciples that the power of the Holy Spirit would come upon them. To what extent they

understood his words we will never know but on the day of Pentecost that promise was fulfilled. Even the strangers outside knew beyond all doubt that something had happened.

May 20th Acts 4:23-31

The early Church experienced two developments. There was a tremendous growth in numbers and there was also the beginning of persecution. Note what particularly preceded this coming of the Spirit and what followed it. There was first of all a tremendous time of prayer and there followed a bold proclamation of God's message. If we lack the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and we must ask if our prayer life is such that God would bless us in this special way. Secondly, are we willing to allow the Spirit to drive us to a bold proclamation of God's work in our own lives?

May 21st Acts 10:44-48

Today we read of the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon those who received the Gospel of Christ. Many in the early Church wondered if Christianity was only for Jews. This became a vexing problem. Here we read of the Holy Spirit empowering non-Jews – Gentiles. As Peter said these people have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, *“All are equal in the sight of God”*.

May 22nd Acts 19:1-10

In his travels Paul met groups of believers. They had heard the Gospel of Christ and they had thought to honour Him by the quality of their lives. They had turned away from their evil ways and were trying to live Christ-like lives. But they were doing it in their own strength and lacking the Power of the Holy Spirit. Paul enables them to grasp the faith and to open their hearts and minds to the power of God's Spirit. Here we are touching on both the greatest weakness and the greatest need of the Church in our own time.

May 23rd 1Corinthians12:1-11

When the Holy Spirit comes upon a person then certain gifts of that power are imparted. There are many gifts of this spirit. Gifts are imparted to the use of the individual for the good of all. Christ who has given each of us a gift and we have discovered each our own particular gift or gifts. We must then endeavour to exercise these gifts within the local Congregation and not use that gift for personal advantage to gain personal esteem but for the strengthening of the body of Christ.

May 24th Ephesians 4:11-16

It is God who gives gifts and these gifts vary. They are given to build up the body of Christ i.e. the Church. Notice how this leads on to spiritual growth and development. We are not meant to remain spiritual children not even in spiritual adolescence we are meant to be mature and Christ-like. That is why these gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given to us. We dare not neglect them.

May 25th Galatians 5:16-26

Verses 19-21 describe the life in which the Spirit is absent. By contrast verses 22-24 describe the life in which the Spirit is in control. Study these verses and decide which list

more accurately describes your own life and notice that there is no neutral ground, no middle way.

May 26th John 16:4-15

Again Jesus speaks of Himself and God the Father and God the Spirit as though they were all separate yet Jesus is under the authority of God while he has authority over the Spirit. *“I am going to Him who sent me. I will send Him (the Spirit) to you.”*

May 27th 1Corinthians2:10-16

This passage underscores the deep relationship between the Father and the Spirit. Only God’s Spirit knows all about God. It appears that by the Power of the Spirit we are enabled to grasp in some measure the truth about God. Again this baffling mystery – the Spirit is separate in that God sent Him; yet it is through the Spirit that we know what God has given.

May 28th Romans 8:12-17

We have been reading passages which show the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit to be separate persons yet all inter-related into one common mind or purpose. Today we see that we also may be drawn into this divine unity or harmony. There is a sense in which we are all Children of God simply by the very act of creation. Yet there is also another sense in which, by obedience to the guidance of the Holy Spirit within us, we are drawn into an ever, and even deeper, relationship with the Divine Father.

DAVID THE SHEPHERD KING

May 29th 1 Samuel 17:1-11

How many today are stricken because there is a “Goliath” somewhere in their lives? It may be the memory of some dreadful mistake in the past; or the fear of some unknown danger in the future; or some temptation or weaknesses, which threatens to ruin the whole of life. Whatever it is, it dominates the whole of life and we can be afraid of our own private “Goliath”.

May 30th 1 Samuel 17:12-27

Into the situation of terror comes a young shepherd boy who had been sent by his father with provisions for his brothers serving in the army. To the fearful soldiers the young visitor is no more than a minor distraction – even an irritation. They did not recognize him as a deliverer sent by God. Sometimes God’s help comes in unexpected ways!

May 31st 1Samuel 17:28-32

The innocence of youth! David was a sincere as he could be but his brothers saw him as a brat whilst the others laughed at him. Children have great imaginations and sometime we too need to allow ourselves to be open to simple possibilities that our adult minds can often dismiss as irrelevant. The limits of our faith are often our lack of belief in what God can really do.