

**BIBLE READING NOTES FOR DECEMBER 2024**  
**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.**

**December 1<sup>st</sup>**                      2 Samuel 3:2–5

Now David has six, each of whom has borne a son to him! No doubt these other marriages enhanced his own personal reputation, but they also confirmed alliances with different tribes who supported him. By marriage he was not only augmenting his own household, but also buying the support of the surrounding tribes.

**December 2<sup>nd</sup>**                      2 Sam 3:6–11

Why did Ishboseth accuse Abner? Did he have a reason to suspect him, or was he only jealous of Abner's growing power? Where did Abner's real loyalty lie? Was he really serving Ishboseth out of loyalty to Saul? Or was he a mercenary who was ready to serve where it suited him best? Was he already thinking of changing sides, and this accusation gave him the excuse to feel aggrieved?

**December 3<sup>rd</sup>**                      2 Sam 3:12–16

Now it is David's motives that are being tested. Why did he want Michal back? Was he testing Abner's loyalty? Did he really want Michal back for her own sake? Or did he see the political advantage of having a daughter of Saul amongst his wives?

**December 4<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 3:17–21

Abner claims to quote something that "*the Lord had said*". Was Abner really acting in accordance with what God had said, or was he merely using God's word as an excuse to justify his own conduct? Was he motivated by obedience to the will of God, or political expediency?

**December 5<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 3:22–30

Was Joab justified in suspecting Abner's loyalty, or was he merely seeking a pretext to avenge his own brother's death? Or did he see his won position as army commander threatened by Abner's presence? Was Abner the innocent victim of political intrigue, or was he now being treated in the same merciless way that he had dealt with Paltiel?

**December 6<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 3:31–39

David had known Abner for some time. It was Abner who had taken him to king Saul after slaying Goliath. No doubt David's grief was genuine, up to a point, but it is equally certain that his loud lamentation at the funeral was politically motivated. First, he was anxious to reassure everyone, and especially the Israelite tribes in the north, that he was innocent of this murder. Second, he was equally anxious to reassure them that it was still safe for them to unite with the southern tribes under his rule.

**December 7<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam. 4:1–12

The killing goes on. Once violence begins it spreads to involve more and more. The tragedy is that Ishbosheth was killed unnecessarily. Baanah and Rechab so misread the situation that they thought they would curry favour with David by killing one whom they thought his enemy. Their own deaths were more of a punishment for their own foolishness, than for the treachery of their crime.

**December 8<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 5:1–10

Now all the tribes which were formerly loyal to Saul acknowledge David as their king as he ruled at Hebron. David set out to attack the city of Jerusalem for two reasons. Those who lived there refused to accept David's authority, thinking that he would never be able to conquer their hill-top fortress. They thought they were so secure that *even the blind and the crippled* would be able to defend the city. Also, David wanted Jerusalem as his capital. It had a better, and more central, situation than Hebron. Moreover, it would please the northern tribes if he moved his capital city nearer them. He was both the strategist and the politician. A part of the modern Jerusalem is still called "David's City".

**December 9<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 5:11-16

King Hiram of Tyre was quick to realize that it would be sound policy to gain favour with the new king of Jerusalem. Note how, even in those early days, trade missions played a diplomatic role. Hiram's action confirmed David in the knowledge that people beyond Israel accepted the changes that had taken place. Once again he extends his household to strengthen his status as a leader.

**December 10<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 5:17–27

The Philistines saw David's growing power as a threat to them, and so they attacked. Note how David seeks divine guidance. There seemed to have been times in his life when he relied on divine guidance, and other times when he went according to his own wisdom. By that guidance David was able to inflict a resounding defeat over the Philistines.

**December 11<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 6:1-5

It is difficult for us now to understand the full significance that the Covenant Box held for the Israelites. It had always represented for them a special manifestation of the Divine presence. To have it back also helped to eradicate the memory of the shameful defeat when it was captured by the Philistines.

**December 12<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 6:6–8

Why was God so angry with Uzzah that He killed him? It seems unfair that since poor Uzzah was only trying to prevent the Covenant Box from falling off the cart! v7 says that he was killed "because of his irreverence" – but what was the precise nature of that irreverence? When the Covenant Box was made it was provided with rings so that it could be carried on poles. Did God consider carriage in a cart a source of "irreverence"? Also, Uzzah was the son of Abinadab in whose home the Covenant Box had been kept. It may have been that it was during this period that Uzzah had treated the Covenant Box irreverently. Punishment does not always immediately follow the sin, but God waits for the appropriate moment.

**December 13<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 6:9-15

The Covenant Box was temporarily left till it was decided what to do with it. Strangely it brought blessing to Obed Edom who was looking after it, so it was decided to complete the journey to Jerusalem. This part of the journey was marked by great celebrations.

**December 14<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 6:16-23

So exuberant was David in these celebrations that he danced and jumped without restraint and very nearly without clothes! The spectacle disgusted Michal who could only see the king of Israel making a fool of himself.

**December 15<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 7:1-7

David considered it fitting that the Covenant Box should be kept in a proper Temple, but the message from God was clear – “you are not the one to build a Temple for me to live in”. Note how God’s message did not come to David directly but through the prophet Nathan. Why did God not want David to build a Temple? Was it because his own life had been so full of violence?

**December 16<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 7:18-24

The promise of a never-ending dynasty could have led to two different reactions an overwhelming pride, or an awesome wonder at the sheer goodness of God. David’s reaction was the latter – “I am not worthy”. Spiritual pride is perhaps the sin to which we are most prone. True humility is a rare virtue.

**December 17<sup>th</sup>**                      2 Sam 7:25-29

Note how this whole prayer is centered on the goodness of God. So often our prayers are about our own wants and needs. We tend to see God merely as the supplier of those needs. When a saint prays their thoughts must always be focused on the power, majesty and glory of God.

**ADVENT****December 18<sup>th</sup>**    Isaiah 11:1-9

We have been thinking much, in recent months, of the reign of David. While his royal line continued for several centuries, there did come a time when, as Isaiah says, “the royal line of David is like a tree that has been cut down”. Isaiah, however, could see a new king of that same royal line who would establish a perfect kingdom – so perfect that even the natural enemies of field and forest will live together in peace. The prophet’s words must have seemed utterly impossible in his own time, but later they were seen as providing a near perfect description of the kingdom of Christ.

**December 19<sup>th</sup>**    Micah 5:2-5a

Bethlehem had been the birth place of David. Micah, however, sees another, and greater king, coming from that same place. One whose greatness will be acknowledged all over the earth. The surprising thing is that Bethlehem was, otherwise, such a small and unimportant place. Apart from being the birthplace of David and Jesus it has hardly any other claim to fame. When God chooses a person or a place for some special reason, God does not always choose as the world would expect.

**December 20<sup>th</sup>**                      Hosea 11:1-11

Later versions make it clear that, almost certainly, Hosea was thinking of the time the people of Israel were enslaved in Egypt rather than looking forward to Joseph’s flight to Egypt with Mary and the holy child. Yet the disciples of Christ could not but see a similarity. It is almost as though the great events of Israel’s history were being re-enacted in the life of Christ.

**December 21<sup>st</sup>**                      Luke 1:26-38

The child promised to Abraham and Sarah was born at a time when, according to normal experience, such birth was impossible. Now Mary sees the birth of her won child as impossible; she is a virgin and unmarried. She must learn that God's power is not limited by normal human circumstances. She has the experience of her own kins-woman, Elizabeth, to encourage her.

**December 22<sup>nd</sup>**                      Luke 1:39-45

When two, or more, individuals are each in close communion with God, then there must be a close bond of communion between them. This is reflected in the sacrament of Holy Communion which is called "a bond a pledge of our unity with him, and with one another as members of His body." This meeting between Mary and Elizabeth is a perfect illustration of the bond that can exist between those *whose hearts are one in Him*.

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>**                      Luke 1:46-56

The Magnificat is perhaps the most beautiful hymn of praise and adoration there is in the whole of Christendom. It is not something to be studied or explained. Rather, it is to be experienced with the aid of the Holy Spirit within us.

**December 24<sup>th</sup>**                      Matt.1:18-25

God was committing his own son to be brought up in an otherwise normal family situation. Joseph's role was no less important than Mary's. He had to be helped to see that Mary's condition was not as it might seem to human eyes, but was something special in accordance with God's will.

**THE INCARNATION**

**December 25<sup>th</sup>**                      Luke 2:1-7

Merry Christmas! How strange that God's son was born at a time that was to say the least inconvenient. It is impossible for us to comprehend the thoughts of Mary and Joseph as far from their own home in Nazareth and jostled by the throng in Bethlehem, they awaited the birth of the Holy child. How often we put off some spiritual decision until a more suitable time. For God's purposes no time is more suitable than the present.

**December 26<sup>th</sup>**                      Luke 2:8-20

The first visitors to the Christ-Child, so far as we know, were humble shepherds. It was as if God was emphasizing the significance of the Incarnation. Not only was Christ born of Mary, but he was born into a world of busyness, noise, rough clamour, and a cold welcome. Yet, there is in all this great comfort for us. Such great events did not take place amongst the great church leaders of the day, but amongst carpenters and shepherds and innkeepers – folk not unlike us!

**December 27<sup>th</sup>**                      Matt.2:1-12

Amongst other visitors were wise men from distant lands. We must not so emphasize the "working class" circumstances of Christ's birth that we imply that, somehow, the intellectuals and the great and mighty have no need of Him. Neither must we so concentrate on the stable at Bethlehem as to imply that the birth of Christ was purely a "local" event. As we shall see later, it was of worldwide significance.

**December 28<sup>th</sup>**                      Matt. 2:13-18

Almost as though to emphasize the reality of the Incarnation, Christ's very life was soon threatened. From the very beginning of His life, Christ was to identify not only with the humble and with the great, but also with the persecuted and the refugee.

**December 29<sup>th</sup>**                      Matt.2:19-23

Christ's time in Egypt, together with his return to Nazareth, were dictated by worldly circumstances. We must be careful not to assume that God's will is molded by influence outside God's control. Such influences may cause minor changes in God's overall plan, but only because God allows them to do so. We must never forget that.

**December 30<sup>th</sup>**                      Luke 2:21-38

Mary and Joseph complied with the normal customs of their time doing for their child what other parents would be doing for theirs. Simeon and Anna, however, recognized that this was no ordinary child. Note Simeon's words, *This Child is chosen by God for the destruction and salvation of many in Israel*. Truer words have never been spoken. How I respond to Christ affects my whole future – eternal life, or eternal death.

**December 31<sup>st</sup>**                      Luke 2:39-52

This is the only incident we know of Christ's life between infancy and manhood. We learn of the home in which He had been brought up. Mary and Joseph did all that was required by the law of the Lord; they went every year to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. We may never know just how well Christ was prepared for His whole ministry of redemption through the influence and example of Mary and Joseph. But note also Christ's growing awareness of his wider ministry – "Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's House?"