

BIBLE READING NOTES FOR JUNE 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.

June 1st 1Kings 18:7-15

Obadiah must have been brave and generous to give shelter to prophets in time of persecution. Yet even he was afraid to tell Ahab that Elijah was in the country. This is an indication of the reign of terror that prevailed. There is no sign of fear in Elijah. When a someone has learned to truly trust God, they know no fear.

June 2nd 1Kings 18:16-19

Who was the real trouble-maker in Israel? Ahab saw Elijah as a disruptive element in his nation, whilst Elijah saw the king as one who was leading the people away from God and into idolatrous worship. Those who destroy faith are a greater threat to society than we think.

June 3rd 1Kings 18:20-29

The leaders of Israel had drifted from the worship of God. Instead they worshipped the pagan gods of neighbouring lands. Ahab's wife, Jezebel, had encouraged the growth of false religion. Elijah issued a challenge to the prophets of Baal.

June 4th 1Kings 18:30-40

It was now the turn of Elijah's God to provide fire. Note how the prophet made it more difficult by drenching the whole altar with water. Fire came down to the amazement of all who watched. It is useless to seek a reason for this strange event. God's ways are beyond the scope of the human mind. The false prophets were destroyed.

June 5th 1Kings 18:41-46

Elijah had predicted the drought, so also he predicted the first rain. Just as we fail to heed the danger of those who teach a false religion, so also do we fail to grasp the value of men and women of prayer. God is more often moved by prayers of His saints than we realize.

June 6th 1Kings 19:1-4

This demonstration of God's power may have impressed Ahab, but Jezebel was furious. She immediately sought Elijah's life. Strangely, Elijah actually prayed that he might die! It is strange that he who had shown such courage and faith should now be so stricken by fear. There is such a thing as spiritual exhaustion. When a man's spiritual output is greater than his spiritual intake, then spiritual depression is inevitable.

June 7th 1Kings 19:5-9

Once again God provides the strength His servant requires. How bread and water came to be there we do not know. All we can know is that God sees His people's need, and supplies it. In the strength God supplied, Elijah travelled for forty days.

June 8th 1Kings 19:9-10

Here we see the reason for Elijah's depression. It was not simply fear for his own life; he could see the situation in the whole land. He had given his whole life to the service of God, yet all around he saw nothing but the idolatry of God's people and the desecration of God's house. He felt that he only remained loyal to God, and even his own life was threatened. There are times when God's people seem so helpless and atheism grows so strong. Our only confidence is that God never leaves us without a witness in any generation.

June 9th 1Kings 19:11-13

God's voice was not in the wind, earthquake or fire, but in the soft whisper. In life there are many claims to great importance – military power, great wealth, spectacular oratory. For a time they seem to be all important, but the real voice of God comes only through the life of quiet devotion and service.

June 10th 1Kings 19:14-18

Elijah is reminded that he is not alone, that others have remained loyal to God. We all need this reassurance. Whatever the state of the Church nationally, there are always men and women whose quiet faith and devotion is its real strength.

June 11th 1Kings 19:19-21

Elijah places his cloak on Elisha who is to succeed. No man is asked to do everything. Each builds on the foundation laid by predecessors, and in time hands it to those who will follow after.

June 12th 1Kings 21:17-24

Elijah was told to confront Ahab with his sin. At times God's people must maintain a quiet, faithful witness in an age of irreligion; and there are times when they must speak out and denounce evil for what it is.

June 13th 2Kings 1:1-8

Here we see spiritual conflict reduced to its simplest terms. Ahaziah was seriously hurt, but instead of trusting in God, he sought to consult a pagan deity. To him the God of Israel was irrelevant. Elijah stands as the representative of the one true God. People like him are never popular because they remind others of their sins, but they are like rocks of righteousness in a vast ocean of unbelief.

June 14th 2Kings 1:9-17

The king thought he could treat Elijah like one of his servants. It is hard for men in authority to acknowledge a power greater than their own. It is the hardest lesson each of us must learn – that the God of heaven is the supreme God and our only hope is to obey.

June 15th 2Kings 2:1-12

These verses are difficult as they describe an event that is beyond our normal experience. Our natural reaction is to dismiss it as a fairy tale, yet surely the whole Bible is full of events that are beyond natural reason and experience. Indeed, the whole religious event is a denial of what we have come to regard as 'normal'. God is in control, and God uses power as God sees best.

June 16th Matthew 17:1-8

If Elijah's translation is difficult to grasp, so also was the transfiguration. There is no way we can 'explain' what happened. We either accept the biblical record, or we reject it, but to reject it is to infer that such an event was not possible to God. It is not for mere man to say what God can or cannot do. We can only stand in awe at One whose hand spans the generations and the continents.

June 17th James 1:1

In a world where position and prestige seem so all important, it is significant that God's witnesses are content to be called 'servants'. Note also that God's people are 'scattered over the whole world'. Like Elijah we sometimes suffer from spiritual loneliness. We need to be reminded that we are only part of a great army of God's people all over the world.

June 18th James 1:2-5

The spiritual life is full of trials, but they are there for a purpose. Such trials are like exercises to build up our moral strength and spiritual stamina. God uses them to make us men and women of faith.

June 19th James 1:6-8

Many of us pray but only half expect our prayers to be answered. If our prayers are genuine and not merely the expression of selfish desires, then we must expect them to be answered. This is called the 'prayer of faith', praying in the confidence that God will answer.

June 20th James 1:9-11

We are often dazzled by wealth, position, wisdom, authority. These can be good, but they are only temporary. Even if they survive the crises of this life, they will certainly not survive the finality of death. An old Spanish proverb says: 'There are no pockets in a shroud'. There is no virtue in poverty as such, yet there is great moral danger in wealth.

June 21st James 1:12-15

Note the prize for those who remain faithful under trial is 'the life which God has promised.' Note also that the trials referred to are not sent by God but come from our own inner thoughts which become desires, and these desires lead us on to sin. That is why the conquest of them is so necessary for spiritual development.

June 22nd James 1:16-18

If evil desires and temptations come from the human heart, then every good and perfect gift comes from God. We have the choice of succumbing to those desires, or receiving the divine gifts which are an expression of Divine love. It is God's great desire that 'we should have first place among all his creatures'.

June 23rd James 1:19-21

We suffer many frustrations in life, and are often tempted to give vent to our anger. Such outbursts are rarely of any benefit in the spiritual life, rather they are a hindrance. It must be our constant desire to control our emotions and submit our wills to God's control.

June 24th James 1:22-27

Here James introduces a theme to which he often returns: faith and action. Many think it unspiritual to get involved in social action of any kind, preferring the quiet life of prayer and contemplation. Others think prayer and contemplation a waste of time – time that could be better spent in helping others. James seeks to express faith in action.

June 25th James 2:1-4

We must accept men and women as they are and not be prejudiced by their outward appearance. Especially this is true in God's house. A church in an army barracks once had this notice above the door, 'Abandon rank, all ye who enter here.' In God's sight the raw recruit is as good as the seasoned general.

June 26th James 2:5-7

We must treat these verses very carefully. Some are poor because they have submitted themselves completely to the service of God; others are poor because they fail to cope with the demands of life. Some are rich because they have taken advantage of others; and some are rich because God has given them the gift of liberality, and the means to exercise it.

June 27th James 2:5-7

Relationships with others should always be governed by the principle, 'Love your neighbour as yourself'. To break one moral law is to break them all. In school exams 60% or 80 % may be satisfactory, but God demands 100% in our moral life.

June 28th James 2:14-26

James develops his theme on faith and action. Faith without action is dead, but we must be careful to avoid the conclusion that faith is therefore unnecessary and that action is all that is required. Faith is fundamental to the spiritual life, but it must be expressed in action.

June 29th James 3:1-12

Another recurring theme in this letter is the careless use of the tongue. It may be that James had a personal problem here, or he may have suffered from others who had this problem, but he was deeply concerned at the harm that could be caused by a bitter word, a lying statement, malicious gossip. He was also concerned that the same mouth could both praise God and slander a friend.

June 30th James 3:13-18

Many claim to be wise, but what is the source of their wisdom? Is it the heart that is also the source of all kinds of selfish and evil desires and passions? Or does wisdom come from God who is the fountain of all truth? There are some that use their wisdom for their own advantage and to exploit others, theirs is worldly wisdom. Others use their wisdom for the good of humanity, their wisdom comes from God.