

Fall is upon us, and with that comes the beautiful color changes of the leaves. As we look around at nature, we can see the glorious works of our Heavenly Father. It is a shame that when we look around our community, the changes we see on a daily basis are not those that honor our God. More and more, we are being "conditioned" to accept the "ways of the world" instead of following what we know are the desires of our Father in Heaven, which are made abundantly clear in Romans chapter 12.

I Beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recom-pense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

And He said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them (Ezek. 2:3-5).

The Lord was calling Ezekiel for a difficult task. In many ways, his work was destined to be as disheartening and thankless as Jeremiah's. God's description of his target audience was anything but complimentary. From it, we can determine that God did not expect Ezekiel's words to be met with immediate success. ***I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me: they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted.***

God knew that facing the daily ridicule and disdain of his fellow Israelites would eventually take its toll on His chosen prophet. For this reason, He clearly outlined ahead of time what He expected from Ezekiel and what Ezekiel would most likely be able to expect from the people he was called to minister to. God made it clear to Ezekiel that his job wasn't to ensure that the people changed their ways; instead, he was only responsible for spreading the Lord's message and living his own life in obedience to God. God expected Ezekiel to stand as a beacon of proof to the existence, truth, and mercy of God, ***whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.*** At the end of his service, the Lord wanted there to be no doubt in the people's minds ***that there hath been a prophet among them.***

The charge God has placed on each of us today is much the same as the one He issued to Ezekiel so long ago. ***For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth*** (Acts 13:47). He expects each of us to live our lives in accordance with His commands

regardless of the actions or reactions of others. ***For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*** (Gal. 1:10). In so doing, His presence in our lives will be made evident to everyone we come into contact with. If we commit to following the words of Jesus Christ, ***Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets*** (Matt. 7:12), then those around us will feel the presence of God. Whether or not they choose to acknowledge Him is up to them. ***He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*** (Matt. 11:15).

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God (II Cor. 4:1-2).

Thought for the Day: *When doing God's work, we should not expect the world's approval, nor should we seek it.*

Christ Revealed: In a ***likeness as the appearance of a man***, who sat upon the throne (Ezek. 1:26-28). This foreshadowed God who appears as a Man, ***the Man Christ Jesus*** (I Tim. 2:5).

Word Studies: 1:18 **dreadful** = awesome, wonderful; 1:20 **up over against** = close beside; 3:12 **rushing** = tumult, shouting; 3:14 **heat** = anger; 3:26 **dumb** = unable to speak to warn them; 4:16 **break the staff** = cut off the supply.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox, President, Bible Pathway Ministries • **Government Officials:** Rep. Al Green (TX) • **Country:** Barbados (289,680) West Indies • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 66.5% Protestant; 3.8% Roman Catholic; 5.4% Other Christian; 1% Rastafarian; 1.5% Other; 20.6% None; 1.2% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Trust the Lord for deliverance in times of trouble (Ps. 50:15).

Optional Reading: Revelation 6

And He put forth the form of an hand, and took me by a lock of mine head; and the spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem, to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of The image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy (Ezek. 8:3).

In the vision in today's reading, God leads Ezekiel into the Temple so that he might bear witness to the abominations within its sacred walls. **So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up** (Ezek. 8:10-11). Ezekiel was profoundly disturbed by all that he saw. **And He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east** (8:16). God's House had been profaned. In direct contradiction to His Commandments, the people had decided to worship Him as one god amongst many gods, and, in so doing, they had shut off their connection to Him.

Therefore will I also deal in fury: mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them (8:18). When we turn away from God and embrace our sin, we create a barrier that makes it impossible for us to come into the presence of God. Our highest privilege is to magnify God's Word and live in His presence. Conversely, to be deprived of His holy presence is a fearful thing. God's love and longsuffering are such that He becomes still and silent only when there is persistent, willful rejection of His Word. **For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved** (John 3:20).

The Israelites did not cease to acknowledge the Lord as their God above all gods, but they added the worship of various abominable idols to their daily life in addition to Him. By doing so, they broke His commandments and profaned the Temple. Similarly, many today acknowledge God as sovereign in name only. We call ourselves Christians, believe all the fundamental doctrines of the faith, attend religious services regularly, and go through the proper motions because we feel it is our sacred duty, yet, even with all of that, we never manage to worship Him and Him alone. Our hearts and thoughts are frequently elsewhere, even during worship services. God has repeatedly warned us that He is a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) and will never allow Himself to be considered 'one among many.' Believing in God is not enough; we must accept Him as our only Lord and allow Him to become the sole Master of our lives. Only then will we live under grace, within His presence and His will.

Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

Thought for the Day: *Accepting the existence of God under the guise of "being open-minded" is faithless and uninformed; true belief is rooted in His Word and His work.*

Christ Portrayed: By the man clothed in linen (Ezek. 9:2-11) who represents Christ as High Priest, marking His people to be spared from the flaming sword of vengeance. ***Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast (firmly) our profession*** (confession) (Heb. 4:14; also Rev. 7:2-3).

Word Studies: 5:16 **staff** = supply; 6:4 **images** = idols; 7:26 **ancients** = aged; 8:12 **chambers of his imagery** = shrine of his own carved idol.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. John Ruth-erford (FL) • **Country:** Belarus (9,608,058) Northeastern Europe • Major languages: Belarussian, Russian • Restricted Religious Freedom • 80% Eastern Orthodox; 20% Other (Roman Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, Hare Krishna, Bahai) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Confess your sins and ask the Lord to restore the joy of your salvation (Ps. 51:1-3,12).

Optional Reading: Revelation 7

Therefore say, Thus saith the LORD God; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come. Therefore say, Thus saith the LORD God; I will even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel (Ezek. 11:16-17).

Ezekiel's message up until this point had not been an encouraging one. The people had greatly sinned, and God's judgment was upon them. God's Spirit had departed, first from the Temple (Ezek. 10:18-19) and then from the city of Jerusalem (11:22-23), and the Israelites were now reaping what they had sown. ***Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*** (Gal. 6:7). Exiled in a foreign land with their spiritual home destroyed, they now lived without hope.

At the time of Ezekiel's ministry, it was a common belief among God's children that the only place He resided on earth was in the Temple of the Lord. They believed they had to travel to God; He did not come to them. Those exiled in the Babylonian territories could no longer travel to the Temple, but they had held onto the hope that, at some point, they would be able to again. Ezekiel's visions told them that the Lord's Spirit had departed and would no longer be able to be found there. They were truly alone. Whether or not they felt the punishment was just, they thought their God had abandoned them.

It was there, at their lowest point, that God moved Ezekiel to offer comfort and encouragement. First, he assured them that, even in exile, they had not been abandoned and were not alone. ***Although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.*** That in and of itself would have brought them great comfort. Knowing that whatever else they had lost, they had not lost God would have been enough to keep them going. But Ezekiel didn't stop there. His next words restored to them the promises of God. ***Thus saith the LORD God; I will***

even gather you from the people, and assemble you out of the countries where ye have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. Where there had been despair, now there was hope.

Ezekiel's words had a direct and definite message for his peers, but that was not their only intended audience. With these words, Ezekiel spoke boldly of the gifts that the future work of Christ would bestow. Jesus, ***In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins*** (Col. 1:14). The fulfillment of God's promise, made so long ago, is now within the grasp of all who will open themselves to accept that which has been purchased with the dearest of blood.

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God (Ezek. 11:19-20).

Thought for the Day: *No worldly power is capable of separating us from God; if we feel an absence, we need only look within for the answer.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who gives ***a new Spirit*** (Ezek. 11:19). This is the promise fulfilled when we accept Jesus as Savior and Lord of our lives. ***God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts*** (Gal. 4:4-7).

Word Studies: 12:3 **stuff for removing** = belongings to take into exile; 12:23 **effect of every vision** = fulfillment, every prophecy will come to pass; 13:9 **upon** = against; 13:18 **women that sew pillows to all armholes** = false prophetesses who sew magic charms upon the wrists of garments; 13:21 **kerchiefs** = veils; 13:23 **divine divinations** = practice witchcraft visions.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Country:** Belgium (10,449,361) Northwestern Europe • Major Languages: Dutch, French • Religious Freedom • 75% Catholic; 25% Other (Atheist, Muslim, Protestant, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Hare Krishna, Scientologist) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask for forgiveness for particular sins (Ps. 51:1-9).

Optional Reading: Revelation 8

And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through My comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the LORD God. But thou didst trust in thine own beauty, and playedst the harlot because of thy renown, and pouredst out thy fornications on every one that passed by; his it was (Ezek. 16:14-15).

In chapters 14 – 16 of the Book of Ezekiel, God once again takes the nation of Israel to task. He begins by disclosing the inner motivations of the elders of Israel who came to Ezekiel to inquire of the Lord (Ezek. 14:1). These men wore an outer cloak of righteousness, but God's view of their hearts revealed to Him their dedication to idolatry and sin. ***Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD God; Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the LORD will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols*** (14:4). Through Ezekiel, God explained that from this point forward he would meet idolatry with wrath; only true repentance and righteousness would be met with mercy (14:6-21).

Next, the Lord gives Ezekiel two parables that further illustrate the current state of Israel. In the first, He compares Israel to the bent and twisted vine tree (grapevine). The vine's sole purpose was to bear fruit, just as Israel's sole purpose had been to produce God's 'fruit.' Having failed in that task, both were useless (15:1-8).

In the second, God paints a vivid and unflattering picture of Jerusalem's relationship with her Lord. He used terminology and mental imagery that would have been readily understandable by the ordinary people of the day. It was a shocking tale designed to make the hearers recognize the gravity of their sins (16:1-63). Although we may cringe a little as we read the blunt words, if we are honest with ourselves, we will realize that much of what is being said still applies to many who self-identify as Christian today.

God is our Creator and Lord. He has given us everything we have. He has rescued us from certain death and offered us

eternal life. All of our modern comforts, all of our talents and abilities, all of it comes from God. When we take our God-given talents and gifts and use them only to pursue our selfish desires, we become as guilty as the citizens of ancient Jerusalem. Without God, we would have nothing. Without God, we wouldn't even exist. The Lord is not saying that we should not use our talents for work or recreation, only that He **MUST** be exalted in everything we do. God has given us these abilities for a reason, and He is the one to whom we need to turn to discover what that reason is. There is no greater joy to be found than in using our talents to their fullest extent in the service of God. Once you feel God's approval wash over you, you will never again seek the hollow accolades of the world.

If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Pet. 4:11).

Thought for to Day: *Accepting that God exists is only the first step toward faith; next, we must learn how to love and live with Him.*

Christ Revealed: In the **everlasting Covenant** (Ezek. 16:60). **He is the Mediator of a better Covenant** (Agreement) (Heb. 8:6).

Word Studies: 16:8 **I spread My skirt over thee** = symbolic of a covenant of marriage (Ruth 3:9; Deut. 22:30); 16:25 **opened thy feet** = offered yourself as a harlot; 16:30 **imperious whorish woman** = shameless prostitute; 16:31 **eminent place** = prominent public location; **thou scornest hire** = you refuse a fee; 16:43 **fretted me** = provoked me to anger.

Pray For: In Honor of Andrea Turner • **Government Officials:** Rep. Vincente Gonzalez (TX) • **Country:** Belize (340,844) Eastern coast of Central America • Major Languages: Spanish, Creole • Religious Freedom • 39.3% Roman Catholic; 30.9% Protestant; 1.6% Jehovah's Witness; 9.9% Other (Hindu, Muslim, Baha'i, Buddhism, Mormon); 3.1% Unknown; 15.2% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank God for His mercy to cleanse us from all sins (Ps. 51:2).

Optional Reading: Revelation 9

Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not My way equal? are not your ways unequal (Ezek. 18:25)?

The people of Judah endured much suffering during the final days of the Babylonian siege. In addition to the physical hardships, their pride took a devastating hit. Judah was once a powerful and respected nation, and Jerusalem was one of the most spectacular capitals ever built. The Israelites were accustomed to being bailed out by God and viewed His refusal to come to their rescue as a betrayal of their trust. They bitterly accused Him of being unjust in allowing them to be disgraced and defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. They viewed themselves as victims, never once considering that their stubborn refusal to turn from their sins had caused the removal of God's blessings and protection. Nebuchadnezzar was not, as they believed, acting in defiance of God's will but rather as His instrument of judgment.

They complained that God's ways were **not equal** (not fair) in much the same way a three-year-old might protest having a toy taken away after throwing it at his sister, but God pointed out the folly of their protest in no uncertain terms. **When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die** (Ezek. 18:26). They had done this to themselves; God was not 'moving against them' but instead allowing them to experience the realistic consequences of living outside of His will. It was not fair of them to willfully sin and still expect to receive the bounty of His blessings.

Yet even as he addressed their petulant attitude, God reminded them that the way back was open. **Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet saith the house of Israel, The way of the LORD is not equal. O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not**

your ways unequal? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the LORD God. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin (18:27-30). They had chosen to turn away from Him, but He had not given up on them. If they wanted a different outcome, they had the power to make a different choice.

Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the LORD God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye (18:31-32). God is a loving father; He takes no pleasure in our suffering. It is His will and desire that we follow Him, and He provides us with all the tools and support we need to do so. God is so much more than fair—He is merciful.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not (Gal. 6:7-9).

Thought for the Day: *It is God's will to free his faithful from the world, not give them dominion over it.*

Christ Revealed: As the One whose forgiveness provides life everlasting (Ezek. 18:20-22). ***God so loved (the people of) the world, that He gave His only begotten Son (Jesus), that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).***

Word Study: 17:18 **had given his hand** = had pledged his word; 18:8 **not given forth upon usury . . . taken any increase** = loaned money at no interest; 18:25 **not equal** = unfair.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Thomas Kean Jr. (NJ), Rep. Ann Kuster (NH) • **Country:** Benin (10,160,556) Western Africa • Major Languages: French, Fon, Yoruba, Tribal languages • Some hostility toward Christians • 27.1% Roman Catholic; 24.4% Muslim; 17.3% Vodoun; 10.4% Protestant; 5.3% Other Christian; 15.5% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank God for guiding you to sacrifice freely for what pleases Him (Ps. 54:6).

Optional Reading: Revelation 10

And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have wrought with you for My name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the LORD God (Ezek. 20:44).

Few verses in the Old Testament define God's grace as succinctly as the above verse. At a time when His people least deserved mercy, God chose to remind them how great His capacity was for it. For the third time, the Israelite leaders had come to Ezekiel to inquire of God. And for the third time, the Lord refused to entertain their questions (Ezek. 20:3). But instead of simply sending them away, God had Ezekiel explain why they were being rebuffed. ***Wilt thou judge them, son of man, wilt thou judge them? cause them to know the abominations of their fathers*** (20:4). Thus, with God's leading, Ezekiel recounted for them the history of Israel from the point of view of the Lord.

In Ezekiel's words, history unfolds, with two constants quickly emerging. The first is the ultimate power of God. From the beginning, the Lord orchestrated every moment of their lives (20:5,6,9,10,14,15,17,22,25,26,33-43). The second constant is the reckless, sinful nature of mankind. No matter how many times God moved to patiently instruct, direct and correct them, the Israelites had fought His guidance and insisted on doing things "their way." (20:8,13,21,27-32) They had survived, as a people, not because of their choices but solely based upon the mercy of God.

As Ezekiel's speech to these men ended, God delivered a profound truth. ***As I live, saith the LORD God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you*** (20:33). ***And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the LORD*** (20:38). The Israelites in exile were being given a final choice; either cede control to the Lord and accept both His rule and His mercy, or chose the path of a rebel and be barred forever from the land of Israel.

We are each of us God's creation, and we survive in this world through His grace alone. Ultimately, His complete dominion over all will be readily apparent, even to those who have spent their entire lives denying Him. ***For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God*** (Rom. 14:11). Through the work of Christ on the cross, every person alive today has received an invitation to join the family of God. If we accept that invitation, then we must turn control of our lives over to God (Matt. 16:24). As God's Word attests, there is nothing that we can do as human beings to make our lives fit for God's presence (Rom. 3:10-11). We are faced with the only choice that matters—will we be counted a rebel and barred forever from the land of promise (eternal life with God), or will we accept His life-changing grace?

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving (Col. 2:6-7).

Thought for the Day: *Claiming to work with God or work for God is the difference between pride and humility, respectively.*

Christ Revealed: *When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: And before Him shall be gathered all nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. . . . And these (goats) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal* (Matt. 25:31-46; also 3:12).

Word Studies: 20:5 **I lifted up mine hand** = I bound myself by an oath; 21:2 **drop thy (your) word toward** = pour out your words against

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Danny Davis (IL), Rep. William Keating (MA), Rep. Rep. Buddy Carter (GA), Rep. Sylvia Garcia (TX) • **Country:** Bermuda (69,839) North Atlantic • Major Languages: English, Portuguese • Religious Freedom • 46.1% Protestant; 14.5% Roman Catholic; 1.3% Jehovah's Witness; 9.1% Other Christian; 1% Muslim; 3.9% Other 17.8% None; 6.2% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call upon the Lord and He will save you (Ps. 55:16).

Optional Reading: Revelation 11

Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravening the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain. And her prophets have daubed them with untempered mortar, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the LORD God, when the LORD hath not spoken. The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none (Ezek. 22:27-30).

The destruction of Jerusalem was not brought about by any one great cataclysmic sin or event but rather by the constant callous indifference of her people. Over a thousand years earlier, Abraham had pleaded with the Lord for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying, ***Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes*** (Gen. 18:24-26). The conversation continued with Abraham pleading for the lives of an ever-shrinking number of righteous men, ending with God agreeing to spare the two cities if He could find as few as ten righteous men living within. By all appearances, Jerusalem seemed to be in an even more desperate situation. In Jerusalem, God sought not ten righteous men but one. Yet just as in Sodom and Gomorrah, His search was made in vain. ***And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none.***

The people had become so comfortable in the trappings of their worldly lives that they no longer possessed the spiritual wherewithal to stand with God. They had become indifferent to the needs of others; they were content to live and let live as

long as their needs and the needs of their families were met. God's laws and commandments had been set aside in favor of manmade directives—directives that had regularly evolved based upon the whims and moral compass of the populace and its king.

We do not know for certain what convictions or beliefs might have been privately held by the citizens of Jerusalem, but we do know that no single soul was willing to publicly ***stand in the gap before Me*** (God). This issue is very much in evidence in the world of Christianity today. Too many people comfortably don the mantle of 'Christian' while simultaneously living for the world. They might be in church every Sunday, but they are wrapped up in other pursuits Monday through Saturday, with no time or inclination to ***stand in the gap***. As the numbers of these self-absorbed, scripturally indifferent 'Christians' swell, the ***gap*** grows ever wider. What will happen when the day comes that the Lord seeks to fill that ***gap***? Will there be anyone capable of answering His call?

Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone (James 2:17).

Thought for the Day: *Death is the cost of sin, and it is the only certainty promised in a life devoted to it.*

Christ Revealed: In the denunciation of Israel's false prophets (Ezek. 22: 25-28). Compare these words with those Christ spoke against the scribes and Pharisees. ***Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees*** (Matt. 23:13-36).

Word Studies: 22:7 ***they set light by father and mother*** = they treated parents with contempt; ***dealt by oppression with the stranger*** = treat oppressively and suffer extortion from a foreigner; ***they vexed the fatherless and the widow*** = they wrong the orphan and the widow; 22:12 ***gifts*** = bribes.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Country:** Bhutan (733,643) in the eastern Himalayas of central Asia • Major Languages: Sharchhopka, Dzongkha, Lhotshamkha • Public worship, evangelism, and proselytization are illegal • 75.3% Lamaistic Buddhist; 22.1% Indian and Nepalese influenced Hinduism; 2.6% Other (Christian, Muslim) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Call to the Lord for help; He will save you out of your troubles (Ps. 34:17).

Optional Reading: Revelation 12

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the LORD GOD: and it shall become a spoil to the nations (Ezek. 26:3-5).

With its island fortress and coastal territorial possessions, Tyre was the greatest international trading center of its time. The destruction of Jerusalem, her fiercest competitor, had afforded her complete control of world commerce. Because they rejoiced over the fall of God's people, Ezekiel prophesied that the Lord would utterly demolish Tyre. ***Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me: I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste*** (Ezek. 26:2).

Tyre seemed like the most secure place on earth. It is highly likely that even if word of these prophecies had reached her, few of her citizens would have felt any fear. Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar battled against this mighty city and besieged her fortress for thirteen years, ultimately defeating her. After the experience with Nebuchadnezzar, the rulers of Tyre decided to move to an island half-mile from the mainland. Surrounded by water and protected by her great fleet of Phoenician ships, Tyre once again believed herself to be unassailable, and once again, she was wrong. When Alexander the Great besieged Tyre, he tore down the walls, towers, and buildings of the old Tyre on the mainland and used them as material to build a causeway in the water, literally a rock road directly to the island, thus fulfilling Ezekiel's amazing prophecy: ***And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses: and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water*** (26:12). True to the Word of God delivered by Ezekiel, this action brought about the end

of Tyre. The once revered island city has never been rebuilt. It exists now only as ***a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea.***

Every hour of every day, the ruins of Tyre stand as testimony to the fact that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. Tyre was not conquered and repurposed; she was utterly destroyed. The ruins still sit upon the deserted bed of island rock, just as God proclaimed they would. ***And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the LORD GOD*** (26:14).

The consequences of the sinful, gloating attitude of Tyre over Jerusalem's fall should serve as a warning to us all. How many of us secretly rejoice when our competition goes bankrupt or cheer when our chief rival makes a public mistake? Instead of lifting them up with supportive prayers, we laugh and gossip and try to forward our own interests at their expense. God's Word plainly states that this behavior is an abomination in His eyes.

Thy Word is true from the beginning: and every one of Thy righteous judgments endureth for ever (Ps. 119:160).

Thought for the Day: *God allows His people to fail so that they will learn from their mistakes, not so others may take pleasure in their fall.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who will rule over the destruction of Satan at the end of time: ***Therefore will I bring forth a fire . . . it shall devour thee*** (Ezek. 28:18-19). As Jesus reigns following the Great White Throne Judgment, Satan, ***the devil . . . was cast into the lake of fire*** (Rev. 20:1-10,14).

Word Studies: 25:5 **couchingplace** = resting place; 26:9 **engines of war** = battering rams; 26:17 **haunt it** = dwell there.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Michael Simpson (ID), Sen. Bernie Sanders (VT) • **Country:** Bolivia (10,631,486) South America • Major Languages: Spanish, Quechua • Religious Freedom • 95% Roman Catholic; 5% Protestant • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray not to be envious of others (Ps. 37:1).

Optional Reading: Revelation 13

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries (Ezek. 30:22-23).

At the time of the Exodus, the ten plagues forced the Egyptians to acknowledge that their gods were powerless against the One True God. This should have caused Egypt to reject their idols and worship the One True God of all creation. We all know, of course, that this did not happen. Their hardened hearts had prevented them from understanding and accepting the majesty of the Lord. Over the centuries since that time, Egypt had become a magnificent world power and had grown famous for her commerce, art, literature, science, and military might. As with his prophecy concerning Tyre, Ezekiel's pronouncement of Egypt's fate would have been considered by the powers of the day to be a laughable hoax. They would have believed it impossible for Egypt to be defeated and permanently stripped of her influence, yet, that is exactly what happened.

God brought judgment upon His chosen people and Egypt, Tyre, Sidon, and Babylon for one main reason. ***And they shall know that I am the LORD, and that I have not said in vain that I would do this evil unto them*** (29:9). The phrase ***and they shall know that I am the LORD*** is mentioned 66 times in this book. This is the point that all of them, from His chosen people to those He chose to carry out His judgment, were missing. None understood the importance of worshiping the Almighty God and obeying His Word.

Nebuchadnezzar did not know that Jehovah was preparing him and his Babylonian armies to be His servants. Neither did he know that he was fulfilling prophecy, and thus following the will of God by devastating first Israel and then Egypt. God said of Nebuchadnezzar, that fierce, evil king: ***I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought (worked) for Me saith the LORD GOD*** (29:20), but even then, Nebuchadnezzar never grasped that

his victories came from the Lord. Therefore, after Babylon had accomplished God's purpose, Babylon was forever destroyed.

Along with the charge to deliver words of doom and devastation, Ezekiel was granted the privilege of foretelling a future time of redemption and restoration. ***In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them; and they shall know that I am the LORD*** (29:21). God Himself looks forward to the time when all and sundry will know His name through the revelation of His glory. Redemption, not destruction. Salvation, not death.

As we read and study God's Word, let us strive to build a deep and personal relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, thus ensuring our place among the redeemed. He is available to us in every chapter and verse of every book if we only open ourselves to receive Him. In the end, God will be known to all, but only those who have entered into the body of Christ will be allowed to enter into His presence for all eternity.

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth (Ps. 46:10).

Thought for to Day: *Worldly destruction does not equal being forsaken, and restoration does not equate to God's blessing. Each act is all part of the same plan leading to the same finale.*

Christ Revealed: By the **Word of the Lord** (Ezek. 29:1). ***In the beginning was the Word*** (Jesus), ***and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*** (John 1:1). ***God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son*** (Heb. 1:1-2).

Word Studies: 29:7 **loins to be at a stand** = their legs to give way or stagger; 29:18 **peeled** = rubbed bare; 30:2 **Woe worth the day** = Mourn the coming day (of terror); 31:3 **a shadowing shroud** = overshadowing the forest.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Sen. Chris Coons (DE), Rep. John Duarte (CA), Rep. Mike Lawler (NY) • **Country:** Bosnia and Herzegovina (3,871,643) Balkan Peninsula in Southeastern Europe • Major Languages: Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian • Discrimination against religious minorities occurred in nearly all parts of the country • 40% Muslim; 31% Serbian Orthodox Christians; 15% Roman Catholic; 14% Other (Protestant, Jewish) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Delight in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart (Ps. 37:4).

Optional Reading: Revelation 14

Because thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas the LORD was there: Therefore, as I live, saith the LORD GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them; and I will make myself known among them, when I have judged thee. (Ezek. 35:10-11).

After the death of his father Isaac, Esau settled in Edom and conquered the rocky country near Mount Seir, known today as Petra. From strategic mountain heights overlooking the southern border of the Holy Land, the Edomites had watched with obvious envy the growing power of Jacob's favored tribes. When it became apparent that the nation of Israel had lost the favor of the Lord, Edom could not be satisfied with just watching the invasion and destruction of Israel by the mighty Nebuchadnezzar. Forgetful of all ties of kinship, the Edomites sent troops to assist Nebuchadnezzar in his devastating war against Jerusalem. They were even crueler than the Chaldeans (Babylonians) and massacred the few Israelites who escaped. They then ruthlessly boasted of their part in the terrible destruction of Jerusalem and eagerly took possession of some of the defeated lands of Israel and Judah.

Amidst the backdrop of this terrible destruction, it seems strange to read the words: ***The LORD was there***. The sentence breaks in like a rainbow in the sky following a torrential down-pour. ***I will make thee*** (Edom) ***perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return: and ye shall know that I am the LORD*** (Ezek. 35:9). Yes, ***the LORD was*** (and is always) ***there*** in the Promised Land, and He saw all that transpired. The land was desolate but not forsaken; it was conquered and carried away, but it was not deserted by Israel's God, for ***the LORD was there***. Once we have been born again unto the family of God, that same promise will exist in our lives, no matter how dark the day or how deep the problem we have entangled ourselves in. The Lord will always be there, waiting to lead all those faithful to Him out of the darkness and into the light.

And I will set up one shepherd over them, and He shall

feed them, even My servant David; He shall feed them, and He shall be their shepherd (34:23). Ezekiel foretold of a Shepherd who would truly love and care for His sheep. He portrayed the Savior-Shepherd as ***My servant David*** because of David's intense desire for his people to honor the Lord. David had a shepherd's heart and was himself a foreshadowing of Jesus the Messiah, the King of kings. Jesus identified Himself as Israel's Shepherd, sent of God. ***As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep*** (John 10:15).

Ezekiel had only the smallest glimpse of what was to come, but we now live in a world in which the Truth has been revealed. Our Savior did not give His life as a martyr for truth or as a moral example of self-sacrifice. He, of His own free will, sacrificed His life as the only acceptable sacrifice for lost, sinful people (10:11,15,18). Jesus Christ took our rightful punishment of eternal death. By dying on the cross for our sins, He conquered death (see Rev. 1:18) so we might have eternal life.

I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of mine (John 10:14).

Thought for the Day: *Christ has reserved our seats in heaven and is anticipating our arrival there; surely, that knowledge should be enough to cause us to follow the path that leads to them.*

Christ Revealed: As the Shepherd (Ezek. 34:23). Jesus said: ***I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep*** (John 10:14).

Word Studies: 34:14 **a fat** = the best; 34:27 **delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them** = freed them from slavery; 36:3 **an infamy of** = slandered, ridiculed by.

Pray For Government Official: Sen. Cynthia Lummis (WY) • **Country:** Botswana (2,155,784) Southern Africa • **Major Languages:** Setswana, English • **Limited Religious Freedom** • 71.6% Christian; 6% Badimo; 1.4% Other (Muslim, Hindu, Baha'i); 0.4% Unspecified; 20.6% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rest in the Lord; wait patiently for Him (Ps. 37:7).

Optional Reading: Revelation 15

And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the LORD God, that My fury shall come up in My face. For in My jealousy and in the fire of My wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at My presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the LORD God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD (Ezek. 38:18-23).

In today's reading, Ezekiel looked beyond Israel's desperate circumstances into a promised time of hope and restoration. In chapter 37, Ezekiel described how God would once again gather all His people (Ezek. 37:16-21), restore their land, heal their hearts, and place His Spirit within them. ***And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put My spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD*** (37:13-14). With these words, Ezekiel reaffirmed the glory and power of God. Whatever trials God's people faced at that moment were transient and irrelevant; God's eternal plan would continue until it reached its predetermined and perfect end.

In addition to revealing the restoration of God's people, Ezekiel went on to explain the way in which God would ultimately stand in their defense against the united evil of the world, van-

quishing all those who would seek to do His people harm and establishing His identity with all of creation in a way that would not be able to be denied. ***Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.***

God has given us His Word so we might come to know Him in faith. He has given us His Word so that we might learn to recognize His will and follow the path down which He leads us. Lastly, He has given us His Word so we might find hope when faced with darkness and love when inundated by hate. God is with us; therefore, victory is assured.

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (Rev. 20:6-9).

Thought for the Day: *God's promise lets us know that not only will His light brighten whatever current darkness plagues us, but also that He will continue shining through all the hard times to come.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who made possible our resurrection from the grave (Ezek. 37:12). ***The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout . . . and the dead in Christ shall rise first*** (I Thess. 4:13-18; also John 11:25; Rev. 1:18).

Word Studies: 37:26 **place them** = settle and bless them; 38:19 **shaking** = earth- quake; 39:6 **carelessly** = securely, undisturbed; 39:14 **sever out men** = select men; **with the passengers** = with the already-collected dead.

Pray For Radio: In Memory of Winston A. Grant (9/11/01 Tower 1) • **Government Official:** Rep. Bob Good (VA) • **Country:** Brazil (202,656,788) South America • Major Language: Portuguese • Religious Freedom • 65.1% Catholic; 22.2% Protestant; 0.7% Other Christian; 2.2% Spiritist; 1.4% Other; 8% None; 0.4% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Sing praises to God, for He hears your prayers and delivers you (Ps. 40:1-3).

Optional Reading: Revelation 16

Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about. He measured the east side with the measuring reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the north side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed round about. He measured the south side, five hundred reeds, with the measuring reed. He turned about to the west side, and measured five hundred reeds with the measuring reed. He measured it by the four sides: it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place (Ezek. 42:15-20).

Twice before in His Word, God has given detailed instructions for the building of His earthly house. First to Moses regarding the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Ex. 25-27,30-31), and later to David and Solomon for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem (I Chr. 28; I Kings 5-7). Both times, He provided architectural blueprints as well as designating who should build it, how, when, and where. Ezekiel's vision was different in that God included no directive for the actual construction. While perfect in scale and function, the Temple design God gave Ezekiel has not yet been given form outside the pages of God's Word, and Biblical scholars are deeply divided over whether or not God intends for it ever to be.

One of the truly wonderful things about God's Word is that we do not have to wait until all has been made clear before benefiting from the lessons it contains. The literal or figurative nature of Ezekiel's Temple will be revealed in God's perfect time; for now, we can be content that God has it under control and turn our attention to the knowledge we can glean from what He has already shared.

This world was created by God, and all that is in it is His (I Cor. 10:26), but it has been greatly corrupted by mankind. In His permissive will, God has allowed those who choose to live Godless, secular lives. For those of us who have entered the body of Christ, such a life is no longer possible, yet we are

under near-constant pressure to conform to worldly societal norms. So what can we do?

We can take inspiration from the design God shared with Ezekiel and build a wall to protect the holiness inside us that has been imparted from God. By doing so, we create ***a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place***, that we can draw around us, creating a bubble of Godliness everywhere we go. Wherever we are or whatever we are doing—home, work, on social media, or just out and about with friends—we can stay in that bubble, set apart from the worldly influence that seeks to destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8). In this way we can fearlessly interact with others, sharing our God and inviting them to experience the peace and certainty that comes from standing in His presence.

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Thought for the Day: *Faith in God insulates our souls from forces that would do them harm.*

Christ Revealed: Through ***the sacrifice*** (Ezek. 40:42). Jesus made the final ***once for all. . . . sacrifice for sins for ever*** (Heb. 10:10-12). Thus He became our only Mediator with God by dying for our sins. ***So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation*** (9:23-28).

Word Studies: 40:17 **thirty chambers** were upon the pavement = 30 rooms faced this pavement terrace; 40:23 **over against** = opposite; 41:24 **turning leaves** = hinged panels; 42:20 **profane** = unholy, common.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Jeff Jackson (NC) • **Country:** British Virgin Islands (32,680) Caribbean • **Major Language:** English • **Religious Freedom** • 84% Protestant; 10% Roman Catholic; 2% Jehovah Witness; 2% Other; 2% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray to be sensitive to give God the praise for everything you do (Ps. 40:16).

Optional Reading: Revelation 17

In the land shall be his possession in Israel: and My princes shall no more oppress My people; and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes. Thus saith the LORD God; Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, take away your exactions from My people, saith the LORD God. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath (Ezek. 45:8-10).

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God (Rom. 13:1). Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17). It is God's will that we submit to the authority of our earthly leaders. This is not a popular concept amongst modern Christians, who love to throw on modifiers such as "God tells us to obey Godly leaders." But God attached no such modifier. If the rule and law of man go against the Word of God, we are expected to follow the dictates of God, but He also expects us to accept the consequences of our actions, whether we consider them just or unjust.

Earthly authorities bear a tremendous responsibility, ***for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account.*** God will hold them accountable not just for their own actions but also for how they direct those entrusted to their care. In today's reading, God directs Ezekiel to tell of a time to come when ***princes shall no more oppress My people***, and His people will be led by the fair, just, and Godly. It will be a time of peace and plenty, without need or want, suffused with the Spirit of God. He then goes on to encourage the current ***princes of Israel*** not to wait for that future time but rather to go ahead and implement Godly rule in the present day. He reminded them that it was within their power to lead with grace and love instead of unyielding force and greed. He urged them to be fair and equitable in all dealings and never allow their position to weight the scales in their favor.

These words were addressed to the ***princes of Israel***,

but those of us in authority over others today would do well to heed God's advice, and that encompasses a much greater number of people than many would think. Parents, teachers, and administrators. Pastors and other spiritual leaders. Supervisors, bosses, and business owners. Mayors, governors, presidents, and kings. Just think for a minute how much better the world would be if everyone in a position of authority exercised that authority solely by the dictates of God. What would it be like if every leader gave up their own agenda, and God's will, implemented with love, mercy, and grace, became the law of the land? How perfect would it be if every living soul yielded to that authority? As individual members of the body of Christ, we cannot control the actions of others, but that doesn't mean there is nothing we can do. We can resolve, from this point forward, to personally lead and follow with Godly commitment and grace.

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world (Phil. 2:13-15).

Thought for to Day: *Even as it appears the world is spiraling out of control and away from God, we must remember that nothing happens that He has not allowed to happen.*

Christ Revealed: As ***the glory of the Lord*** (Ezek. 43:4). Jesus is ***the brightness of His glory*** (the glory of God), ***and the express image of His Person*** (Heb. 1:3).

Word Studies: 43:4 **whose prospect is** = which faces; 43:12 **limit** = the whole border, territory; 43:13 **higher place of** = height of; 43:14 **settle** = ledge on which the priests stood; 43:17 **squares** = sides; 44:18 **bonnets** = turbans, headdresses; 44:22 **put away** = divorced; 45:24 **meat** = grain/cereal/meal.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Ro Khanna (CA), Rep. Chuck Edwards (NC), Rep. Ann Wagner (MO), Rep. Roger Williams (TX) • **Country:** Brunei (422,675) Northern Coast of Borneo • Major Languages: Malay, English, Chinese • Restricted Religious Freedom • 78.8% Muslim; 8.7% Christian; 7.8% Buddhist; 4.7% Other (Includes Indigenous Beliefs) • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray to be considerate to the less fortunate (Ps. 41:1).

Optional Reading: Revelation 18

Then said He unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh (Ezek. 47:8-9).

In a vision, Ezekiel saw the waters of life flowing into the Dead Sea, bringing forth fresh, life-giving water where there had once been only death and desolation. Everywhere the river flowed, it brought life. This may have been a new concept in the time of Ezekiel, but for Christians today, it should have a familiar ring. ***And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*** (Eph. 2:1). The progress of these waters was gradual but constant. It began at the altar, symbolic of the cross. Ezekiel first saw waters reaching to the ankle, then to the knees, then to the loins, and then they became a river. They flowed gradually and constantly in the ever-deepening stream.

The growth of this stream serves as a perfect illustration of Christ and His Church. The Gospel had a small, insignificant beginning. An unknown and unassuming carpenter's son joined with earnest fishermen to spread a message of hope and love. Steadily, the movement grew, despite the extreme opposition from religious and political leaders, who conspired to crush it. Still, the power of Christ proved impossible to stop. Slowly but inexorably, it has spread from a small village in Galilee to every corner of the world.

The River of Life has its source in Him who created all life, in Him whose glory first filled the Temple before spreading among all the nations of the earth. All the spiritual blessings that now enrich the world issue from Him who alone gives life (see Eph. 3:8; John 6:27; 10:28). Similarly, the growth of grace in the individual life is a progressive work, beginning with a small stream from Christ, the Fountainhead, but increasing in depth and preciousness over time. Our spiritual insight from God's

Word, like the waters of the Temple, is shallow at first but grows exponentially as we study with Him and become dispensers of the Water of Life to others. ***With Thee is the Fountain of Life: in Thy light shall we see light*** (Ps. 36:9).

All who accept Jesus as Savior shall have ***rivers of living*** (life-giving) ***water*** flowing from them: ***In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*** (John 7:37-38).

From the Lord flows a pure River of Life that has no limitations. He can cleanse the vilest of sinners—no exceptions. No one who desires to forsake his sinful ways and accept the gift of Christ the Redeemer is disqualified. All the blessings of life everlasting, which come only through Christ, are equally available to all who desire Him to be Savior and Lord of their lives.

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Thought for the Day: *The water of life surrounds thirsty unbelievers, but it is as salt water to those without God.*

Christ Revealed: Through the river of living waters and one of the Names of God, ***Jehovah*** (Yahweh) - ***Shammah meaning: The Lord is there*** (Ezek. 47:1-12; 48:35; also Rev. 21 – 22).

Word Studies: 46:7 ***as his hand shall attain unto*** = as much as he can afford; 46:24 ***places of them that boil*** = where the Temple servants are too boil the sacrifice; 47:2 utter gate = outer gate.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Government Officials:** Supreme Court Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, Gov. Ron DeSantis (FL) • **Country:** Bulgaria (6,924,716) Southeastern Europe • Major Languages: Bulgarian, Turkish • Newly opened to evangelism • 59.4% Eastern Orthodox; 7.8% Muslim; 1.7% Other (Catholic, Protestant, Armenian Apostolic Orthodox, Jewish); 3.7% None; 27.4% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray for a greater desire to serve the Lord (Ps. 42:1-2).

Optional Reading: Revelation 19

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon (Dan. 3:28-30).

As little more than children, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were captured by the Babylonians and removed from their homeland. They were separated from their families, stripped of their identities, and assigned to the court of Nebuchadnezzar so that they might undergo special training designed to integrate them into the Babylonian culture and make them productive members of their new society. As everything they had been raised to believe in was called into question, these four young men faced the most important decision they would ever have to make. Would they surrender their heritage and faith and become the authentic Babylonians Nebuchadnezzar wished them to be, or would they remain faithful servants of God and follow His directives even along the new path before them?

Scripture makes clear their choice. Without hesitation, they chose to follow the will of God. They accepted their positions as servants to the Babylonian king, acknowledging his authority over them as second only to the authority of God. On that point, they stood firm and would not compromise, not even in the face of death. ***Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: And whoso falleth not down and worshippingeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of***

the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up (Dan. 3:10-12).

Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah went into the fire without foreknowledge of the outcome. It is likely that they fully expected to be consumed by the flames, but they knew in their hearts that keeping the commandments of God was more important than preserving their own lives. They knew that whether they lived or died, their actions would bring honor and glory to God.

By bringing His faithful servants safely through the flames, the Lord revealed Himself to their Babylonian captors. While Nebuchadnezzar was far from converted, He could no longer deny the existence and might of the God of Israel. ***Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.***

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Thought for to Day: *If the light of God is your guide, you will always be able to see the path before you.*

Christ Revealed: As ***The Stone that smote the image*** (Dan. 2:35). ***The Stone*** is Jesus Christ (Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; I Pet. 2:4-8).

Word Studies: 1:4 **Children in whom was no blemish** = Young men who were strong and healthy; 2:1 **sleep brake from him** = he was unable to sleep; 2:31 **great image was terrible** = dreadful, awesome, frightening; 3:19 **the form of his visage** = his facial expression ; 3:21 **hosen** = other garments.

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Nanette Barragan (CA), Rep. Veronica Escobar (TX), Rep. Derrick Van Orden (WI) • **Country:** Burkina Faso (18,365,123) Western Africa • Major Languages: French, Sudanic Tribal Languages • Religious Freedom • 60.5% Muslim; 19% Roman Catholic; 15.3% Animist; 4.2% Protestant; 0.6% Other; 0.4% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that God delights in your joy (Ps. 43:4).

Optional Reading: Revelation 20

Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you. I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions (Dan. 6:25-27).

Daniel was taken into captivity during the first incursion by Nebuchadnezzar, during the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah (Dan.1:1-3). Nearly 70 years later, Daniel had reached the rank of high-level official, second only to the king (6:1-3). Daniel got to this position not by pandering to the Chaldean (Babylonian) government but by standing strong in his faith. He was upright and honest in all his dealings, fearlessly sharing his God-given gifts with those in authority over him. His honesty earned him the respect of Nebuchadnezzar (and even helped to lead the pagan monarch into acknowledging the power of God (4:18-37)) and later of Belshazzar, Nebuchadnezzar's idolatrous and ill-fated descendant (5:16-30).

As we see at the beginning of chapter six, Daniel's success at the hands of the Lord had also earned him the enmity of those whose positions of power he overtook (6:3-4). Unable to find any legal or moral fault with Daniel, they conspired to put him in a situation that would put God's Law at odds with the law of the land (6:5-8). The light of God shone so clearly from Daniel that even these evil men knew that he would continue in the will of God (6:10-11). What comes next is one of the most well-known biblical events of all time. Daniel is thrown into a den of hungry lions and emerges unscathed the next morning. While this miraculous event does give us another look at the awesome power of the God we serve, it also allows us to experience the quiet yet life-changing power of faith.

From our reading, we can discern that Darius was a just king with a good moral character. He was devastated when he

realized the consequences of the law that he had been conned into signing as a side-effect of his own ego. His most trusted advisor was facing an agonizing death, and he was powerless to do anything about it. After sealing Daniel in the lion's den, the king returned to his rooms and spent a sleepless night in the clutches of fear and grief (6:18). Because he believed himself to be the 'highest power,' he was given over to hopeless despair.

Daniel, on the other hand, was calm and untroubled. From the moment he had heard of the decree, he knew that his life was in danger, yet he still placed his total trust in God. Openly, he prayed; willingly, he entered into the lion's den. His life was in God's hands, and he was unafraid. What Daniel had that Darius lacked was an unwavering belief in a power greater than himself. ***And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose*** (Rom. 8:28). Daniel knew that, no matter if he lived or died, his life was being used to glorify the Lord. In that knowledge, he found peace.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

Thought for the Day: *Those who attempt to maintain total control of their lives and the lives of those around them experience nothing but stress; only those who accept God's power will feel peace.*

Christ Portrayed: By Daniel – a stone was rolled across the mouth of the den of lions and set with the king's seal (Dan. 6:16-17). There was a stone rolled across the mouth of the cave where Jesus was buried and it too was set with an official seal (Matt. 27:63-66). As Daniel came forth unscathed, proclaiming the power of God to save, so, too, Jesus came forth from the dead proclaiming the saving power of God (Rev. 1:18).

Word Studies: 4:11 **the sight thereof to** = its visibility extended to; 4:16 & 32 **seven times** = seven years; 5:5 **against the candlestick** = opposite the lampstand; 5:12 **shewing of** = rare ability of revealing the meaning of baffling riddles.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Officials:** Rep. Joaquin Castro (TX), Gov. John Bel Edwards (LA) • **Country:** Burma (55,746,253) Southeastern Asia • **Major Language:** Burmese • **Persecution of Christians** • 89% Buddhist; 4% Christian; 4% Muslim; 1% Animist; 2% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Remember that the Lord is always ready to help you in times of trouble (Ps. 46:1).

Optional Reading: Revelation 21

And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it (Dan. 8:27).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17). As Christians, we know the solemn truth of Paul's words to Timothy. We understand that God's Word is a precious gift meant to be prayerfully studied and applied to our lives as we live and work in the body of Christ. Most of the time, this is a fairly straightforward process, but occasionally we come up against a passage that we cannot seem to decipher, even through the filter of the Holy Spirit. The harder we try to understand the 'meaning' behind the words, the more frustrated we grow until we finally give into temptation and skip ahead to more easily understandable Scripture.

Sometimes, though, the message that a passage holds for us is not the one that we thought we were looking for. Daniel was a much-beloved servant of God, and he had been blessed with an extraordinary ability. ***As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams*** (Dan. 1:17). Throughout his life in Babylon, he had efficiently interpreted the dreams of kings and princes. He had himself received numerous visions from the Lord. Up until the point of today's reading, the Lord had enabled Daniel to discern the meanings of dreams and visions, no matter how obscure they appeared at first glance. ***I thank Thee, and praise Thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter*** (2:23). Yet he had no effective interpretation of the visions he received in today's reading. Even when the Lord sent the angel Gabriel to clarify the message, Daniel was still unable to understand. The vision left him feeling sick, shaken, and confused.

Why, we might wonder, would the Lord give Daniel visions that he would be unable to interpret? God Himself gives us the answer to that question with how he closes his communication with Daniel. ***And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days*** (8:26). God gave this vision to Daniel, and by extension, to all readers of His Word, so that it might be preserved and, in some as yet to be recognized time, bear witness to Him. These words constitute a promise from God, not a warning. There will come a day when all those living upon the earth will be able to look upon these passages of Scripture with understanding and will marvel at the omniscient nature of God, much as we do now when we read Isaiah's words that so accurately foretold the first coming of Jesus Christ. In the meantime, it is our responsibility and privilege to prayerfully read and remember the words, trusting that God will make their meaning clear at the proper time.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known (1 Cor. 13:12).

Thought for the Day: *True faith accepts the direction of God even in the face of the unknown.*

Christ Revealed: As the ***Son of Man*** (Dan. 7:13-14). The truth of this vision was confirmed by our Lord as He spoke of His promised return. ***They shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*** (Matt. 24:30).

Word Studies: 7:25 **wear out** = to persecute with purpose of entire annihilation; 7:28 **cogitations much troubled** = bewildered thoughts; 8:7 **choler** = brutal rage; 8:24 **wonderfully** = astonishingly successful; 9:7 **confusion of faces** = look of shame; 9:25 **wall** = moat; 9:26 **cut off** = put to death.

Pray In Memory of: Angie Stone • **Government Officials:** Sen. Chuck Grassley (IA) Gov. Mke Parson (MO) • **Country:** Burundi (10,395,931) East-central Africa • Major Languages: Kirundi, French • Religious Freedom • 62.1% Roman Catholic; 23.9% Protestant; 2.5% Muslim; 3.6% Other; 7.9% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** God wants to be exalted through you (Ps. 46:10).

Optional Reading: Revelation 22

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my LORD, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand (Dan. 12:8-10).

The closing chapters of Daniel are often compared to the Book of Revelation. Similar to a study of Revelation, when we read these three chapters, we are often left with more questions than answers. Even Daniel, God's beloved scholar (Dan. 9:23), was baffled by the Lord's vision. After receiving it, he inquired: ***And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my LORD, what shall be the end of these things?*** If Daniel was left confused, what hope do we have for understanding? And he said, ***Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.*** The purpose of the vision given to Daniel, and by extension, to all of us reading today, was not to allow the hearer to discern the entirety of God's plan in detail. Instead, it was given so that we might grasp, in part, the overwhelming power of the God we serve.

Daniel was a man of prayer, and through his rich prayer life, he remained continually in the presence of God. Daniel understood that his words (prayer) held no actual power and that the power resided with God alone, but he revealed his 100% dependence on the Lord through his words. By opening himself completely to the Lord, with no thought to his own physical well-being (10:16), Daniel was filled with heavenly strength (10:19). As Daniel prayed for his people on the worldly plane, God granted him the privilege of glimpsing the heavenly one. It is here that we find the essential lesson of the book of Daniel—we are never alone. The spiritual world surrounds us at all times, and conflicts are being waged in ways beyond our comprehension. Evil exists (Dan. 10:20), but God and His forces

are stronger (1 John 4:4). The Lord came to Daniel to encourage the continuation and expansion of his prayers. Daniel's willingness to be filled with the spirit of the Lord allowed him to aid in the battle that his eyes could not see. ***For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*** (Eph. 6:12).

In his final vision, God gave Daniel knowledge of the end times. As we read the words today, the chaos and confusion of those days seem to leap off the page at us. The horrors of war and the depravity of wickedness paint a bleak picture of despair. Yet in the midst of the madness, we see the hand of God. ***Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; the wise shall understand.*** This is His promise to Daniel and to all who are joined in the family of God. For those who belong to and follow Jesus Christ, the confusion will simply be background noise. Our way will be clear; in that time, we shall understand. It is not just to Daniel, but to every faithful believer that God says:

But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days (Dan. 12:13).

Thought for the Day: *Only God's light can illuminate the path before us; those that close their hearts to it will only perceive a dark and winding labyrinth.*

Christ Revealed: As ***Him that liveth for ever*** (Dan. 12:7). As One of the Three expressed Persons of the Trinity, Jesus Christ always has been and always will be. ***Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily*** (Truly, truly), ***I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am*** (John 8:58). ***I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord*** (Jesus Christ), ***which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty*** (Rev. 1:8, also 4:8).

Word Studies: 10:15 **dumb** = speechless; 11:11 **choler** = furious rage; 11:15 **fenced cities** = strongholds; 11:24 **fattest** = richest; **forecast his devices** = prepare his plans; 12:7 **a time, times, and an half** = 3-1/2 years.

Pray for prayer lines in memory of Edith Cain and Selma Tyler • **Government Officials:** Sen. Tommy Tuberville (AL) • **Country:** Cabo Verde (538,535) Western Africa • **Major Languages:** Portuguese, Crioulo • **Religious Freedom** • 77.3% Roman Catholic; 3.7% Protestant; 4.3% Other Christian; 1.8% Muslim; 1.4% Other; 10.8% None; 0.7% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask God for daily direction (Ps. 48:14).

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. As they were increased, so they sinned against Me: therefore will I change their glory into shame (Hos. 4:6-7).

These verses make the reason for Israel's defeat unmistakably clear. God had chosen Israel to be His nation and had showered His love and blessings upon her, but she had turned away from Him to other gods. Her citizens had put His Word and His Law out of their minds and neglected to teach them to their children. As a result, the children strayed and became unfaithful to God. In the end, a simple lack of knowledge brought this once great nation to her knees. They no longer remembered the glory and the holiness of the One True God, and their very foundation crumbled.

Hosea was a prophet of the Lord sent to 'refresh the memory' of Israel. The Lord sent many prophets during this time of forgetfulness, but Hosea stands out from the rest in one significant way. God commanded Hosea to take for his wife a known adulteress. The Lord told Hosea ahead of time that she would be unfaithful to him, but He commanded him to love her anyway. Over time, all that the Lord had foretold regarding his wife came true. Hosea was heartbroken, but he still loved her, and finally, he redeemed her and brought her back into the love and protection of his household.

The Lord's relationship with Israel formed over centuries, and the patterns were so spread out that they were often hard to detect. Hosea's marriage to Gomer played out in real-time, where everyone could plainly see. Hosea, who remained faithful to his wife through it all, represented God, and his wife represented Israel, the Lord's faithless bride. Hosea underwent years of pain and uncertainty as His wife refused to commit. Through the births of three children (whose parentage was quite likely uncertain), Hosea loved and supported his wife. This mirrored the centuries that the Lord had stood by Israel, loving and protecting her, trying to guide her away from the

pagan idols and back into His will. At her lowest point, Gomer left her husband to live with another man. This illustrates the complete break that Israel had made from the One True God. Ultimately, Hosea buys back his wife, and after a long period of chaste re-introduction and faithfulness, he restores her to her rightful place in his home. By doing so, Hosea demonstrates the Lord's unfailing love for His people. Through Hosea, God affirmed that He would never forsake Israel, no matter how terrible her actions were. Although her behavior might bring about severe consequences, He would always be willing to redeem her and bring her home.

Today, we, as citizens of the world, stand on the same perilous ledge as Israel did so long ago. As we accept watered-down versions of God's message, we are in danger of forgetting his Living Word. Only one Guidebook is provided for us to get the most out of our brief lives on earth. We call it the Bible, and it contains everything that we need to know to live the fullest life possible. Without it, we are lost and will be ***destroyed for lack of knowledge.***

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Thought for the Day: *God will never leave or forsake us; our relationship with God should focus on how not to forsake Him.*

Christ Revealed: Through Hosea's love for his unworthy, sinful wife (Hos. 3:1-5). Our Lord Jesus not only loved us ***while we were yet sinners***, but He also died the death of shame for us on Calvary so that all He possessed might become ours (Rom. 5:8; 8:32; II Pet. 1:3-4). ***I will betroth thee unto Me for ever*** (Hos. 2:19).

Word Studies: 2:3 (first) **set** = expose; (second) **set** = leave; 3:4 **ephod** = sleeveless priestly outer garment; 4:16 **slideth back** = stubborn, obstinate. Israel has committed whoredom and sacrifice to idols.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Government Officials:** Rep. Henry Cuellar (TX), Sen. Tim Scott (SC) • **Country:** Cambodia (15,458,332) Southeast Asia • Major Language: Khmer • Restricted Religious Freedom • 96.9% Buddhist; 1.9% Muslim; .0.4% Christian; 0.8% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Praise the Lord; our God is the Mighty God (Ps. 50:1).

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city. They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD (Hos. 11:8-11).

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt (Hos. 11:1). God loves us. He loves us no matter what we do, what we say, or how we act. He loves us just as much when we are defiantly turned away from Him as when we kneel at his feet. God loves us because it is His nature to do so. **And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him** (I John 4:16). God does not go against His nature (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:18; II Tim. 2:13).

God is always at work in our lives, even when we refuse to acknowledge His presence. **I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them** (Hos. 11:3-4). He supports, provisions, heals, and guides us daily, often without credit or praise and frequently with complaints that He should be doing more. Even those who claim to belong to Him regularly take Him for granted. **And My people are bent to backsliding from Me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt Him** (11:7).

God has compassion for us, even when we deserve none. **I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the**

city. Through our actions, we have earned judgment—damnation and death are our just rewards. ***Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*** (Rom. 5:12). But instead of giving us what we deserve, God gave us His Son. ***Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*** (1 John 4:10). His compassion for us is so great that He is willing to pay our sin debt and wipe our slates clean, and all He asks in return is that we allow Him to do so. That's it. If we acknowledge Christ as our Savior and accept Him as the Lord of our lives, He will do the rest.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Thought for to Day: *God's wrath and mercy share a single motivation; both are applied to shepherd us to salvation.*

Christ Revealed: In the son who was called ***out of Egypt*** (Hos. 11:1). This prophecy is twofold: one is a historical reference pertaining to Israel (Ex. 4:22-23); and the other is prophetic, looking to the sojourn of Christ as a child in Egypt (Matt. 2:14-15).

Word Studies: 9:1 **hast gone a whoring** = committed spiritual adultery and idolatry, were unfaithful to God (Israel was regarded as the wife of Jehovah. Isaiah 54:5; 62:4-5); **cornfloor** = threshing floor; 10:5 **calves** = golden calf idols; 10:11 **to ride** = to put in harness; 11:12 **ruleth with God** = is still considered faithful to God.

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Country:** Cameroon (23,130,708) Central Africa • Major Languages: English, French, 24 Major African Language Groups • Pressure on Christians from authorities and Muslims • 40% Indigenous Beliefs; 40% Christian; 20% Muslim • **Prayer Suggestion:** Trust the Lord for deliverance in times of trouble (Ps. 50:15).

Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation. That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten. Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine; for it is cut off from your mouth. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white (Joel 1:2-7).

Little is known about the prophet Joel. We can't even determine with 100% accuracy the period in which he served because there are no dates, known events, or names of (previously dated) prophets or kings mentioned in the three chapters of his recorded prophecy. After analyzing his message and references to Judah, most Biblical scholars place the opening of his ministry around 835 BC during the early years of the reign of King Joash of Judah. This would make Joel one of the earliest prophets to minister to the nation of Judah.

Joel's ministry began on the heels of a devastating natural disaster the likes of which Judah had never before seen. ***Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.*** The nation had been overrun by a swarm of locusts that had laid waste to every green or growing thing. Crops, trees, vineyards—all were consumed. Their flocks and herds were decimated due to a lack of food (Joel 1:18-20), and the people were left with nothing, not even enough to make sacrifices to God. ***The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn*** (1:9).

It was in the midst of this devastation that Joel rose to speak

to the people. But instead of the words of encouragement or comfort that one might have expected from a messenger of God in the face of so much suffering, Joel brought a stern warning. Basically, he told his neighbors, “You think this is bad? You haven’t seen anything yet! This is nothing compared to what’s coming if you don’t repent and repair your relationship with God.” ***Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand*** (2:1).

Some in the time of Joel likely recognized the locust plague as a fulfillment of God’s warning promise to their ancestors (Deut. 28:38-39). Others may have viewed it as an attack from evil or even a naturally occurring disaster. Regardless of what they believed the root cause to be, however, there was only one possible correct response. ***Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD*** (Joel 1:14). Only by humbly and openly reaching out to God would they be able to find their way through.

Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer (Rom. 12:12).

Thought for the Day: *Only solid faith can weather the storms of worldly life.*

Christ Revealed: As the One who said: ***I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh*** (people) (Joel 2:28) – fulfilled in part on the Day of Pentecost and still being fulfilled today (Acts 2:16-18).

Word Studies: 1:12 **languisheth** = withers away; 1:16 **meat** = food; 1:17 **garners** = storehouses, granaries; 2:6 **gather blackness** = turn pale with terror.

Pray For Bible Pathway Printer: Pollock Printing, Nashville TN • **Government Officials:** Rep David Trone (MD), Rep. Pramila Jayapal (WA) • **Country:** Canada (34,834,84) English, French • **Religious Freedom** • 40.5% Catholic; 20.5% Protestant; 6.3% Other Christian; 3.2% Muslim; 1.5% Hindu; 1.4% Sikh; 1.1% Buddhist; 1% Jewish; 0.6% Other; 23.9% None • **Prayer Suggestion:** Confess your sins and ask the Lord to restore the joy of your salvation (Ps. 51:1-3,12).

For, lo, He that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is His thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The LORD, The God of hosts, is His name (Amos 4:13).

We cannot hide from God, no matter how hard we try. We can hide our eyes and refuse to see Him, but that will not shield us from His gaze. We can say He does not exist, but that does not change the fact that He was there before the world was created and will still be there when it ceases to be. As Amos so eloquently tells us, He is the Almighty Creator of all things.

All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:3). Just because we say a bird cannot fly does not stop it from flying. If we say the wind is not blowing, that does not stop the trees from swaying. Saying God did not create us cannot change the reality that He knit us together in our mother's womb (Ps. 139:13).

God has given us the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, but Satan is eager to disrupt our reasoning. Sometimes, he will attempt to confuse us by telling us our actions aren't that sinful or that they are beyond our control. He gives us false support even as he twists our perception of reality. The alcoholic bound by his or her addiction lives in denial as Satan tells them that their self-worth is tied directly to their next drink. Others, filled with pride and hatred, see everyone as their enemy because they cannot grasp the concept of unconditional love. Satan feeds their fear by telling them that such love does not exist. He whispers in their ears that they are alone in this world, and with each word, he draws the bindings of their sinful choices tighter.

It is a sorrowful existence to live deceived, embracing the chains that bind us. Satan tells us that nothing can change who we have become; he shouts in our ears in an attempt to drown out the voice of God that is telling us that we are not meant to be bound by those chains and can be freed by the love of Christ. There is hope, however. Satan can be ignored; his voice can be silenced. Our Father God, the Creator of all,

can remove the scales from our eyes and convict our hearts of our sins, both large and small. Even greater still, He can cleanse us of our guilt and shame and forever free us from the lies that bind us. ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*** (1 John 1:9).

As children of God, saved by His grace, our eyes should always be turned toward Jesus. This world is Satan's, and it is filled with evil. Those living in sin are deceived; their souls are crying out for their Creator while being stifled by the flesh. Do you not hear it? Do you not hear the Holy Spirit within you crying out in response? As children of God, we have a responsibility to respond to their cries and soothe them with the love of Christ which resides within us. Just as God's hand is always outstretched, so too must ours be.

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

Thought for the Day: *When we turn our backs to God, Satan comes into focus.*

Christ Revealed: As the fiery (Amos 1:4,7,10,12,14; 2:2,5; 5:6) judge (chap. 1 – 5). ***Jesus . . . was ordained of God to be the Judge*** (Acts 10:38-42; also II Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:18-23). ***His eyes were as a flame of fire*** (Rev. 1:14; also 2:18).

Word Studies: 2:13 **pressed** = burdened; 3:5 **gin** = trap; 3:14 **visit** = with punishment; 4:1 **kine of Bashan** were the fat cows, raised in the best pasturelands; but here, it is used figuratively in referring to self-gratifying, sensual, influential women who encourage their husbands to do wrong; **masters** = husbands; 4:3 **breaches** = breaks in the city wall; **cast them into the palace** = cast them into the mire (dunghill); 4:9 **blasting** = blight; 5:21 **smell** = be pleased, take delight; 5:23 **viols** = harps.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Country:** Cayman Islands (54,914) Caribbean • Major Language: English • Religious Freedom • 67.8% Protestant; 14.1% Roman Catholic; 1.1% Jehovah's Witness; 7% Other; 9.3% None; 0.7% Unspecified • **Prayer Suggestion:** Ask for forgiveness for particular sins (Ps. 51:1-9)

Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the LORD stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the LORD, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of My people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more (Amos 7:7-8).

Amos was a man filled with genuine love for the people of God. He saw their wickedness and pleaded with them to change, yet he cared for them enough to still intercede with God on their behalf (Amos 7:2,5). The Lord responded to Amos' pleas by sharing with him a vision that demonstrated just how far Israel had fallen from the will of the Lord.

In Amos' vision, ***the LORD stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in His hand.*** A ***plumbline*** is an ancient tool first used by Egyptian builders. In its simplest form, it is a line with a weight at one end. The mason (a craftsman who builds with stone or brick) uses it to ensure the walls are in exact vertical alignment as they lay the stones one upon the other. As the Lord stood upon the wall, His purpose was not to construct but rather to test an existing structure for soundness. The ***plumbline*** in His hand represented the message of Truth that God was delivering via His prophets, and the wall symbolized the godly separation of the kingdom of Israel from the ways of the world. God's inspection revealed that the wall had become so hopelessly off-center that destruction was the only solution (Amos 7 – 8). Still, God assured Amos that destruction did not mean the end of His Covenant promise. God vowed that He would one day renew His people and gather them together again (9:13-14). ***And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God (9:15).***

The Word of God is our ***plumbline***. It is the guide that God has given us to ensure that our thoughts and ways are upright in His sight. Just as a mason uses a plumbline to ensure the wall is aligned properly, we as Christians must be just as precise in applying Biblical truths to our lives. Christ Himself is holding the line; it is up to us to align our lives to it. ***Through faith***

we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3).

God's Word reveals to us when our lives are being lived in disobedience to Him and when we have slipped into sin. Without the Word of God, right and wrong become nothing more than subjective concepts, determined not by an absolute truth but instead by the personal convictions of the individual. God's Word sets the standard by which every person's life will be measured.

And if any man hear My words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (Matt. 7:21).

Thought for the Day: *Seeking to follow a moral path is admirable, but it amounts to nothing if that path is not set by God.*

Christ Revealed: As the **Plumbline** (Amos 7:7-8). A plumb line is an instrument used in measuring an absolutely straight vertical line. Being perfect, Christ alone is qualified to walk in the midst of His people, measuring and exposing good and bad, true and false (Rev. 2 & 3).

Word Studies: Amos 6:8 **excellency of Jacob** = pride, arrogance (Jacob means the whole of Israel, including the palaces of Jerusalem and Samaria); 6:11 **with breaches** = into ruins; **with clefts** = fragments; 6:13 **horns by our own strength** = pride over their accomplishments, military power (Deuteronomy 33:17; I Kings 22:11).

Pray For Staff: Gilbert Palafox)• **Government Official:** Rep. Nathaniel Moran (TX)• **Country:** Central African Republic (5,277,959) Central Africa • Major Languages: French, Sangho • Religious Freedom • 35% Indigenous Beliefs; 25% Protestant; 25% Roman Catholic; 15% Muslim • **Prayer Suggestion:** thank God for His mercy to cleanse from all sins (Ps. 51:2).

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD* (Jon. 1:1-3).

The Lord directed Jonah to go to Nineveh to **cry** (prophecy) **against it; for their wickedness is come up before Me**. However, Jonah believed that Nineveh threatened Israel and deserved destruction. He knew God had called him to warn them to repent, but Jonah did not want them to repent. He believed that it would be in the best interest of his people if Nineveh ceased to exist. So, like many today, he made the mistake of attempting to avoid the command of God.

Jonah was unwilling to be a foreign missionary to Nineveh, the capital city of the powerful, fierce Assyrian Empire, so when the Lord spoke, he sprang into action. **He found a ship going to Tarshish** (the most remote of the Phoenician trading places), **paid the fare**, and left town in the opposite direction of Nineveh. Apparently, this man of God had misinterpreted the strength of the Lord's command, believing it instead to be a simple request. Although Jonah felt he was leaving his troubles behind, he only compounded them. He had forgotten that man's actions could not thwart God's will. **For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back** (Is. 14:27)?

At least in the beginning, circumstances seemed to favor Jonah's plan and allowed him to 'escape.' Soon, however, the situation changed, and Jonah experienced the consequences of ignoring the will of God. He quickly discovered that the Lord's will **WOULD** be done, regardless of his own opinion. His only choice was to serve God or to die. **But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken** (Jon. 1:4).

Like Jonah, we are often more diligent in working toward our

ruin than in seeking our salvation. Jonah sought out the ship and ***paid the fare***, just as many today who spend their time and money on selfish projects while disregarding the Lord's work and the needs of others. However, just as Jonah soon discovered the futility of his actions, so too we will find that these pursuits will leave us empty and unfulfilled. Unless we actively follow God's will, our souls are in as much imminent danger as was the boat in the storm.

If you find that you tend to shirk responsibilities that seem unpleasant, as Jonah did, you may want to take this time to reacquaint yourself with the will of God. He does not expect us to understand or agree with everything He asks us to do, but He does expect us to trust Him and follow Him anyway.

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:6-7).

Thought for the Day: *We are not equal partners with God; we are His subordinates tasked with accomplishing what He delegates us to do.*

Christ Revealed: By Jonah's experience in the great fish (Jon. 1:7 – 2:10). Jesus used this historical event as an illustration to tell of His death, burial, and resurrection when the Pharisees demanded a sign from Him (Matt. 12:39-41; also 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Word Study: 2:2 **hell** in O.T. 31 times (from Sheol, used about 65 times) = to hide, cover, or the grave. In the N.T. Jesus used hell (from Hades, Gehenna) to explain an after-death place of torments (Matt. 8:29; Luke 16:23,28; Rev. 14:10; 20:10); 2:8 **lying vanities** = worthless idols, false worship; 3:10 **God repented** = He was grieved; 4:5 **booth** = shelter; 4:8 **vehement** = scorching.

Pray For Staff: Jennifer Palafox • **Government Official:** Rep. Erin Houchin (IN) • **Country:** Chad (11,412,107) Central Africa • **Major Languages:** French, Arabic • **Religious Freedom:** 53.1% Muslim; 20.1% Catholic; 14.2% Protestant 7.3% Animist; 0.5% Other; 1.7% Unknown; 3.1% Atheist • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank God for guiding you to sacrifice freely for what pleases Him (Ps. 54:6).

For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of His place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under Him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem (Mic. 1:3-5)?

The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem (Mic. 1:1). The prophet Micah is unique in that he was the only prophet to speak equally to both Israel and Judah. He was the first prophet to foretell Judah's fall and Jerusalem's destruction. Micah was not a timid prophet. He did not attempt to soften his words to protect the feelings of his audience, and he was harsh in his assessment of ongoing sin. He openly derided the seers and diviners of the day, warning them to expect God's judgment for proclaiming peace to people living outside of the Lord's will (3:5-6). He urged the people of both nations to turn their attention to him instead. ***But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin (3:8).***

Micah's message to Israel was blunt: ***Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard: and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof (1:6). For her wound is incurable; for it is come unto Judah; he is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem (1:9).*** Her depravity had reached a point of no return, and God's judgment was coming. Micah warned Judah to spiritually wake up and recognize the danger before it was too late. ***He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? The Lord's voice crieth unto***

the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it (6:8-9). But God had gifted Micah with an uncommon understanding of the hearts of men, and it was clear from his message that he didn't expect that they would heed his warnings. ***Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest*** (3:12).

Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy: they shall not prophecy to them, that they shall not take shame (2:6). No one from either nation wanted to hear what Micah had to say. Israelites believed he was undermining their strength and capitalizing on their troubles, and Judeans believed he was unfairly holding them responsible for Israel's sins. At this point, Micah could have thrown up his hands, said, "I tried," and walked away, but he didn't. Instead, he doubled down on his message; he got louder and more insistent. He couldn't force people to understand and respond, but he made sure they were given the opportunity to hear.

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (II Tim. 4:2).

Thought for the Day: *It is not that God's Word is harsh but that the listener's heart is closed and unwilling.*

Christ Revealed: By Jonah's experience in the great fish (Jon. 1:7 – 2:10). Jesus used this historical event as an illustration to tell of His death, burial, and resurrection when the Pharisees demanded a sign from Him (Matt. 12:39-41; also I Cor. 15:3-4).

Word Study: 2:2 **hell** in O.T. 31 times (from Sheol, used about 65 times) = to hide, cover, or the grave. In the N.T. Jesus used hell (from Hades, Gehenna) to explain an after-death place of torments (Matt. 8:29; Luke 16:23,28; Rev. 14:10; 20:10); 2:8 **lying vanities** = worthless idols, false worship; 3:10 **God repented** = He was grieved; 4:5 **booth** = shelter; 4:8 **vehement** = scorching.

Pray For Staff: Tiffany Parisi • **Country:** Chad (11,412,107) Central Africa • Major Languages: French, Arabic • Religious Freedom • 53.1% Muslim; 20.1% Catholic; 14.2% Protestant 7.3% % Animist; 0.5% Other; 1.7% Unknown; 3.1% Atheist • **Prayer Suggestion:** Thank God for guiding you to sacrifice freely for what pleases Him (Ps. 54:6).

God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him. The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him (Nah. 1:2-7).

Nahum brought God's warning to a nation that had heard it all before. In the time of Jonah, the citizens of Nineveh had heeded God's admonition and been spared. **So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them** (Jon. 3:5). **And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not** (3:10). Yet despite that earlier miracle, or perhaps in part because of it, the current inhabitants of Nineveh were not disturbed by the violent nature of Nahum's prophecy. Where their ancestors felt the conviction of God and sorrow leading to repentance (II Cor. 7:10), the new generation could not be bothered with God and believed themselves to be untouchable. **Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the cankerworm spoileth, and flieth away. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the**

mountains, and no man gathereth them (Nah. 3:16-19).

Mistaking God's compassion and mercy for tacit permission to continue to sin with impunity is the most dangerous mistake anyone could ever make. ***The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.*** All sin has a cost, and God will never allow that cost to go unpaid. Either through Christ's work on the cross or our spiritual death and consignment to hell, the price will be exacted in full.

The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him. When we place our full trust in God, we do not need to worry about inciting His wrath because He will guide us through life in such a manner that we won't. ***In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths*** (Prov. 3:6). God has infinite patience for those who are seeking to do His will. But for those who turn away from Him, flaunting their sins and reveling in the world, ***the day of trouble*** is fast approaching.

Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God (Rom. 2:4-5).

Thought for the Day: *God does not, as many lament, let the wicked go unpunished. But the time of their punishment will be no sooner or later than He dictates.*

Christ Revealed: As the One whom even the sea obeys (Nah. 1:4). Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm (Matt. 8:26).

Word Studies: Nahum 1:12 **quiet** = strong, safe, secure; 1:14 **no more of thy name be sown** = nothing of your name will remain; 2:7 **tabering** = beating; 3:19 **bruit** = report. Habakkuk 1:4 **the law is slacked** = the law is never enforced.

Pray For Staff: Kevin Jennings • **Country:** China, Mainland (1,355,692,576) Eastern Asia • **Major Language:** Mandarin • **Renewed persecution of the Church** • 18.2% Buddhist; 5.1% Christian; 1.8% Muslim; <.1% Folk Religion; <.1% Hindu; <.1% Jewish; 0.7% Other; 52.2% Unaffiliated • **Prayer Suggestion:** Pray at all times (Ps. 55:17).

G*ather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD's anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger* (Zeph. 2:1-3).

If someone asked you to name an Old Testament prophet, chances are good that Zephaniah would not be the first name to roll off your lips. This tiny book of prophecy, only three chapters long, is tucked away between the books of Habakkuk and Haggai and is the fourth from the last book of the Old Testament. This minor prophet doesn't even get the distinction of standing on his own in our daily readings, instead being paired with the book of Haggai. Yet the message being shared here is of vital importance to anyone trying to navigate the world today.

God called Zephaniah to testify to a nation in crisis. Judah was emerging from the darkness of 57 years of wicked rule. The young and untried Josiah had just ascended to the throne of David, and the tone of his leadership had yet to be established. The inhabitants of Judah were in a period of uneasy waiting, mired in the sins of their fathers and looking towards their earthly king to determine where they should go from there. Zephaniah offered a clear warning; waiting on the consensus of the nation to lead them back to the ways of God was foolhardy at best and could be disastrous. God's anger had been awakened, and His judgment was coming. It was time for each individual to look into their heart and find the courage to kneel before God. ***Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness.*** Salvation would be found in no other way.

We live in a world headed for judgment. When Christ returns, all the governments of man will be rendered inert. There will be no debates, elections, or treaties. The opinions of the masses will have no power at all; societal norms will at last give way to God's truth. Only those who have recognized their Savior and

humbled themselves before Him, availing themselves of His saving grace, will ***be hid in the day of the LORD's anger***. Not those who have claimed to serve him by usurping His name and recreating Him in their image, nor those who have hung back, waiting for the tide of public opinion to give them the go-ahead to follow Him. No one who has abused His name for selfish gain or the exploitation of others will feel the touch of His grace. It is urgent, therefore, that all who seek the Lord do so with an open, humble heart ready to receive.

Seek ye the LORD while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (Is. 55:6-7). And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man (Luke 21:34-36).

Thought for the Day: *All masks will fall away when Christ returns, rendering their usage meaningless from the beginning.*

Christ Revealed: As ***King of Israel, even the Lord*** (Zeph. 3:15; compare John 1:49).

Word Studies: Zephaniah 1:4 **Chemarims** = the idolatrous priests in charge; 1:9 **leap on the threshold** = rush into houses to confiscate the property by extortion and deceit; 2:15 **carelessly** = securely, with no equal; Haggai 2:7 **desire of all nations** = the One desired by all people, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Pray For Staff: Ryan McCrary • **Government Official:** Rep. Ed Case (HI), Rep. Debbie Wasserman-Schultz (FL), Rep. Adriano Espaillat (NY), Rep. Andrew Garbarino (NY) • **Country:** Christmas Island (1,530) Southeast Asia • **Major Languages:** English, Chinese, Malay • **Religious Freedom** • 36% Buddhist; 25% Muslim; 18% Christian; 21% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rejoice that He has promised to sustain us at all times (Ps. 55:22).

Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath He sent Me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye. For, behold, I will shake Mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be My people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee (Zech. 2:7-11).

Zechariah's audience was much changed from the one encountered by earlier prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Gone was the proud certainty of their status and the belief that they were untouchable. Even though they had finally been returned to Jerusalem, the land was no longer theirs to control. They were there by permission of a foreign king, and they knew that permission could be revoked at any time. Though they had initially been eager to restore the Lord's Temple and city, they were easily confused and discouraged. It was a different world from the one their ancestors had known, and they were unsure of their place in it.

Zechariah's words were meant to restore their sense of identity—to remind them of who they were and who they belonged to. They were God's people doing God's work, and they had nothing to fear. ***And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her*** (Zech. 2:4-5). Zechariah was not calling for a return of the false pride and self-importance that ruled the people before their fall but rather for a spiritual rebirth. The people needed to separate themselves from the Babylonian culture to which they had become accustomed and embrace the privileges and responsibilities that came from being a member of God's family.

Zechariah's words are just as needed by those of us in the body of Christ today as they were by the returning exiles. We live in an increasingly hedonistic world headed by governments that, at best, pay lip service to God and, at worst, deny Him entirely. We are God's beloved children, ***the apple of His eye***, and He wants us to understand that we are not bound to this world. ***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life*** (John 3:16). He has come to ***dwell in the midst of us***, has placed a new heart within us, and has encircled us with ***a wall of fire***; we are loved, protected, and free to live for Him and partake of His Word. There is nothing the world can say or do to change that truth.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one (John 10:27-30).

Thought for the Day: *When the world deals us a blow, we need only remember that it can't affect our relationship with God, and we will remain undiminished.*

Christ Revealed: As ***My Servant the BRANCH*** (Zech. 3:8). Christ was brought into the world in ***the fulness of the time*** (Gal. 4:4), and ***took upon Him the form of a servant*** (Phil. 2:7). But He will soon return as the Righteous Branch to reign as King (Jer. 23:5).

Word Studies: 1:15 **forward the affliction** = heathen nations increased your afflictions beyond My intentions; 1:19 **horns** = world powers; 1:21 **fray** = terrorize; 3:5 **mitre** = turban; 5:1 **roll** = God's Word was written on parchment or skins then rolled up.

Pray for: In Memory of Daniel Turner • **Government Officials:** Sen. Bill Cassidy (LA) • **Country:** Cocos (Keeling) Islands (596) Southeastern Asia • Major Languages: Malay, English • Religious Freedom • 80% Muslim; 20% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** When you are afraid, have confidence in and rely upon the Lord (Ps. 56:3-4).

For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour (Zech. 8:10). For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD (Zech. 8:14-17).

During the time of Zechariah's ministry, the remnant that had returned to Jerusalem under the decree of Cyrus was spiritually floundering. The rebuilding of the Temple had been eagerly begun, but rising opposition soon had work stuttering to a halt. ***Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia (Ezra 4:23-24).*** The people were at first dismayed by the interruption but soon became distracted by the tasks of day-to-day life. They rebuilt their own houses and set themselves to reclaim the land. They were busy yet strangely unprofitable. ***Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes (Hag. 1:6).***

Then the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them (Ezra 5:1). The people God charged Haggai and

Zechariah with ministering to were of a very different nature than the self-righteous, proud, closeminded individuals that had populated Jerusalem and the surrounding countryside before the exile. The current population had been humbled; their pride trampled in the dust of their shattered illusions. These people wanted to find their way back to God but were still somewhat confused and easily misled. Through Zechariah, God offered explanations for His gentle chastisement of their reluctance, along with a healthy dose of encouragement. ***And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong*** (Zech. 8:13). God believed in them. He knew they were hearing Him. He knew they would do as He asked. Through the words of His prophet, God took His people by the hand and led them in the direction they needed to go.

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you (John 16:13-14).

Thought for the Day: *God does not expect us to walk the path untended or without stumbling; He calls upon us to lean on Him and depend on His guidance.*

Christ Revealed: As King and as a Servant sold for ***thirty pieces of silver*** (Zech. 9:9; 11:12). ***They covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver*** (Matt. 26:15).

Word Studies: 8:2 **was jealous . . . with great jealousy** = loved with great protective love; 10:3 **goats** = civic and political leaders; 10:8 **hiss** = signal; 11:7 **Beauty, and . . . Bands** = two shepherd's staffs; 14:9 **His Name One** = Jesus will be recognized and reign as God with no rival false god.

Pray For Country: Colombia (46,245,297) South America • Major Languages: Spanish • Religious Freedom • 90% Roman Catholic; 10% Other • **Prayer Suggestion:** Your prayers should be lifted up with confidence in God (Ps. 56:9,11).

And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto My name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it (Mal. 2:1-3). For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts (Mal. 2:7-8).

In the second chapter of the Book of Malachi, God spoke directly to the corrupt priests who were once again polluting God's Temple and misleading His people. ***For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law.*** God warned that continuing down their current path would lead to a revocation of their many blessings. He went on to state that His chastisement was not meant to destroy His covenant relationship with the tribe of Levi but to preserve it.

This warning, like so many others, fell primarily on deaf ears. While we will never know the number of individual priests who may have altered their ways in response, we know that, as a whole, they were unmoved. By the time of Christ's birth 400 years later, the priesthood had devolved into a body of legalistic, self-righteous, pseudo-spiritual leaders. ***All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And***

love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi (Matt. 23:3-7).

Although the line of Levitical priesthood ended with the coming of Jesus Christ, our eternal high priest (Heb. 7:11-28), Malachi's warning still applies to all who boldly claim to be ***the messenger of the LORD of hosts*** today. Those who stand before others intending to help them discern the truth of God's Word and God's will for their lives take on a tremendous responsibility. Not only does God require that they accurately represent His Word without alteration or adjustment, but He also expects them to practice what they preach. It is not enough to proclaim the holiness of God; those who seek to give Him voice must first apply that holiness to their own lives. To do any less is to reveal oneself as a hypocrite, and hypocrites have no place in the body of Christ.

And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God (Rom. 2:1-3)?

Thought for to Day: *Speaking for God does not mean speaking in His place; our role is only to introduce His Word to those deprived of it.*

Christ Revealed: The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple (Mal. 3:1). ***Jesus went into the Temple. . . . saying . . . My House shall be called . . . the House of prayer*** (Mark 11:15-17).

Word Studies: 1:6 **fear** = reverence, willing obedience; 1:13 **snuffed at** = sneered, lightly esteemed, despised, scorned; 2:12 The Lord will cut off . . . the master (who hath married the daughter of a strange god – see 2:11) **and the scholar** = the priest and the layman will be rejected

Pray For Staff: Judy McCrary • **Government Officials:** Rep. Dusty Johnson (SD), Gov. Tina Kotek (OR) • **Country:** Comoros (766,865) Southern Africa • **Major Languages:** Arabic, French, Shikomorro • **Societal discrimination** continued against non-Muslim citizens, particularly Christians and those who converted from Islam • 98% Sunni Muslim; 2% Roman Catholic • **Prayer Suggestion:** Rely upon the Lord at all times; He is your refuge (Ps. 62:8).

TWO VIEWS OF GOVERNMENTS THAT RULE DURING "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES"

A Stone was cut out
without hands, which
smote (struck) the
image upon his feet . . .
and brake them
to pieces

[Dan. 2:34,44-45]



THE WORLD'S POINT OF VIEW

A dazzling giant to be admired
and achieved at any price:

*The lust of the flesh, and the
lust of the eyes, and the pride
of life (one's lifestyle)*

[1 John 2:15-17]

FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

The world system is
full of pride, selfishness, greed,
and cruelty,

but is only temporary:

*The world passeth away, and
the lust thereof:*

*but he that doeth the will of
God abideth for ever*
[1 John 2:15-17].

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM [DANIEL 2:31-45]

DANIEL'S VISIONS [DANIEL 7:1-14; 8:1-14]

BABYLON is represented by *this image's head . . . of fine gold* [2:31-32,37-38; 7:4,17]. The head of gold in Nebuchadnezzar's dream was seen in Daniel's vision as a lion with eagle's wings. Both the head of gold and the lion represent Nebuchadnezzar, the king who conquered Israel, which represents the earthly Kingdom of God.

MEDO-PERSIA is represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream by *his breast and his arms of silver* [2:32,39; 7:5,17; 8:3-40; 11:1-2]. But, in Daniel's vision, they were seen as a bear with three ribs in its mouth. The bear and the ram with two horns represented Medo-Persia.

GREECE is represented in Nebuchadnezzar's dream by *his belly and his thighs of brass* [2:32,39; 7:6,17; 8:5-8,21-22; 11:3-20]. In Daniel's vision, the stomach and thighs of brass were seen instead as a leopard with four wings of a bird on its back. Like a leopard, Greece was swift in conquering the known world under the youthful Alexander the Great. In Daniel's second vision, he saw a ram and a he-goat [8:5-8]. The one-horned goat [Greece] trampled the ram [Medo-Persia] to pieces. After his death, Alexander's kingdom was divided among his four generals, represented by the four heads of the leopard.

ROME is represented by *his legs of iron* [2:33,40-44; 7:7-8,23-24], which Daniel interpreted from Nebuchadnezzar's dream [2:33,40-43]. They were the two great divisions of Rome. They are seen in Daniel's vision as a dreadful beast with iron teeth, ten big horns and one little horn. After defeating Greece, Rome [the beast] was the fourth great empire to rule the world.

REVIVED FROM ROME [The New World Order] [10 toes . . . part of iron, and part of clay] [2:40-44; 7:7-8,23-24] — This confederacy will consist of 10 kings. In his intent to destroy Christianity and rule the world, one day soon the Antichrist [the *little horn* of 7:8,24; 8:9] will defeat three of the ten kingdoms of this confederation. Ultimately, the New World Order, under the Antichrist, will be de-stroyed by Jesus Christ [the *Stone* of 2:45] who will then set up His 1000 year earthly kingdom for all of His true followers.

Dear Friends of God,

I will be 84 years old this May. As a teenager, I attempted to read through the Bible and quit in Leviticus. I felt like the Ethiopian administrator to the Queen of Ethiopia who was reading in Isaiah. Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. He responded: ***How can I, except some man should guide me?*** (Acts 8:31). More than 50 years ago, I prepared a one-year, easy-to-understand, through-the-Bible devotional commentary.



John & Letha Hash

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (Timothy 3:16-17).

This obviously means that ***All Scripture*** must be read to gain the best in our brief stay on earth. But it is a limited offer – just one short lifetime and no guarantee of life for the next 30 days. **Just think! *All Scripture*** (from Genesis to Revelation) is ***profitable***.

To be ***thoroughly furnished*** means [1] to prepare ourselves to be the person God wants us to be; and [2] to accomplish the purpose for which He created us.

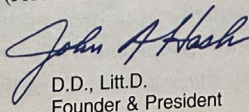
Surely, in gratitude, we will respond to His loving concern for our eternal welfare by saying: “By God’s grace, I will read all of what my Creator planned for me to know.”

Think how tragic it would be to fall short of His expectations . . . wasting our few short years chasing material, social, and financial goals for self-gratification – but failing to achieve His eternal purpose for which He created us.

Bible Pathway does not engage in controversial theological doctrinal issues but my focus is on practical solutions to our emotional, spiritual and moral well-being, as recorded in the Creator’s guide to successful living. It is a CHRIST-CENTERED, non-denominational, concise, easy-to-follow, daily devotional commentary through all the Bible. Jesus said that the Old Testament Scriptures reveal Him: ***Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He (Jesus) expounded unto them in all the Scriptures all the things concerning Himself. . . . in the law of Moses*** (Genesis – Deuteronomy), ***and in the prophets, and in the Psalms*** (Luke 24:27,44).

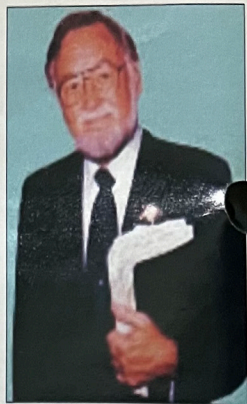
I pray as I write each day’s devotion ***that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God*** (Colossians 1:9-10; also II Peter 3:18).

Start in Genesis with a greater desire than ever before to please the Lord in the year 2005. Experience what the prophet meant when he said: ***Your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart*** (Jeremiah 15:16).


D.D., Litt.D.
Founder & President

Dear Bible Pathway friends and family,

At this time in our history, the world around us is in more confusion than ever and secular ambitions permeate our society. People are looking for direction and guidance. Our desire is to bring the peace we have in our hearts to others. We want to give them the opportunity to know Jesus and we can show them the Way by encouraging them to read all the New Testament during October, November, and December.



Read it carefully and prayerfully so that you understand your responsibilities and what Jesus has promised. Depend on the Holy Spirit to *guide you into all truth* (John 16:13) as Jesus promised. Take seriously how His Guide to Life applies to your life and pray that you will conform to His will. Act quickly on what you sense the New Testament Covenant is requiring you to do. The King is saying to some: *Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* (Luke 6:46).

The New Testament is a wonderful place for someone to begin who has never read the Bible, so that they may know the facts. I encourage you to begin reading this October and complete the entire New Testament this year by reading just 15 minutes a day.

As you close another year, filling your mind and heart with the precious life of our Lord, you will experience a truly fresh start for the upcoming year.

Let us use the last three months of this year to prepare ourselves for 2006 with the Words of the New Testament imprinted on our hearts, so that we may know more fully the meaning of Jesus' words: *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly* (John 10:10).

John A. Hask