

READING NOTES – OCTOBER

The One Year Bible (ESV)

OCTOBER 1

Isaiah 62:6-65:25

Isaiah 62:6-12

Vs. 6-12 The watchmen are to stay alert, watching for the coming of the Messiah. They are to give God no rest, crying out to Him. As disciples this is supposed to be our attitude of heart too. The Lord's Prayer has this in it. And I think of the first verses I memorized as an Awana worker, Titus 2:11-14, *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

V. 11 Read Revelation 22:12-17 and you will see v. 11. Those verses in Revelation have the same feel as these verses in Isaiah.

Isaiah 63

Vs. 1-6 This is the Messiah coming to Zion in victory. I wonder if v. 1 was the inspiration for the song, *Mighty To Save?*

Vs. 7-9 What would you call this? What a statement of God's *steadfast love* for Israel. In spite of what Israel has done in the past and what they are now, God will never stop loving these people; and He will fulfill His promise to use them in saving the world. *As regards the gospel they are enemies of God (now), for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.* (Romans 11:28, RSV)

Vs. 10-14 These are the clearest references to the Holy Spirit I know of in the OT.

Vs. 15-19 The people are appealing to God, their Father, to return to them. Again, these are some of the only references in the OT where God is referred to as the Father. This is very special ground.

So in this chapter, we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This might be one of those portions of Scripture where the Jews developed their teaching of the Trinity.

Isaiah 64

Vs. 1-7 This sounds like a continuation of the last chapter where the nation is confessing their sin to God.

Vs. 8-12 They appeal to God for help because He is their Father and because of what has happened to Zion / Jerusalem.

You notice that all of this is prophetic. The city still looked pretty good during the time of this writing. It would be about another 100 years before everything looked like a wilderness and desolation.

Isaiah 65

Vs. 1-7 These verses seem to be God's reasons for rejecting that generation of Israel.

Vs. 1-2 Paul quotes these verses at the end of Romans 10. Believe it or not, these verses are referring to the mystery of the church; that is, that for a time, God would reach the world through the people of Christ, the church.

Vs. 8-10 This is the blessing of the obedient.

Vs. 11-12 This is the cursing of the disobedient.

Vs. 13-16 In this contrast between the obedient and disobedient, can you hear some of what Jesus said in the Beatitudes; i.e., blessed are, but woe to...?

Vs. 17-25 This will be the blessing of the people in the Millennial Kingdom.

As we've seen before, God's purpose in showing us what the end will look like is to give us hope now to keep going and to keep following in the harvest.

Philippians 2:19-3:4

Philippians 2:19-30

Vs. 19-24 Paul planned to *send Timothy* because Timothy was a pastor and teacher. Timothy wouldn't just visit, he would strengthen, encourage, and correct. From these verses you get some good words about Timothy, and you get the idea that Paul's trial wasn't far off and that he did think he would be released.

V. 21 While this must have been true about Timothy, I wonder if any of the other workers read it and felt bad. In 2 Timothy we'll find out that when Paul was arrested, many of the faithful fled. Maybe Paul was beginning to see that many of those he thought were solid were not.

Vs. 25-30 It might have been that Epaphroditus ("E") was to have stayed with Paul longer, but everyone was worried, so Paul decided to send him back. This would also show that "E" wasn't coming home because of adversity or being chicken-hearted. There are also some good words here about "E" and on how to treat people who have worked hard in the Lord and risked their lives.

Philippians 3:1-4

These verses are the prelude to some very challenging and wonderful verses. It is interesting that out of conflict and perversity, God can bring blessing.

V. 1 We will see *finally* again. Apparently what is happening here is that Paul is getting off on a very blessed rabbit trail.

V. 2 There is no political correctness here. These were often Jewish Christians of the circumcision party in Jerusalem, who followed and hounded (no pun intended) Paul and disrupted churches.

A note on *dogs*. For me the connotation that comes to mind is that dogs were scavengers. These teachers couldn't bear fruit and begin churches, but they could come in behind Paul like scavengers and build stubble on the foundation he had laid.

V. 3 What a great definition of what it means to follow Christ. No denomination, only the worship of God in the truth of the Spirit. We live in the glory of our salvation in this person, Jesus Christ, sharing it with others. And we are always only ever sinners saved by grace.

V. 4 is a springboard into tomorrow.

Doing correction in the harvest isn't what anyone wants to do; but as you see from these verses, it not only has to be done, but there is even blessing that comes from it. As a result of this conflict, tomorrow we will read some of the greatest verses written on following Christ as a disciple in the harvest.

Psalm 73

Earlier in the year when we read this psalm we hadn't yet read Job. Psalm 73 should "feel" a little different now, having sat with Job in his ashes and misery. The interesting thing is that when you read this again next year, you will see even more here.

Vs. 1-3 This is saying that the psalmist recovered from his trial, and he is telling us what it was that caused his faith to stumble.

Vs. 4-12 Why does God allow the proud and wicked to prosper for a time? Reading all of what we've read to date, you should have some good answers.

Vs. 13-15 Verse 13 sounds like Job, or me, when I'm in a self-piteous mood. Verse 15 is the bind we are in when we know the truth. Denying the truth becomes an impossibility, even though you could think that you should just give in.

Vs. 16-17 Here was Asaph's turning point. Where is that sanctuary for you? There is no temple. I have this time alone with God in His Word and in prayer. If not for that, where would any of us be?

Vs. 18-22 We understand that God is just and that He is to be trusted, both with rescue and with judgment. Our job is to trust and follow, not to tell God when and how He should judge. This son of Asaph got the message.

Vs. 23-26 Just like David did, this man learned to focus on God, not on those who were rejecting God. God's wisdom and purpose are beyond us. We are called to live with Him. With so much we don't understand about God's working day to day, what we know of God through our Lord has to be enough for us and all we need.

Vs. 25-26 are a beautiful, poetic declaration of our hope in God.

Vs. 27-28 Amen.

Proverbs 24:13-14

We need to seek wisdom. I like the idea of the visual of seeking honey, but who of us would really take this advice? Who of us hasn't learned wisdom because of constant stumbling, falling, running into the wall at 100 mph? We who are now older need to tell our stories to help the next generation of disciples "wise up" without having to hit the wall. Thankfully there is a very gracious Father who heals our self-inflicted injuries and patiently teaches us the wisdom of listening to Him.

OCTOBER 2

This is the final day in Isaiah. If you've been keeping up, you really, really owe yourself a treat. I'd recommend a Pumpkin Spice Frappuccino at Starbucks©. Or, just find a quiet place and page through Isaiah in a normal Bible and see what you remember. Without a doubt, you have been blessed in reading this in ways you might not even know.

Isaiah 66

Vs. 1-2 Read this and think about it. Do you get the point of what God is saying?

Jesus quotes a part of v. 1 in the Sermon on the Mount when He tells His disciples not to make vows to God.

If you understand what God and Isaiah are saying here, this is the same thought Paul expresses in the last two verses of Romans 11 and the first two verses of Romans 12. I'm willing to bet these two verses of Isaiah were in Paul's mind when he was writing those verses in Romans. I'll ask him when I get to see him.

Vs. 3-4 If our hearts are not obedient to His Word, this is what God thinks of our worship and religious routine, even as believers.

When I spoke they did not listen, reminds me of Jesus saying, “*Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?*”

V. 5 Notice that this is addressed to those who truly are the Lord's, that is, those *who tremble at His Word*. Notice too, the trembling in v. 2. How is your "trembling?"

The words of the brothers here must be either insincere or meant as mockery.

Vs. 6-9 God uses the illustration of labor to say to Israel, "I haven't brought you through all of this to not complete my purpose for you."

Vs. 10-14 So Jerusalem gives birth and all will find consolation and comfort and will nurse there. Interesting. According to Ezekiel and Revelation, there will be a river running out of the temple. On each side of it there will be trees that bear fruit monthly, and there will be healing in the leaves. (Rev. 22:2) The people of the world will come to Jerusalem for healing, and after the Tribulation, they're going to need it. God is going to offer blessing for all who come to His city. And of course the best thing about Jerusalem will be the guy sitting on the throne in the temple.

It will still apparently be a matter of the will for people to come to Jerusalem. Even during the Millennial Kingdom and at the end of it, not everyone will like Jesus. Sin's dominance doesn't need Satan's deception. We can be rebellious all by ourselves if we don't recognize what sin truly is (an incurable spiritual disease) and our need of a Savior.

Vs. 15-17 This judgment seems to be the Messiah judging the nations in opposition to Israel at the end of the Tribulation. Or, it could be a warning for those who rebel against the Messiah and His servant Israel at the end of the thousand years, when Satan is released and finds those ready to wage war against Israel.

Vs. 18-21 This seems to say that Israel will be a servant to all the nations, declaring God's glory to all who don't have an opportunity to come to Jerusalem.

Vs. 22-24 This is after the thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth. There will be a new heaven and a new earth, and there will be a final judgment. (Rev. 21:1-2)

I can't wait. I was reading this morning, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us*. Now, we have the Lord and the Spirit burning in us as we work in the harvest on this dying planet. But the Day is coming.

Philippians 3:4-21

Vs. 4-6 This isn't Paul bragging, but he is really trying to make the Philippians see that they shouldn't be impressed by "credentials." Paul had been the real thing and threw it all away for Jesus.

Vs. 7-11 Notice that the focus of all of this is knowing Jesus. In the past, Paul discovered that salvation by grace through faith meant knowing Christ. Now, even 30 years down the road Paul is still striving to know Christ more. That, I think, is the mark of a disciple who never tires in the harvest and doesn't get older, just wiser and stronger. Knowing our Lord isn't academic or knowledge-oriented; it is a daily ongoing walk. We follow Him in the harvest and He reveals Himself more and more in ways we could never guess. That is why it is by faith. (John 14:21-23)

V. 12 And here is Paul's motivation.

So many believers seem to have the mindset that they got saved, and now they're going to heaven; so the goal is to go to church, enjoy life and stay out of trouble. Knowing Christ is our

personal goal, the goal of every disciple. Read that prayer again at the end of Ephesians 3. It all has to do with knowing Jesus and His love.

But Paul's goal here is knowing Christ in such a way that, if possible, he could live on earth as if he were perfectly following Christ. The goal was being so fully focused on Jesus and the blessings and grace available in Him, that Paul would honor God as if he had been resurrected. I'm sure Paul knew this was impossible in this body of death; but if you aim at nothing, you hit it every time. Paul aimed high out of love for Jesus. But that was only for Paul, right?

Vs. 13-14 Paul had a lot to forget from the past. He looked at the future (that's why God has also given us all that stuff in Isaiah) and strained forward in the present. And again, this is only recommended for disciples on steroids, like Paul. Right?

Vs. 15-16 Wrong. It is meant to be the norm for every one of us. It is what makers of disciples are to model so as to make disciples who model the same. A disciple is not above his teacher; but every disciple, when he is fully trained, will be like his teacher.

Vs. 17-21 The important thing to see in these verses is that Paul was not crying over lost humanity; he was crying over fallen followers, disciples who defected.

Notice where the focus is, on Jesus and the coming transformation of this body of death. That is our personal hope in the resurrection. You see this expressed in Romans 8 when Paul talks about how the creation is waiting for our redemption.

In the opening verses of Isaiah 66, we had God looking for those who trembled, who were awed by and honored His Word in their hearts and actions. What Paul is saying here is the same thing, just in a different way. The natural response to Christ giving His life for us is to give Him our hearts and do what He says. This involves following Him in the harvest and being treated as He was treated, but also bearing fruit as He bore fruit and glorified the Father. It is simple discipleship.

Psalm 74

Isn't it interesting to read this psalm, having read Isaiah? Notice that the appeal for help focuses more on God defending His name, than defending His people.

Vs. 1-2 The plea to remember the people, His heritage and Zion.

Vs. 3-8 When the Babylonians burned the temple, the gold on the paneling melted and went into crevices between the foundation stones of the temple. They removed these stones to get at the gold. When they were done, the temple was completely ruined.

Vs. 9-11 These are the age old questions. However, Isaiah's ministry revealed the people's hearts. When they had the Word they should have responded. Hearing the Word and ignoring it makes a people dull and ungrateful. When the Word comes to Israel again, it will be like living water. Knowing the love of Christ, the Word and the plan of God is enough to get us through all the rough spots. It is something that God continually teaches us in His "silence."

Vs. 12-17 But, as in Job and in Isaiah, what is known about God, His wisdom in creation and His love, are the things we cling to when He is "silent."

Vs. 18-23 God should see the actions of the nations as an attack on Him and do something about it. He does and He will.

Proverbs 24:15-16

Amen.

OCTOBER 3

Hang on to your hat. In some respects Isaiah and Jeremiah are comparable to Elijah and Elisha. Elijah and Elisha were called upon to try to save the northern kingdom. When Elijah's ministry was rejected by the majority of the people, Elisha was called to accompany them into their judgment. Isaiah was used to warn the people of Judah of the coming judgment and he gave the people hope that there would be redemption and blessing if they followed the Lord. The people and leaders rejected that message. Now Jeremiah will be used by God to confront and appeal to anybody who would hear as Judah enters their judgment and exile.

Jeremiah 1-2:30

Jeremiah 1

This is the calling of Jeremiah, probably as a teen during the reign of Josiah.

Vs. 1-3 This introductory info is very interesting. Jeremiah's dad has the same name as the high priest under Josiah. Since Jeremiah isn't mentioned as the son of a high priest, and since Jeremiah's family of priests had been excluded from the office of high priest because of Eli back in 1 Samuel, it is thought that Jeremiah's father had the same name but wasn't the high priest. Yet, they would have been living at the same time. I only mention this, because it is still possible that Jeremiah's dad had been the high priest. Hilkiyah was the one who found the only existent copy of the books of Moses. Jeremiah was from Anathoth, a city of priests three miles from Jerusalem. This is where Solomon had sent Abiathar, the priest, into exile (you remember, right?).

The Word of the Lord came to him and sounds like the calling of Samuel and Isaiah. This happened in the 13th year of Josiah, meaning that the only existent copy of the Bible, the law, had not yet been found. That would happen in the 18th year of Josiah. Since Josiah became king when he was eight, it could be that Jeremiah and Josiah were about the same age.

Jeremiah's ministry continued well beyond King Zedekiah and the fall of Jerusalem; in fact, Jeremiah might have been the writer who finished 2 Kings, recording events that happened 30 years after the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah was there when Jerusalem was destroyed and Judah was taken fully into exile. Jeremiah was the prophet who recorded the dark days of Jerusalem.

Also, just for trivia, Jeremiah would have been alive during the days of Ezekiel and Daniel, Jeremiah being the senior of these three prophets. Jeremiah might have known Ezekiel before Ezekiel was taken into exile, but he never knew him as the wild and weird prophet he became in Babylon. Although it is wildly speculative, it could be that Jeremiah might possibly have met Daniel. Interestingly, when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem, he specifically sought out Jeremiah and allowed him to go free. I think Daniel might have had something to do with that. Since Daniel was an important advisor to Neb, you can safely assume Daniel was giving Nebuchadnezzar important information regarding how to deal with Jerusalem and its people.

Vs. 4-8 So, what do you get out of this?

V. 5 You have to wonder how Jeremiah was *a prophet to the nations*. Did any of the nations know what God said through him? Later, we'll see that Daniel had a copy of Jeremiah, so it is likely that both Nebuchadnezzar and Darius might have heard some of what God said through him.

V. 8 God promised to deliver Jeremiah here, and later God says this even stronger. Jeremiah eventually, I think, got the idea he was untouchable, until he got his first punch in the mouth. We'll read later what Jeremiah thought of that. In the end, we'll see that except for a couple of

humiliating and dangerous situations, Jeremiah did indeed outlive all of his adversaries. So, God did protect him.

Vs. 9-10 This is the second prophet who had his mouth touched. It is cool that God Himself touched Jeremiah.

I would say that being *set* over the nations means that God will give him the authority to speak God's words of judgment against them.

Vs. 11-19 This is Jeremiah's operational check to make sure he "worked."

Vs. 11-12 The almond tree's name sounds like the word for *seeing*. Also, it was the first tree to bud, so it was watched by people to determine the time of the season. God would watch over His Word to make sure it was fulfilled.

Vs. 13-14 The pot was from the north pouring out toward the south, which would be God's wrath and Babylon pouring toward Judah and Jerusalem. Remember, all of the great threats against Jerusalem came out of the north. Even though Babylon and Persia were east, they couldn't come over the desert and so had to go north along the rivers and then move south toward Israel.

V. 17 It says, *dress yourself for work*, but the note says "gird up your loins," which also meant to get ready for a fight or for action. God told Job twice to gird up his loins. Jeremiah was about to have a very action packed life, sometimes fighting for his life.

Vs. 18-19 Jeremiah was untouchable for a time, and in the end, he survived all of the hate and destruction.

Jeremiah 2

There is no way to know exactly when this was written. If it was before Josiah found the Book of the Law, then this may have helped lead to his reforms. Verse 16 could mean the death of Josiah, in which case, this would have been shortly after that event.

Vs. 1-3 This is what Israel was, probably just before they entered the land after the older, rebellious generation had died off.

Vs. 4-8 This is the sin of the nation after entering the land, led by three groups of leaders. What was the purpose of each group? It sums up total loss and corruption in a culture.

Vs. 9-13 No nation ever leaves their gods, but Israel did. Why doesn't a nation leave their gods? I think it is because those gods are dead and are really controlled by the people. A living God is much harder to live with.

Their crime is described in v. 13 as having two parts. Do you see the difference in those two actions, yet how they fit together? It is the same today. Going to God means depending on God. If you have your own source other than God, you can avoid Him. Living water was superior to stagnant water that sat in a cistern.

Vs. 14-19 Judah had gone to Egypt and Assyria for help rather than going to God, as if they were slaves looking for help from their master.

V. 16 could mean the death of Josiah, either before or after it happened. Or it could mean that every time they went to Egypt they kept having to pay money for no real help, consequently getting scalped.

Vs. 20-22 Although God freed them from Egypt, they willingly became slaves of idols. This is one of those places where God is using Israel to show us what mankind is really like even with the truth, but without a spiritual rebirth. The sin within us is too strong and defies truth, logic and reality. The sickness is spiritual and it needs a spiritual cure. And God is the only doctor. Even

after receiving the "cure," we need to stay in the Word daily and follow Him daily. The full cure comes when we step into a new body.

Vs. 23-25 Their zeal for idols was like an animal in heat. Verse 25 says it was all for the sake of comfort and appetite.

Vs. 26-28 They have been caught by God and He will make them feel shame.

Vs. 29-30 They complained against God, yet as God punished them, they didn't turn to Him, but instead kept devouring one another.

I was reminded of Jesus' word regarding the stress of the Tribulation in Matthew 24:12, *And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.* When things get worse for people as God's judgment approaches, it will reveal what is truly in people's hearts. Now is a good time for us to be working in the harvest.

Philippians 4

V. 1 *Stand firm* how? From what Paul has just said, what makes them *stand firm*? If it has to do with 3:17, then it really goes all the way back to 3:7 and everything thereafter. Jesus will be at the center of this stand.

Vs. 2-3 Sometimes you just need a wise mediator, even among seasoned disciples. Paul knew that these women would have a hard time working this out alone. Some malfunctions are like that. I have been in situations where I needed and lacked a wise mediator.

Vs. 4-7 Notice that the rejoicing and the forbearance are linked to knowing, really knowing, that the Lord is present. The Lord is not *at hand* as in His imminent return; but like we saw in Job, He is present in everything in our lives, working for His glory and purpose. That gives us stability and hope, if we truly know and acknowledge it.

Notice that *the peace...which surpasses all understanding* is linked to that "knowing" and also to a life where everything is always, constantly, being brought before God. We often tend to use vs. 6 & 7 like a rabbit's foot. We get in trouble and then rub it for good luck. This peace is for those who are always coming to God, not just when they are in trouble.

Vs. 8-9 *Finally* Paul got back to the *finally* from 3:1.

So, what do you do when you are surrounded by stress and persecution? Paul says to think on good stuff and to do what Paul has taught them. Using Psalm 119 as a guide, I would also say that memorizing Scripture is a good idea. Also, using Psalm 42 as a guide, I would say recounting times of God's past blessing and kindness helps too.

Vs. 10-20 There are some good things in this section. Verse 13 is one of those gems.

V. 17 Paul, like any maker of disciples, was looking for the life of Christ coming out through the lives of the Philippians. Life in knowing Jesus is seen in expressing Christ's love.

Vs. 19-20 Great verses.

Vs. 21-22 While Paul was in jail, he was often attended by guards. Sometimes he was chained between two of them. As Howard Hendricks observed, if Paul was chained to them, that means they were chained to him. Imagine the assignment of sitting next to this distressing individual for four-hour stretches. That would give Paul more than enough time to share the Four Laws, twice.

And now Paul says that there were believers all over *Caesar's household*. That's what you call a "chain reaction."

There is such a contrast in the readings today. In the OT we have the judgment against Israel, and in the NT we have a sense of the Philippians working hard in the harvest in spite of their

challenges. But there is one thing that links both readings: A servant was called to faithfully proclaim the Word in this present darkness. As disciples we are called to be light, but at times the darkness seems so strong. But it isn't we who are supposed to shine; it is Jesus, and in us, as we follow Him in the harvest, praising Him, reaching out, making disciples. He is stronger. You might want to listen to "Stronger," by Hillsong Chapel.

Psalm 75

Judging by what we read in Psalm 73, and now see here, Asaph had a hard time looking at the evil and proud people around him, wondering why they prospered. The focus here seems to be how the righteous are to keep their hearts from being consumed with the unfairness they see around them. As Paul said to the Romans in Romans 12:19, *"Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.'"*

V. 1 This is what Asaph learned in the trials, to look to the Lord's deeds and to praise God.

Vs. 2-3 His judgment will be to the entire earth.

Vs. 4-5 And the judgment will extend to every individual.

Vs. 6-8 And Asaph learned not to occupy himself with God's judgment, because it is God who will judge in the measure that He sees fit.

Vs. 9-10 Those who fear the Lord and follow Him will declare God's praise forever. The proud and all who rebel against God and resist Him will get their horns cut off; that is, they will be humbled as they are judged.

God uses wickedness and evil and injustice for His purposes, so they won't be going away anytime soon. As disciples, we need to learn how to live with these in the grace of God. We keep our eyes on the Lord, praise Him and follow our Lord in the harvest.

Proverbs 24:17-20

This is good advice considering what we just read in Psalm 75. Add to that what Jesus tells His disciples that they should love their enemies and do good to those who hate them, and you have the complete picture. God allows us to be in situations where we can fret so that we can grow. We have to take what we know is true and make it a part of our hearts in following the Word and the Spirit. When presented with the opportunity, we are to do good for these people. It gives them an opportunity to seek help or repent. If nothing else, it heaps burning coals upon their heads and messes with their minds. 😊

OCTOBER 4

You are beginning Colossians today and your feet are just getting wet in Jeremiah. You should be encouraged with how much you have read this year. Just think, you're reading your 24th book in the OT, your 12th in the NT, and you are more than halfway through your second reading of The Psalms.

Jeremiah 2:31-4:18

Jeremiah 2:31-37

Vs. 31-32 Notice that these words are written to a particular generation. This is written in the early years of Josiah, the godliest king Jerusalem ever knew. These words against these people would be fulfilled during the next three kings, still 40 years down the road. For most of his 55 years as king, Manasseh had ingrained idolatry into Judah and Jerusalem. This idolatry was now the culture and national identity of the people. Although Josiah was incredibly brave and passionate about saving his people from the wrath of God, God is saying through Jeremiah that

they will not change. Those people during the years of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah forgot all that God had done through Josiah and they are this generation.

V. 33 They were so good at harlotry, that they could teach old prostitutes new tricks. No pun intended.

V. 34 This refers to the charge against Manasseh that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood and God would not forgive. (2 Kings 24:4)

V. 35 This was the biggest sin of all. We understand this. When God is silent, we think everything must be OK.

Vs. 36-37 Jerusalem switched alliances regularly, rather than holding to the Lord.

Jeremiah 3

These words probably came before Josiah found the OT and passionately began to cleanse the land. When you see what God says to the northern (exiled) kingdom, you understand how this might have motivated Josiah to take his crusade further north into Israel.

Vs. 1-5 In saying this, God is not rejecting true repentance, but rather false profession in the face of troubles. You know how we always get "serious" when things are going bad. They did it too, but God isn't fooled.

Before Josiah, there were small temples of Baal along the roads or on the hills, each with a prostitute. People could make a quick worship stop and be on their way. Although Josiah got rid of these things, as soon as Josiah was dead, the people put them up again. People were worshiping Yahweh, and also everything else. God didn't (doesn't) like that.

Vs. 6-10 In light of those first five verses, this is what God spoke to Jeremiah. What is the message? In Ezekiel, God will take this two sister analogy and graphically develop it, giving them both names. You would have thought that Judah would have taken seriously what they saw God do to Israel. But today too, we really don't learn much from the example of others who make mistakes and are judged.

Vs. 11-18 Another word to Jeremiah, this is for the future restoration of Israel (the northern kingdom) and its reuniting with Judah into one nation. Notice the call to return. This was a great promise of mercy and restoration. Although Judah was just within a few years of judgment, God was still appealing to the people to turn to Him. Too bad it all fell on deaf ears.

V. 11 Israel was more righteous, in that it only ever had idolatrous kings. It honestly followed their example. Judah had some very godly men, but the people still defected from God.

V. 13 This is all God needed.

Vs. 19-20 God would have healed them had there been repentance.

Vs. 21-25 This might be God's call to a future generation and the confession and future repentance of Israel.

Jeremiah 4:1-18

Vs. 1-4 Notice that this returning was relational. It was not to a religion, but to Yahweh, the living God. Returning and repentance was to look like true returning and repentance. When John the Baptist was faced with the Pharisees coming to him, he told them to bear fruits of true repentance. The Pharisees walked away, but the people understood and wanted to know more. Here, there was only the show of repentance and returning, so God prophetically motivated them.

Vs. 5-18 Imagine that Jeremiah had to preach this publicly. This would be the word to those people 30 and 40 years in the future. When Jehoiakim heard these words (along with the rest of what Jeremiah wrote) it was winter, so as these lines were read to him, he cut them from the scroll and threw them into the fire. Cool, huh?

V. 10 Many places in Jeremiah, Jeremiah himself cries out in anguish. Here, I think his problem with God was that God allowed the false prophets to prophesy peace. But it was what the people wanted. It wasn't God's fault. Later, Jeremiah goes nose to fist with these prophets.

It was good that God started Jeremiah's ministry during a time of national revival, because people were willing to listen. I think these first six chapters during the time of Josiah (11 & 12 also) helped Josiah have the courage he needed to work to change the nation. After Josiah, the real battles begin for Jeremiah.

Colossians 1:1-20

Colossians was written at the same time as Ephesians, while Paul was in prison in Rome. Colossae was about 100 miles east of Ephesus. The same guy, Tychicus, carried both letters and he probably was in good shape when he was done with the delivery. It is likely that Paul had not fathered this church as he had Ephesus. It appears that Epaphras was the disciple who sowed and reaped in this field.

It is evident that as Christianity grew, there were constant problems cropping up. People took the teaching and twisted it; therefore, we have all of these letters. We also have Paul telling Timothy to guard and entrust the truth. As you read this letter you will notice how similar it is to Ephesians, but what will be important for us is to see where it is different. Those differences will point to the particular problems at Colossae.

Vs. 1-8 As Paul talks about the gospel here, notice that the gospel is *bearing fruit* everywhere it goes. That should say something to us, that if we let the gospel out, it will bear fruit. In this context, it also tells the people there that the message of the gospel is the same truth all the people have responded to. They don't need a "special" truth of their own. Not only that, Epaphras is a well-known and approved worker. It appears that Epaphras was there telling Paul and others about this church.

Vs. 9-12 This is Paul's prayer for their growth. You see parts of Ephesians and Philippians in this. Notice again the *bearing fruit*.

Vs. 13-20 This is the fullest description of Jesus' work and His deity in the NT. This also begins to hint at the problem the Colossians were facing. It was a teaching that said that Jesus was not fully God, that at some point He had been made by God and had been made a god. You get this from all the things that Paul says here. It would be good to map out all the things that Paul says about Jesus.

The *firstborn* is a reference to Jesus' position, not that He was created and was born into existence or deity. In John 1:1-18 you see the apostle John making sure everyone understood that Jesus was God. In fact, in John 5 Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of God and as the Son of Man. As the Son of God, he is God the Son, fully God, never created, always one with the Father and Spirit. As the Son of Man, Jesus was born as a man, and as a full-fledged man in submission to God, was given authority to rule by the Father. At the end of John 8, Jesus calls Himself Yahweh, I Am. There is no perfect analogy for the Trinity or the person of Jesus. We have the biblical information and are simply told it is true. We don't need to be able to figure out God.

Today we have many religions that say that Jesus was something other than a part of the eternal triune God. The Jehovah's Witnesses say that Jesus was Michael the Archangel who was made into a god. The Mormons say that Jesus was a god among many gods and the half brother of

Satan, who was chosen to be the savior of man. It is understandable that as the gospel spread, there were people who couldn't grasp the Trinity or understand God the Son becoming the Son of Man. It took 300 years of church councils and fights to formulate the doctrinal positions on the Trinity and on Jesus that we find in church statements of faith. All of those positions find their ways back to the NT and to these words.

The truth is important, and so we entrust truth to others to be passed on. It is important what we believe about Jesus. Paul and all the NT writers describe Jesus as God who became man and took our place. To make Jesus secondary in any sense (not fully God or only one of many saints to whom we pray) eventually destroys the message that brings salvation. Paul said it to the Philippians, *For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.* Who glories in Jesus Christ except those who have been saved by faith in the Son of God? As Paul said, *Who loved me and gave Himself for me* (Gal. 2:20).

Psalm 76

Vs. 1-3 Notice the importance of Zion and the broken weaponry.

Vs. 4-9 If you put together some of the reading we've been doing, you might get an interesting feel about this psalm. The event sounds like it could be when Assyria came against Jerusalem. We just read about this in Isaiah. This gave the people great confidence in the object of God's affection, Zion; but they didn't fully turn to Him. Now with Babylon about to assail Jerusalem in Jeremiah, the people had a false confidence in Zion as if it were magic, not fully understanding that they had totally lost God, and so, Jerusalem would be destroyed.

Vs. 10-12 As you read this, remember the arrogant words of Rabshakeh in 2 Kings 18 & 19. He vented his wrath on the people, the city, the king and then on God Himself. God used his wrath, to bring Himself praise. Interestingly, the final battle on earth will occur just miles outside of the walls of this city; and, again, men will vent their wrath against God and Israel. God still says Zion is His city, and that's why the irrationality of man (and spirit) aims its hatred there. This morning in Romans I read, *"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."* (Rom. 9:33) Jesus is that living stone. Zion is the city in which He will reign. The powers of nations, earthly and spiritual, will be drawn there to that city to witness the arrival and wrath of the coming King. There, our Lord will use the wrath of men to bring Himself praise. In the meantime, we need to be bringing in the sheaves.

Proverbs 24:21-22

We would take the part about the Lord and say, "Duh, of course." But what about the part about the king? You can just imagine what the Christians in Rome thought about their governmental leaders. Take five minutes to read Romans 13. Look at what it says disciples are to do regarding the government. Look at what it says disciples are to do regarding the harvest. The same author wrote this proverb and that chapter.

That last line is interesting. If you oppose God and oppose the authorities He has put in place, when the hammer falls, it is a double whammy.

OCTOBER 5

Jeremiah 4:19-6:14

One of the challenges with Jeremiah, and you might want to take this up with God when you get to heaven ☺, is that Jeremiah's prophecies are arranged topically and chronologically, but not primarily chronologically until we get to the end of the book. That's not completely comfortable to a western (consecutive numbers, parallel lines and right angles) way of thinking. In Isaiah we

had to be alert to when God was referring to the near events or the final events and the coming of the Messiah. In Jeremiah, besides the prophetic aspect of what he is writing, we are left to wonder if some things were written at a different time and are being put here by Jeremiah because it fits into the topic he is addressing. Mentioning times and kings, then, will always be important.

Jeremiah 4:19-31

Assuming that this was said in the early days of Josiah and Jeremiah, God was not only giving Jeremiah a vision, but He was also giving him all the emotions that come with fear.

Vs. 19-21 This is the kind of stuff that gives Jeremiah the nickname of "The Weeping Prophet." Early on, Jeremiah was distressed for his people and didn't seem to completely understand God. Later, after years of trying to help them, Jeremiah's attitude toward the people became more like God's.

Vs. 22-26 Look at what Jeremiah *looked* for. He was looking to see if the people would respond to God.

V. 22 The last part of this verse was used by Paul a couple of times, but in the opposite way, where he says, for example in 1 Corinthians 14:20, *be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.*

V. 23 This is like Genesis, but instead of order, the people have created their own chaos.

Vs. 27-28 This is God's desire for judgment and it has a certain "end times" ring to it.

Vs. 29-31 Surrounded by her enemies and not seeking the Lord, Judah tried to seek help from Egypt, but all Egypt's promises failed and Jerusalem fell.

V. 30 It's interesting that Jezebel painted her eyes before she went out to meet her judges and died.

Jeremiah 5

Vs. 1-2 I've noticed that often the first couple of verses make a statement, and the rest of the chapter works off of that statement.

V. 1 This reminds me of Abraham talking with Jesus (the angel of the Lord) about Sodom, before the angels destroyed it in Genesis 18:17.

Vs. 3-5 Like Abraham, Jeremiah was hoping that someone would be found who really followed God.

V. 6 Because these people were themselves treacherous, God will send three hunters to watch them, stalk them, and nibble away at their numbers.

Vs. 7-9 In spite of all the lessons and all the help, what they had become as a people was unredeemable unless God punished and purged them. It is interesting that when God blessed and fed them, they turned away from Him.

Vs. 10-11 The picture of Israel as a vineyard is common, but here God is bringing ruin to it. He will leave a remnant.

Vs. 12-13 We'll see this a lot. The prophets spoke peace to the people, but that is what the people wanted. Verse 13 is part of what the false prophets said about the true prophets like Jeremiah. Notice that the ESV has this as one saying inside of quotes.

Vs. 14-17 This is God declaring judgment for the words of the prophets that no danger would come. Then God describes the army that is to come against them and how devastating it will be.

Vs. 18-19 Mercy and judgment together. God will save a remnant, but He will give them what they want, making them sick of their own sin.

Vs. 20-24 This sounds a lot like Isaiah. Notice the contrast in vs. 22-23. The wild sea submits to God, but wild Israel does not.

Vs. 25-29 Again, although the Lord would gladly show them mercy, He can't. Think back to 5:6 where the Lord calls out three predators to pick away at the people. The people were predators too.

Vs. 30-31 The leaders were religious and ungodly, but the people liked it like that.

Jeremiah 6:1-14

Vs. 1-8 This is a prophetic warning for those in Jerusalem regarding the punishment coming against them. Benjamin was the only tribe that stayed with Judah when the nation divided. Jerusalem is the object of God's love in the future when the people will return to Him, but at this point Jerusalem was becoming the center of everything unholy. When we read Ezekiel, God will take him undercover and show what the leaders were really worshiping. It was creepy.

Vs. 9-14 This is a prophetic description of that coming punishment. Notice again who is mentioned in vs. 13 & 14. As we'll see in the reading tomorrow, this culture of ungodliness had gone so long and so deep that it was a part of the average family. God would have to cleanse everyone, but a special note would be made to single out the leaders who led the people away from God.

As disciples in the harvest, we need tact and wisdom as we talk to people. Yet, we need to tell people the whole truth. Jesus mentioned the coming judgment often. The disciples were sent out telling people to repent. Inviting people to Jesus to get a better life sounds good in their ears. But the whole truth speaks of God's coming kingdom, our sin, our need to turn to Jesus for forgiveness, and our need to be saved in Christ. This is the most important part and it is the most offensive. In many places in the world, salvation means that a person might have personal assurance and peace in Christ, but as a result of their decision, it means having their "worst life now" in their immediate context. People need the truth, not just what we think they want to hear that fits their needs and lifestyle. It's God's Word, not ours.

Colossians 1:21-2:7

Since Paul had not yet visited this church, much of what he says has the same tone of introduction as in Ephesians. Even the letter to the Ephesians was a letter sent to many churches, some of which Paul had never visited. Paul had never visited any of those churches in the area around Colossae.

Colossians 1:21-29

Vs. 21-23 This sounds just like portions of Ephesians, except v. 23 where Paul reminds them that this is the same gospel that is being preached everywhere. Paul had to remind the Corinthians of this too, because of preachers who were adding to the teaching which Paul had brought.

V. 23 In light of all we've read, knowing you can't lose being a "new creation" (salvation), how do you interpret Paul's warning?

Vs. 24-29 This is Paul describing the importance of the ministry in the harvest God had given him, and has given us.

V. 24 Nothing was "lacking" in Jesus' suffering with regard to salvation. Yet now, guiding the church, Jesus was using Paul's suffering (He uses ours, too) to provide crucial insights and leadership to others. Jesus was using Paul to fill out what He was not physically present to teach.

V. 27 We've seen this in Ephesians. The mystery is not that the Gentiles would be saved, but that God would make a mysterious "nation" of Jews and Gentiles during this time. That's us, the church.

Colossians 2:1-7

Vs. 1-2 Paul saw all of his ministry struggles as challenges to strengthen churches. That would be an interesting mindset for us, as disciples, to develop. Notice that in v. 2 Paul tells what he understood to be God's goal in allowing him to struggle as he did. The point of making Paul struggle was to produce mature disciples and a unified church.

Vs. 3-7 are entering into one of the problems at Colossae. Teachers were apparently saying there was hidden knowledge beyond what Paul had shared with them, and that if they wanted the fullness of God, they had to go deeper into this knowledge and philosophy, and, wouldn't you know it, deeper into Jewish custom.

Paul is, and will be, saying that Jesus is as deep as you need to go. And as we saw in Galatians, Paul will tell them that if you begin with Jesus in faith, you should stick with Jesus in faith. All the fullness is in Him. He's enough.

Psalm 77

I wonder what this son of Asaph was living through when he wrote this. These guys usually led worship under godly kings. This could have been written during the Assyrian advance on Jerusalem under Hezekiah, or it could have been written after the return of the people from Babylon. Both times were times of distress.

Vs. 1-2 Whatever was happening, Asaph was very distressed. In v. 2 it says he was coming to God *in the day of my trouble*. We might think, "better late than never," and God may hear if we only go to Him as a last resort. However, the godly are always going to God and always receiving peace. This is the secret behind the peace promised in Philippians 4:6-7. Asaph was a regular at God's door and God was his only hope.

Vs. 3-9 Here we see that the distress had something to do with the nation. The times were continually bad and the good times were now only memories. God's grace and favor on Israel seemed like history. But Asaph himself is forcing himself to wrestle spiritually with the situation. You see a progression in these verses and he comes upon God's promise that He will be gracious to Israel.

Vs. 10-15 Underline *I will*. Now look at what Asaph declares about God in the last three verses. Underline *you* and *your*. This is great stuff.

Vs. 16-20 In the fulfillment of His promises and love for Israel, God shook all of creation. Though Asaph couldn't understand the current distress, this was the same faithful, fearsome, and almighty God who promised to fulfill His love to Israel. That day is still coming.

Funny, this morning I was reading in Luke 8 about a weary Jesus waking up in a sinking, storm-tossed boat filled with screaming fishermen, *Master, master, we are perishing!* Jesus gets up and turns off the wind and the waves and says to them, *Where is your faith?* They didn't know that they had God in the boat.

So what is the comfort of these psalms? I'm reading this one and identifying deeply with it. In a way, who'd want to identify with such a distressing psalm? But there's a sense of saying you know what the psalmist is going through and realizing that God says it's OK to feel like this. It is, oddly enough, God saying that He knows how we feel. It leads me to believe He wants me to be able to understand that this psalm is true. And then He wants me to find and use the hope in this psalm.

So, what do we have? Crying out? Check. Remembering? Check. Verses 7-9, wondering? Check. Appealing, remembering, pondering, and meditating? Check. Verses 16-20 are from the Bible itself, viewing the way God redeemed His people. For us too, we know about our salvation, our Lord's rescue and the future we have in Him. Now as we wait on Him, we have the privilege of knowing Him and following Him in the harvest. He's not just in the boat with us, He's in us in the Holy Spirit. Right? Check.

Proverbs 24:23-25

I'm sure this is harder than it sounds, especially if the wicked are in power or pay the salaries. I'm sure King Manasseh didn't rule for 55 years by making friends with the people who rebuked him. It says that he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and I'll bet gallons of that blood came from those people who stood up to him. But who is the real king? Oh, yeah, that's right. God is the real King and His is the real kingdom.

In the case of those who rebuked King Manasseh, the delight and blessing was in the form of standing in the presence of God and relaxing in the glory and wonder of heaven. That's not bad at all.

OCTOBER 6

Jeremiah 6:15-8:7

If you notice the way the verses are laid out in chapters 1-6, most of it appears to have been prophecy given in a declarative fashion. Looking at 6:27-30, you have a sense that God's commissioning of Jeremiah is now complete. In those verses, God is stating for Jeremiah one of His purposes among the people. It seems then that all of chapters 1-6 were during the time of Josiah, probably before Josiah's revival. Chapter 7 will be the first sermon that Jeremiah preaches, and we'll see, without needing anyone to tell us when this happened, it was definitely after Josiah's death. The sermon is reporting, in real time, what the people were actively involved in.

I'm saying this all just to help you understand a little how to look for clues that give you some order of events and where there are changes. Remember to keep underlining phrases that recur or connections between words if they stand out to you. An easy phrase to begin with is *thus says the Lord*.

Jeremiah 6:15-30

V. 15 The lack of shame isn't just rebellion; it had now become something they were unable to do. Worshipping idols and doing bad stuff was the new normal for them. But God's perspective of reality is the only one that counts. Jesus said that if the light in man became darkness, that darkness would be great. And so it was, and is.

Vs. 16-17 As a result of the lack of shame in v. 15, God tried to reason with them. Do you notice the dialog here?

Vs. 18-20 This is why God was bringing the punishment on them. Notice that even the nations were being called upon to take note of this judgment. I have the sense that when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple years later, he fully understood that he was fulfilling God's judgment on these people.

Vs. 21-26 There are two separate punishments here, each introduced with *thus says the Lord*. How would you describe these? The first was internal; the second was external. The nation would rot from within, and a nation from without would destroy some and take others captive.

Vs. 27-30 This is how God will use Jeremiah in the lives of these people in the history of this nation. Sometimes God uses us this same way and we have to accept it as His assignment for us.

Jeremiah 7

You have to get to vs. 16-20 to see what was actually happening in Jerusalem. This has to have happened during the reign of Jehoiakim, meaning it was after Josiah's death. That would be 15-18 years after God's appointment of Jeremiah. Now the fun begins.

Vs. 1-4 Notice the location where Jeremiah gives this sermon. You get the point right? Talk about God sending His man into harm's way.

Vs. 5-7 This is what God really wanted. If they wanted to dwell in Jerusalem and worship in the temple, all they had to do was obey.

Vs. 8-11 Notice that the *do not trust* in v. 4 is picked up again in v. 8. This is a really strong charge against the people. Christians wouldn't do this, right? Remember what Paul said to the believers in 1 Corinthians 10? They became involved in idolatry too. In Jeremiah and 1 Corinthians, the people didn't get rid of God (they thought), they just brought in other gods that they could worship alongside of God. It might be easier to be idolatrous than we think. A disciple needs to be alert. Paul says in that famous verse in 1 Corinthians 10:13 in the context of idolatry, *No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.*

V. 11 I believe this is part of what Jesus quotes the second time He cleanses the temple in Matthew 21:13. Jesus knew the OT.

Vs. 12-15 God shows them that He's done it before. *Ephraim* refers to the northern kingdom of Israel, already taken into exile.

Vs. 16-20 This is really interesting. Jeremiah was always weeping for the people. God says not to intercede for them. Later, after Jeremiah gets roughed up, he will be the one to tell God not to listen to the people.

Vs. 21-26 I'll bet when Paul read these words after he had found Christ, v. 23 burned right through his heart. This is all God ever really wanted.

Vs. 27-28 God is preparing Jeremiah for how the people will respond to his first sermon.

Vs. 29-34 This section begins with a call to mourn. Look at what the people had done. They themselves had desecrated the temple. They had begun again to offer their children in sacrifice. Notice back in 7:9 there is a mention of Baal. Where you had Baal worship, you had people sacrificing their babies. You had to do something with those unwanted children that came through Baal worship. That generation was beyond repair.

Jeremiah 8:1-7

Vs. 1-3 This is what God says to Jeremiah as fact. Notice in v. 2, this will only be done to those who had served these things. David's bones wouldn't be out there, but I wonder about Solomon's.

Vs. 4-7 Notice the difference here. This is the prophetic word that God has given Jeremiah to declare.

When I read v. 7, I thought of Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy to preach the Word. People need to constantly hear what God says. In the harvest, it isn't our job to make people believe, but we need to herald. Those who *hear* the words of God will step forward.

Colossians 2:8-23

Vs. 8-15 The key to this section is the threat in v. 8, the declaration in v. 9, and the words *in Him*. Paul didn't need to write a book. Jesus Himself was the answer.

V. 8 Adding religious works or routine to Christ might seem logical, but it is foreign to the living faith in following Christ. Traditions appeal to the past ways and rote formulas for being acceptable to God. The elementary teachings are for babies, not for the mature.

Vs. 9-10 We do not come into the fullness of Christ by doing things. Period. We own the fullness of Christ and experience it as we follow and mature.

Vs. 11-15 Notice how Paul uses the catch words of legalism and shows how those old forms were fulfilled in being made alive in Christ. He shows that the spiritual meaning of circumcision was fulfilled in coming to Christ and putting off the old nature, the flesh.

V. 15 The rulers were disarmed because their authority to "rule" as guardians of mankind was only theirs if mankind was constantly proven to be guilty before God in perpetual sin and unrighteousness. Therefore Satan is a constant accuser. When Jesus lived a sinless life, died for our sins and was raised from the dead, man could be declared righteous; and Jesus Himself, the man, was seated at the right hand of God and declared the righteous ruler of mankind. Satan was served notice and disarmed. The enemy can accuse, but Christ makes righteous all who come to Him. True freedom then is only in Christ, not obedience to laws and rituals.

Vs. 16-19 Notice the phrase *let no one*. This represents the teaching of these Jewish teachers. Verse 19 is what the Colossians needed to focus on.

Vs. 20-23 This self-inflicted suffering seemed religious and good. Paul had real suffering that came from working in the harvest. Paul's scars came from working alongside Jesus, not trying to suffer for Jesus. Working in the harvest, we work in the freedom of Christ. If He wants us to suffer or experience hard times, He'll provide them, not us.

V. 21 This verse was used in the prohibition of the early 1900's in the States, quoted out of context, saying these words were God's opinion about drinking. Ironically, that misuse of these verses is exactly what Paul and the Spirit were warning against. If you take away the choice to obey, grow and mature in Christ by building fences and traditions, you produce rebellion and immaturity. Only by freely following Christ can we fully mature in Him. That is a good thought as we make disciples in the harvest who make disciples.

Psalm 78:1-31

Like before, we will be in Psalm 78 for three days. This will be a good review of some events we read about at the beginning of the year.

Vs. 1-4 I mentioned before that Matthew and the Spirit quote v. 1 of this introduction as the reason why Jesus told parables, thus fulfilling this verse. Go figure. What that means for us is that in the rest of Psalm 78, there is a parable for us to understand. What fun! What stands out to you and what do you think the real point of this recounting of history is?

Vs. 5-8 Look at what God gave and why. What an honor to receive this information and the personal words of the Lord. That was grace, but God showed us in Israel that the sin within us is stronger than the perceived privilege of receiving the words of rescue and life.

Vs. 9-11 It may be that Ephraim is mentioned here because of the northern kingdom going into exile during the time of Hezekiah. Judah represented the godly line which produced David and eventually the Messiah. Look again at Jeremiah 7:15 in today's reading.

Vs. 12-16 This is what God did. Underline *He*.

Vs. 17-20 This is what *they* did. Notice that v. 20 is a part of their words against God.

Vs. 21-31 This is a retelling of Numbers 11. If you look at Numbers 11:20 you'll see the miracle of God making quail come out of noses. Why do I find this funny?

In Jeremiah today we read how God allowed Shiloh to be destroyed, the place where the tabernacle had been. If we were reading this entire psalm today, we'd read Psalm 78:60. Kind of interesting, huh?

As I was highlighting the high points of this reading, what stood out to me were vs. 7, 11, 19 and 21-22. I don't think God wants a lot from us. I don't want to fall into acting like they did. God wants us to review and remember His grace and love. That is what helps us through the hard times on earth, in the harvest. We walk in the daily reminder of the love of Christ as we follow Him in the harvest.

Proverbs 24:26

This is an interesting analogy. I think He means a kiss that brings satisfaction, peace and delight, not some politically motivated or correct little peck.

OCTOBER 7

In reading the entire Bible, you could get the idea that there is a lot of negativity going on. Obviously there is the constant testimony of God's love and His ongoing work to rescue and redeem mankind, but there is still a lot of judgment. We see it in the prophets, in The Psalms and in the warnings of Proverbs. Then too, we see a lot of caution and commands in the NT to stay awake and not live like when we were lost.

The overwhelming sense we have from the Lord is that this planet is under judgment. Judgment will come. As disciples we know the mercy of Christ and follow Him knowing that the time is drawing to an end. Clouds are building on the horizon for every person, and eventually for the world itself. A time for judgment has been set, for each individual and also for all who are on the earth when the Tribulation begins. When Jesus sent out His disciples, their simple gospel was that the kingdom was coming, that men should turn to God (repent) and come to Christ. The kingdom implies both judgment and joy. It depends on knowing God.

The constant sense of judgment in Scripture is to keep the mature focused and alert. It is reality. A disciple hungers now and weeps now for the world. It is a choice, because what is happening now is urgent and it is coming to an end. Yet, it doesn't weigh us down as we work in the harvest because of the love the Holy Spirit has poured into our hearts. Knowing our Lord brings joy. Seeing new life in Christ brings joy. Seeing those new disciples going out and making disciples, who make disciples brings joy. And then comes the party.

Jeremiah 8:8-9:26

Jeremiah 8:8-22

Vs. 8-12 God takes aim again at the leaders of Judah.

V. 11 This is the second time God has said this about the leaders. You will notice that the image of a wound or incurable sickness will come up again and again.

V. 13 I wonder if Jesus had this in mind when He cursed the fig tree?

Vs. 14-15 The people are running for shelter. Tragically they will call out for help, but it will be too late. God is telling them to turn to Him now.

Vs. 16-17 The coming judgment. Dan was the northernmost tribe, and trouble almost always came from the north.

Vs. 18-22 This seems like the lament of God and of Jeremiah. There is no joy on God's part in punishing the rebellious. We have seen how patient God is. His patience is to give us time to respond to Him.

V. 22 The ironic and tragic truth is that there was a cure but the people didn't choose it.

Jeremiah 9

Vs. 1-2a are Jeremiah's thoughts. This is another example of why he is called the Weeping Prophet. It really must have been tragic seeing the people refusing to follow God and then seeing them punished.

Vs. 2b-6 This is God's charge against the people. Notice that twice it says they refused to know God. Knowing God is not new to the New Testament. It really goes right back to Adam and Eve, and it has always been the basis of saving faith. In the process of not knowing God, they had become corrupt toward each other.

Vs. 7-11 Look at *I will*. This is God mapping out His plan of action.

Vs. 12-16 This is like God pleading His case why He has to do this. Notice the call for the wise man.

Vs. 17-22 The Lord's punishment of the people. It appears that the women are called on to lead the mourning.

Vs. 23-26 Again, who is the *wise man*? That would be v. 24. This sounds a little like those first two chapters of 1 Corinthians. Notice how *steadfast love, justice, and righteousness* are fused together. Notice too that the true measure of a person is understanding and knowing the Lord. It reminds me again that what we are really asking people to do is to know the Lord. It is a personal relationship, not a religious tradition and lifestyle. Knowing Christ is what sets us free.

Colossians 3:1-17

Where Ephesians has six chapters, three that magnify God's grace and three telling us how to live that grace, Colossians has four chapters with the same breakdown. Chapters 1-2 talk about the greatness of salvation in Christ, and now we are entering the application of how to live that truth.

Vs. 1-4 There is an old critical motto that says some people are so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good. That isn't what Paul or God is saying here; in fact, the real point here is that if you are too earthly minded you are no earthly good. Based on all of what God has done in Christ alone, our minds, hearts and lives should be captivated and empowered by that truth.

It is interesting that Paul talks about setting our minds on things above. Paul had actually, literally, been there. You can imagine that when things became hard for him, he could close his eyes and remember what he had seen and remember how that was so much more powerful than anything he was facing. That is what is meant for us too. We have the Word and the Spirit, and by faith we can see and live beyond this earth. This is why it is important for us to be in the Word every day, to keep our vision of God fresh and our understanding of His love, grace and justice in balance.

We're here reading these verses, but you have read so much more. Think of what you've read in the OT, and in the Gospels, Acts, and Romans up to here. Based on all of that, how should you live? What kind of joy should you have in life? How should you invest as a disciple in the harvest? If it could "grasp" us, it would change us. The reality is that as disciples we need to be constantly reading and allowing God's Word to remake us.

Vs. 5-11 God's judgment is coming. God's truth saved us and changes us. God opens our eyes. Jesus sets us free. Some of this sounds very similar to Ephesians. I would mention again that loving one another as disciples isn't just a command to be nice to mankind generally. We are called to love all people as God loves them. But the bond in Christ is for that group who are sent into the world by their Savior to bear witness to His work on the cross for mankind. As those saved, who are working together in the harvest, behind enemy lines, we are to cherish our

relationships and have a special love for one another. Take away the harvest, and we are just being nice to each other for some general reason.

Vs. 12-17 Here it is. We are God's chosen ones, bearing His message to a dying world. Our group is supposed to reflect the oneness that each of us has with Christ Himself. The entire church is supposed to be unified in our Lord and His grace and His mission. Notice the commands to *put on*, and *let*. All of this centers on Jesus and allowing His Word to dwell in us richly.

There is a lot to grasp and absorb in these verses. It'll take a lifetime. Beyond what we learn or are taught, there has to be a very innocent sense of wonder and gratefulness in what Jesus means to us. That's why a believer with a Bible, yet without an education, in a poor third world country can have a closer relationship to Jesus than any of us, with all our blogs, books and programs. It is a matter of heart and devotion and wonder.

Psalm 78:32-55

V. 32 This is the bridge from the last section (yesterday) into today. Tomorrow will be the same as we get into the next section of Psalm 78. Today will end on a high note, but v. 56 will bring in the sad reality of how they acted.

Vs. 33-36 So God punished them, then they repented and remembered God. This is the cycle seen in the book of Judges. The tragedy was that they remembered God less and less every time they got into trouble.

Vs. 36-37 They only came back to God enough to help themselves and get some relief. Just like us.

Vs. 38-41 It is interesting that they forgot God, but in God's mercy He remembered the depth of their helplessness in sin. In spite of their sin, God still had compassion on them. And He shows us this same grace and forgiveness.

Vs. 42-55 Specifically, Israel did not remember how God rescued them from Egypt. Notice that vs. 42-43 set up the context of the deliverance from Egypt. Then in vs. 44-51, underline *He* to see all that God did for them. In v. 52 you have the deliverance, and in 53-55 the fulfillment of His promises to them and their fathers.

Remembering God's goodness and blessing to us is a constant theme in The Psalms, and just a good thing to do when times are tough. So after all of this deliverance and blessing, what did the people do? Tune in tomorrow for the rest of the story.

Proverbs 24:27

Good advice.

OCTOBER 8

Believe it or not, this is your last day in Colossians and in Psalm 78. Go celebrate.

Jeremiah 10-11

Jeremiah 10

Vs. 1-5 God appeals to the people not to copy the other nations regarding serving idols or becoming led by signs and superstition. God has already said that He can be understood and known personally.

Vs. 6-13 What a surprise to find this here. What a great declaration of the glory of God. You'll see a note on v. 11 that this one verse is in Aramaic, not Hebrew. This word to the nations was in the language the nations understood.

Vs. 14-16 Meanwhile, back with the idol makers. Verse 16 is a verse of hope. In the middle of all of this warning and judgment, God is still saying that Israel is His inheritance. (Deut. 32:8-9)

Vs. 17-18 Time for the people to go into exile, like hobos with their bundles on their shoulders.

Vs. 19-25 This is Jeremiah lamenting for the people, feeling like a wounded man. Verse 21 is very sad. Leaders don't lead for themselves. If they fail, the people pay the price.

In the years after King Josiah, Judah began to shrink as the surrounding nations were able to harm them. Babylon was the new power and besides the threat they posed, the surrounding nations took advantage of the general lawless atmosphere. Later, God will pronounce judgments on Judah's neighbors.

Jeremiah 11

Vs. 1-5 God commanded Jeremiah to exhort the people to come back to the covenant that Israel made with God at Mt. Sinai. Some suggest Jeremiah began this during the revival in the days of Josiah. Until they found a copy of the OT, the leaders would not have known exactly what the covenant at Sinai was. Finding the Bible and hearing Jeremiah's preaching might explain why Josiah was so distressed when the books of Moses were read to him.

Vs. 6-8 Jeremiah may have preached this message during his entire ministry. In Josiah's day, the entire country, on the surface, served God. The revival was broad, but superficial for the majority. During Josiah's day they didn't have temples or shrines to other gods.

Vs. 9-17 After Josiah's death, the people (led by ungodly kings) quickly went back to worshipping everything other than God. The worship of Baal and Ashtoreth (Baal's wife) were "X-rated" and almost irresistible, explaining why King Solomon was lured into Ashtoreth worship. This would have begun quickly and required little overhead. The people disregarded the testimony in the books of Moses that God judges the sins of Israel if they rebel.

Vs. 9-13 The people had multiplied gods, so God said that when distress came upon them, they should seek their own gods.

Vs. 14-17 Jeremiah might be distressed and weep, but God tells Jeremiah not to intercede for the people. Actually, by the time the city was taken and destroyed, Jeremiah was seeing things very much like God did. A couple good beatings and being thrown into a muddy cistern have a way of changing your perspective.

Vs. 18-22 Anathoth was Jeremiah's hometown. So where is it that a prophet has no honor? That's right. And to boot, they wanted to kill him. God not only told Jeremiah about this, but God took it personally.

I was reading this morning in John 8 where Jesus confronted the priests, scribes and Pharisees who wanted to kill Him. *You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* (John 8:44) This is the same reason why the leaders wanted to silence Jeremiah. They were following their father.

It is interesting that taking God's Word to people in the harvest not only allows you to see God's blessing and love, it also allows you to understand God's righteousness in judging people. People may reject us, but they are really rejecting Jesus. We feel it and understand how God must sense the rejection, apathy and ridicule.

Colossians 3:18-4:18

Colossians 3:18-25

This is the same as in Ephesians 5 and extremely brief in comparison.

V. 25 Ephesians doesn't have this warning.

Colossians 4

V. 1 This is the warning to masters of slaves. In Ephesians 6, this warning and the one in 3:25 were mixed together. In some way, comparing this to Ephesians helps you to better understand what this warning means in Colossians.

Vs. 2-4 Again, there is a longer version of this in Ephesians 6, right after the mention of the spiritual armor.

Vs. 5-6 These are different than Ephesians 4 and good advice on chewing the bull with others in the harvest.

Vs. 7-9 These are exactly like Ephesians except for the mention of Onesimus. If you don't know who Onesimus is, you will when you read Philemon. Onesimus is the entire focus of that letter. It is interesting here that he is now serving Paul.

Vs. 10-11 As Paul often does, he mentions fellow workers who are with him. Of interest here is the mention of Mark. This is how we know that Mark and Barnabas were related. It helps explain why Barnabas was willing to split with Paul in Acts 15. It is interesting that Mark was here with Paul in Rome during the time Paul was under house arrest as recorded at the end of Acts. By that time, Mark had already written the Gospel of Mark. The next time that Paul would be in Rome, it would be to die as recorded in 2 Timothy, and he will ask Timothy to bring Mark with him to help him. It is said that Mark wrote his Gospel for the church in Rome, and so it would have been appropriate for Mark to have been in Rome ministering to the churches of Rome. It could be that Mark was now visiting Paul, who was still under house arrest, and filling him in on some of Jesus' history that he had not known.

Just to make sure they understood that Paul was not promoting Jewish custom, Paul mentioned that of all the people with him, these men were the only Jews with him (men of the circumcision).

Vs. 12-13 Epaphras is honored here. He apparently was the guy who "planted" the church in Colossae. Paul is showing his esteem for him and may also be saying they should honor Epaphras more than those teachers who are confusing them. Notice that Epaphras "struggled" for them and notice too what his desire for them was.

V. 17 Archippus is the son of Philemon, the recipient of one of the letters we'll be reading.

When was the last time you read Colossians? Congratulations!

As mentioned, the conflict with those teachers who were trying to diminish the eminence of Christ resulted in Paul and the Spirit giving us the longest, clearest declaration of the glory of Jesus, the Son of God, God the Son. When you put it all together, He deserves our love, our devotion and our wonder. Staying in the Word daily and allowing the Spirit to keep our hearts alive to the love of God and the mission we have in the harvest will guarantee that our hearts are always growing in the wonder of Christ. Wonder makes making disciples a lot easier.

Psalm 78:56-72

Vs. 56-58 This is the contrast to God's amazing salvation of His people from Egypt. They had all those signs and wonders, yet this is how they responded. Underline all of the things they did. It is interesting.

Vs. 59-64 This summarized the period of the judges. But as we read the book of Judges we saw the patience of God. There were about 400 years of God reaching out to this people. Notice that Shiloh wasn't destroyed until the time that Eli was judged in 1 Samuel 4. The death of the priests was probably during the reign of Saul when he put to death the priests and their families at Nob, as he was trying to find and kill David. (1 Sam. 22:18-19)

V. 60 This is what we have heard mentioned in Jeremiah 7:4. *The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord...* was like their good luck charm, but they had defiled it and rebelled against God.

Vs. 65-66 This is God rising in jealousy to protect His people, not because of their works but because of His promise.

Vs. 67-72 This section is the real point of the psalm. The people were to lift their eyes to the provision of a leader like David. It was through David that God brought order and stability to Israel. We don't really get the emotion of having a hero king. We don't have any real faith in our politicians. Back then, the conquering hero, the king, brought stability; and it was a great day when he returned victorious from battle. It meant safety, order and peace. We who know Jesus have a real hero and a real king. In psalms like these, and in all of the NT, we are invited to look to the return of our Lord and King, Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Man, who will bring order and lasting peace to the earth. That was the vision we saw in Isaiah 6. The earthly king had died, but God sat upon the throne of both heaven and earth. A King sits on the throne today and we need to tell people He's returning.

Proverbs 24:28-29

Just reading these verses brings to mind words from Jesus and Paul. How many things can you think of from Jesus or Paul that tell you what our attitude, as the rescued, should be? I'll start.

Romans 12:17-21 *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.* ¹⁸*If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* ¹⁹*Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."* ²⁰*To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* ²¹*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

OCTOBER 9

Jeremiah 12-14:10

Jeremiah 12

Vs. 1-4 Jeremiah is upset that as times got bad, the wicked and those who are plotting against him could hold off the effects of God's chastening longer because of their resources.

Vs. 5-6 God is challenging Jeremiah. He has not yet really seen what God's judgment will look like and how vile the people will be in their response to his preaching. God is telling Jeremiah that this is a picnic compared to how it will be. I think too, of how easily I can be shaken by mail, phone calls, bad news, and frustrations. It gives you a reminder of how deeply within us sin affects us and how self-focused and fragile it makes us. God trains us to handle pressure and live by spiritual reality and focus on trusting Him by exposing us to pressure, and at the same time, leaving us with no place to go but Him.

Vs. 7-13 You notice that the words *heritage* and *portion* are prominent in this pronouncement of God's judgment on Judah and Jerusalem.

Vs. 14-17 This is a pronouncement of judgment on the neighbors, then a promise of compassion on Judah and compassion on the nations who listen to what the Lord is doing. This might be looking to the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom. This is like a

summary of what God had always intended with Israel. The nations would see God's blessing on Israel because of their special relationship to God, and the people would come to Israel and be saved. That is the blessing promised to Abraham. Now and in the future, this is how nations will come under God's judgment or blessing.

Jeremiah 13

Vs. 1-7 First, what was this? Apparently it was like a belt, worn around the waist. The priest wore a sash or belt like this. John the Baptist wore one made out of leather. In order for this to have made any point to the people, it would have been recognizable and understandable to them. Apparently when Jeremiah wore it, it was either very attractive or it made him look like he was working as a priest.

V. 4 There are two possibilities with the Euphrates. There is a town/location about 3 miles from Jeremiah's home-town of Anathoth that is spelled exactly the same way. If it is the Euphrates River, that would have been a 700-mile round trip. If it is the near location, then this "parable" would have been more visible to the people and would have applied to the usefulness of the people to God. The name would have been a "suggestion" of exile, since it sounded like the Euphrates. If it really is the Euphrates, then this is also a very strong warning about the future exile, since the exiles would have been led north to the Euphrates and then south down the Tigris to Babylon.

Vs. 8-11 The point here is the linen *loincloth*. Just as the belt looked good and brought glory to the wearer, also signifying the purpose of the priest, Judah and Jerusalem's usefulness was in giving glory to God. When they stopped doing that and fell into idolatry and disobedience, they were rotted and were rendered useless.

Vs. 12-14 The people liked wine, but these are the grapes of wrath. The anguish of this judgment would be so emotionally devastating that it would be like them being drunk, confused, off balance, and unable to regain their composure. Imagine being drunk forever. This is another example of how people shouldn't count on making a last minute cry to God. The logic is living like they want and getting all the gusto right up until the end and then making that prayer and going to heaven. When God brings this distress on Israel, they will be so emotionally off balance and so overwhelmed that they might not be thinking straight. God is not mocked.

Vs. 15-17 This is God's warning of judgment, and Jeremiah is warning the people that if they don't listen, he's going to cry again.

Vs. 18-19 This looks like it is the humbling of King Jehoiachin and his mother who actually surrendered the city to Nebuchadnezzar, keeping it from being totally destroyed. This humility marked the second deportation of exiles and was a sign of mercy. The people who remained in Jerusalem didn't heed this mercy.

Vs. 20-27 The new king and the people didn't change, so the next time Nebuchadnezzar came to Jerusalem it was for total destruction.

V. 22 Some of this imagery is very strong. The harlot is being raped, receiving the punishment fitting of her sin.

V. 23 This generation of people was incurable in their idolatry and perversion of what they thought about God and spirituality. But just for perspective, there were individuals who were being saved and who truly loved God. Jeremiah was one of them and we'll meet more.

V. 27 This imagery is just that, imagery. God will cleanse His people.

Jeremiah 14:1-10

Vs. 1-6 Drought was one of the punishments God would bring against the people if they left Him, and is mentioned in Deuteronomy.

Vs. 7-9 This is Jeremiah pleading for the people, that God should do something. He did. God removed the people from Israel, preserved them through their hardship and cleansed them in the Babylonian captivity.

V. 10 Here is God's answer to Jeremiah. The people wouldn't change, so God had to punish them.

When Jeremiah was just getting started, King Josiah found a copy of the Bible. When they read the books of Moses to Josiah, especially Deuteronomy and probably all five books, Josiah was moved to tears and grief because he understood the judgment coming against his people. When we read all of this, as disciples, we need to understand that what is going to happen to the people who don't know Christ - on this planet, in our town, in our neighborhood, and in our family - will make Jeremiah look like a party. Jesus said it best when He talked about what the lost would be facing for eternity, *where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched*. That is eternal punishment. It doesn't mean we need to get obnoxious in the harvest, but it does mean that we need to work and pray constantly. It was Jesus who saved us from the wrath of God. He is the only one who can save them.

1 Thessalonians 1-2:9

After Paul established the church in Philippi, he went on to Thessalonica, a major city of about 200,000. We've read this in Acts 17:1-9. We know Paul was there at least three weeks, and perhaps from 3-6 months. Paul thanked the Philippians for two gifts of money they sent to him as he worked, starting and establishing the church in Thessalonica. From the two letters we have to this church, we can see that Paul did some very in-depth teaching to establish them. There was a lot of persecution to Paul and the church there, and eventually Paul was driven out and had to flee to Berea. When Paul settled down in Corinth, he wrote these letters to encourage the people in their faith, to strengthen them in the persecution, to correct their misunderstandings about what he had taught them and to counter false teaching by some of the Jews, who, as usual, tried to discredit Paul.

1 Thessalonians 1

Vs. 1-3 Notice that their faith became immediately visible. They were immediately met with opposition.

Vs. 4-5 Notice *our gospel*. This is to say that in spite of what others said about Paul, the power of the gospel was visible to them and bore fruit. Paul was simply a servant.

Vs. 6-10 Children become imitators of their parents. This is why Jesus' words to His disciples are so important, *a disciple is not above his teacher*. We need to be disciples of our Lord so that as we make disciples and they imitate us, they naturally grow to imitate Christ. The word about what God did among the Thessalonians and their faith in Christ became news.

V. 9 It is interesting that we're reading about idols in Jeremiah and these people were saved from idols.

V. 10 Notice how this chapter ends. Paul had taught them to wait on the Lord and to wait with expectation. This verse is important in that the implication of this verse is that those who know Christ will not enter into the Tribulation, that is, the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:1-9

Vs. 1-4 As you read this, understand that Paul had been/was being slandered and was said to have taken advantage of the Thessalonians. Just like in 1 & 2 Corinthians, Paul is having to defend himself here. But notice the gentleness in his tone. This wasn't a job for Paul. He poured out his heart to God and to them. Paul and his co-workers even sacrificed, providing for themselves, so that they could work there among them.

V. 5 They didn't come to flatter or make a name for themselves.

V. 6 They didn't come there to take advantage of their position as workers of Christ.

Vs. 7-8 They had come with a sense of love and vulnerability.

Vs. 9-10 As mentioned, they received financial gifts from the church at Philippi and when they didn't have money, they worked. This was to keep their critics at bay and God enabled them to get by, trusting Him.

Disciples in the harvest are natural born fools - pouring out their hearts, living by faith in love with Jesus Christ, allowing "life" to pass them by in order to reach out to those who don't even know they're lost. They spend their lives working to make disciples who will do the same and follow Christ and pour out their lives to make disciples. Paul poured out his heart, first to Jesus, and then in the love of Christ for others. He was a fool for the sake of Christ. He is a good person to imitate.

Psalm 79

It's kind of interesting to be reading Jeremiah as we're reading this psalm. What Asaph is protesting is exactly what God says will come upon the people. This psalm suggests that this son of Asaph was living in Babylon or was one of those who had returned with Zerubbabel and was burdened by the difficulties Israel was having trying to establish itself as a people and nation.

Vs. 1-4 God's entire inheritance had been destroyed, both people and city.

Vs. 5-7 God's jealousy was because of Israel worshipping other gods. Now God is being called on to be jealous for His ruined servant Israel.

Vs. 8-10 In appealing to God's mercy it was understood that what really had been damaged was the name of God *among the nations*. He hadn't deserved Israel's disobedience. In fact, it says that the nations blasphemed the name of God because of Israel. Daniel prayed that God would restore the city and the people for His name's sake. At the heart of this prayer was a true love and appreciation for God. Read Daniel 9. For me this is the greatest prayer in the Bible outside of John 17 where Jesus prayed for the disciples. In both of those prayers, by Daniel and by Jesus, the name of God looms big and should be honored.

Vs. 11-13 This is a kind of repentance. They have not only suffered, but Asaph says they are like sheep, helpless and needing a shepherd.

God did punish the nations for going beyond the allowance He gave them to punish Judah and Jerusalem. In many cases their violence against the Jews became butchery and was filled with rage against God. Jeremiah will prophesy about that. At the end of the Tribulation, this psalm will be fulfilled.

Proverbs 24:30-34

So, what is the point in all of this, especially if you don't own a vineyard or take naps in the afternoon?

It seems to me that it is saying that a little neglect leads to ruin. So, you can be a Christian workaholic and even be successful in "ministry," but neglect your marriage, your kids, your

health and boom! Before you know it, there are weeds all over the place; the wall is down; bad things are getting into the vineyard and it is ruined.

Along with the armor in Ephesians 6 is the command to stay alert with all perseverance. We still have this silly idea that walking through this life is easy and that God is a nice help when we need Him. This world is incredibly dangerous. Our bodies/spirits in this world are irreparably damaged, and the spiritual life is not a difficult life...it is an impossible one. We need the Word every day and the Spirit every minute.

Notice that v. 33 is a backward progression. *Sleep* is mentioned first and *folding of the hands* is mentioned last. The idea is that letting down a little can lead to spiritual unconsciousness. We say that reading the Bible is important, but live as if it is not really, really important. We need to keep our vision clear and our hearts fed every day, and the Bible is God's method of choice. We need our meds every day.

A Christian singer, who my children and I used to listen to, "came out" in April 2010, making public that she is a lesbian. Now she's trying to bend the Bible to match her "lifestyle." Ironically, her life is now a ruined vineyard testifying to the truth of these verses. It probably began with small areas of neglect. I don't believe she ever saw it coming.

OCTOBER 10

Jeremiah 14:11-16:15

Jeremiah 14:11-22

Vs. 11-12 Since the people wouldn't repent, God told Jeremiah, yet again, not to intercede for the people. This is now the third time God has commanded Jeremiah not to pray for them.

Vs. 13-16 Jeremiah reminds God that the people were being fed lies by the false prophets. Yet the people were as guilty as the prophets who told the people what they wanted to hear.

Vs. 17-22 God told Jeremiah to say this, but what is said is also Jeremiah's own crying and lamenting for the people anyway, pleading with God, as Moses and Samuel did for the people. Notice that in vs. 20-22, Jeremiah isn't pleading for the people as much as he is for the name and honor of God. All of God's great followers have prayed for His name and renown.

Jeremiah 15

Vs. 1-4 This is God's answer to Jeremiah's lament and continues what God said in 14:11. God says that the punishment has already been determined and He cites the sins of Manasseh as the reason. (2 Kings 21:16, 24:4)

V. 1 Even if *Moses and Samuel* pleaded, God would not hear them.

V. 4 This gives us some understanding as to what was behind the ruination of the people. Manasseh drove the people to such wickedness and idolatry for 50 years that the people were incurable. Not only that, God vowed that He would punish Jerusalem for all the innocent blood that was shed in the city.

Vs. 5-9 God says He will make the women of Jerusalem like widows. Notice the last sentence of v. 6. We have watched God relent and show mercy all year long. Verse 7 sounds like the warnings of judgment found in the messages of both John the Baptist and Jesus. *His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.* (Luke 3:17)

Vs. 10-21 Jeremiah laments and God answers.

V. 10 Jeremiah laments his life and calling.

V. 11 God assures Jeremiah of vindication and protection...

Vs. 13-14 ...by punishing his enemies and making them serve their enemies.

Vs. 15-18 Jeremiah, it appears, tried to quit; but there was no place where he could turn in the prophet's badge. He had been made the occasion of jokes and the focus of anger and ridicule. There were threats and ill treatment. But since he knew the Lord and the truth and had been set free from spiritual blindness (v. 11), he couldn't keep quiet. Now Jeremiah was wondering if even God would disappoint him, promising him refreshing and then failing him in the end. Having been in ministry, I know these feelings too well.

Vs. 19-21 God reaffirms His calling to Jeremiah if he will get out of his self pity and serve Him. There are great promises here. I suspect that Jeremiah didn't see some of this blessing until Babylon had invaded Egypt and Jeremiah returned to retire in Israel.

Notice that Jeremiah wasn't allowed to compromise the message, or take a step toward the people in seeing things from their perspective. The repentant would come to him. God's truth doesn't need to negotiate.

Jeremiah 16:1-15

Vs. 1-4 Just as God did to other prophets, He made some demands on Jeremiah to help him, but also to be a sign to the people. (For Ezekiel's protection and as a sign to the people, God made him unable to speak unless God was talking through him.) In this case, God forbade Jeremiah to take a wife during this time of judgment.

Vs. 5-7 Jeremiah couldn't mourn with the mourning.

Vs. 8-9 Jeremiah couldn't rejoice with the rejoicing.

Vs. 10-13 When Jeremiah declared these restrictions to the people, God knew the people would act surprised that God was so mad at them. God does not take idolatry (rejecting God) lightly, but the people didn't take it to heart.

Vs. 14-15 This is a very, very strong thing that God was going to do; and as we'll see in Daniel, it involved a lot of love and grace and power from God to free His people from their upcoming captivity.

It is safe to say that this time in the harvest is a time of grace. We are relatively free to work in the harvest. But that day will end. No one knows when the Tribulation will begin, but we know it will. For many people on this planet the distress of those days will completely blind them to their need to know Christ. Now is the time to do our work of making disciples, who make disciples in the harvest.

1 Thessalonians 2:10-3:13

1 Thessalonians 2:10-20

Vs. 10-12 Poor Paul, always having to defend himself. It was hard for those false teachers to match Paul's heartfelt compassion, gained from being saved from what he was saved from. Verse 12 is the focus of all Paul & Co's actions and teaching.

V. 13 There is a certain miracle in receiving the Word of God. What cheered this disciple maker even more was that the people were able to see past Paul to the Author of the Word. It takes a very humble teacher not to get in the way of the Word and make himself the focus. For the purpose of dealing with the criticism, Paul is showing them that the power came from the Word of God, not him or his coworkers.

Vs. 14-16 The first two sentences begin with "for." This shows the proof of v. 13. The Word had worked. The reality of their faith and growth in Christ was the persecution they endured. In the

seed that had no depth and fell away, the focus of the persecution and tribulation wasn't Jesus. It was the Word. (Mark 4:17)

Vs. 17-20 Here again is Paul's natural compassion in Christ, in the harvest. How do you understand vs. 19 & 20? If you were a bricklayer, but never laid a brick, how would that make you feel? If you were a painter, an artist, but never painted, how would that be? Paul couldn't be satisfied as a disciple maker, a laborer in the harvest, without fruit. If you get what is being said here, my question is how we can be satisfied, regardless of where we work in the harvest - in the field, in the barn, in the machine shed fixing the equipment, cooking for the field workers - without seeing fruit coming from the harvest. Paul was totally invested for the Lord and fell in love with the fruit.

This is the first year I have noticed that this chapter ends with a mention of the Lord's return. I wonder if all the chapters end with some reference to the Lord's return?

1 Thessalonians 3

Vs. 1-5 Two things stand out to me. First, Paul had someone like Timothy who would go back into a tough situation, who knew how to teach and to strengthen. Second, Paul gave this young church and these new believers a vision of following Christ that included suffering and affliction.

Vs. 6-10 What is interesting to me in this section is the weight of care Paul had for them in Christ. I wonder if Jesus' weight of care for us is any less. *Lacking* is not referring to there being something wrong with their salvation, but rather that Paul wanted to strengthen them further in the faith.

Vs. 11-13 These are familiar themes: *love for one another* out of the love of Christ, and honoring God. But did you notice how this ended? Jesus is the finish line. Our goal is meeting this person, our Savior. Our goal is not doing good and being religious. That's a huge difference.

And this is the ending of another chapter, and it talks about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As disciples our Lord's coming is to become our desire and hope. At the same time, our Lord's coming looks like great clouds building in the west and coming over the fields we are working in. What an interesting mixture of joy and urgency.

Psalm 80

This had to have been written during the years of Isaiah or after the exile. Isn't it interesting reading this psalm now while we're in Jeremiah?

Vs. 1-2 This is the cry for the Lord to regard the remnant as His flock.

V. 3 This is the great refrain of this song.

Vs. 4-6 The nation that was to have been the glory of God and to have drawn all nations had become a sign to the nations of what happens when a people rejects God. Israel had suffered, by serving as a lesson to the world.

V. 7 I'll bet this sounded great as a poetic and musical refrain.

Vs. 8-13 God had planted Israel as His own nation and rescued them from Egypt. Then God had allowed the wild animals to trample His vineyard. The question of v. 12 seems answered in Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Vs. 14-16 In asking God to regard how the nations had crushed Israel, notice the reference to God turning to look in v. 14 and the rebuke of His face in v. 16.

Vs. 17-18 Doesn't this look like a cry for the Messiah and the fulfillment of God's promises in the Millennial Kingdom?

V. 19 I love this refrain. I can identify with this psalm. I want the Lord's face to shine on my life and work for Him in the harvest.

Proverbs 25:1-5

This is my favorite chapter in Proverbs. Someday, Lord willing, I'm going to memorize it.

Vs. 2-3 Substitute for *kings*, "lovers of Jesus."

Vs. 4-5 Those in the presence of the king are those people he confides in and seeks advice from. For us as disciples, as lovers of Jesus in the harvest to be established, we need other lovers of Jesus who are tender in the love and faith that are in Christ and passionate about the harvest. Too many lovers of Jesus fail for lack of kindred spirits and become influenced instead by the lukewarm and the resistant.

OCTOBER 11

Jeremiah 16:16-18:23

Jeremiah 16:16-21

Vs. 16-18 There are a few places in the Bible where God expresses His pursuit of those who reject Him, and this is one of them. It reminds you of the words in Hebrews 10:31, *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. It is also interesting that God says He is always watching. We all know it, but because God is invisible we become desensitized and don't really care. That's one of the reasons why He's invisible.

Vs. 19-20 This is Jeremiah's confidence in the Lord and his desire to see God acknowledged.

V. 21 God will bring a time when people will know Him. Here, I think, Israel will know by the fulfilling of judgment that the events are from God. There will be recognition. This will be the same thing that happens during the Tribulation. Humanity will rage against God for the events that come upon the earth, acknowledging by their anger that God does exist. Some will repent and come to Him. One way or another, all people will know Him and bow the knee, but unbroken sin will always, irrationally, want to spit in His face.

Jeremiah 17

Vs. 1-4 God explains how deeply engraved idolatry and ignorance were in the culture. When God brought Israel into Canaan, the culture was so corrupt that His only solution was to remove it. This generation in Israel is in the same state. God will need to punish these people and then totally remove the survivors to another place to save Israel. It makes you wonder about cultures today.

Vs. 5-6 The curse of those who ignore God.

Vs. 7-8 This blessing sounds like Psalm 1.

Vs. 9-10 It is interesting that these verses follow vs. 7-8. Blessing is available, but the heart is incurably sick without God's cure. Verse 9 is famous. The heart is deceitful and incurably sick. While the penalty and judgment against sin can be removed, the sickness of sin in us remains strong. Sin is only broken by coming to Christ for forgiveness and receiving the Holy Spirit and the new spiritual creation within us. But then, sin is only broken. It is still active in this body/soul/spirit unity. "Defeating" sin means we need to be in the Word daily, following the Spirit daily, and responding to Christ in love for what He has done for us. Thank God for His grace and His cure in our Lord. Being released from this body to be with Christ will be the death of sin in us. This is why His return and the resurrection with Him are our hope. (Rom. 8:23-24)

Vs. 11-13 This appears to be a judgment against injustice that was going on among the people. True riches are found in God, including the *living waters*. John 7:37 *On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."*

Vs. 14-18 In spite of Jeremiah's desire to help his people, the people were getting tired of Jeremiah and persecution against him was growing. What is interesting is that Jeremiah's pleas to God are beginning to sound like God's pronouncements of justice on the people. Jeremiah is beginning to see how wicked the people are, and in an ironic way, Jeremiah is becoming more like God.

Vs. 19-27 It looks like God is giving the people a very simple test of their obedience. Keeping the Sabbath was a simple but profound test of faith. Why take a day to enjoy the Lord? Why not work or buy or make hay while the sun was shining? The people wouldn't pass this test.

Jeremiah 18

Vs. 1-11 So what do you think the point of this illustration is? It seems to me that God is saying that He can shape and change the events and times at will, so they really ought to obey Him. He had tried to form Israel in His hands, but they were willfully going crooked. It was time to smash down the clay and reform a new vessel. Yet, it would be formed out of the same promise to Abraham and would fulfill the destiny of Israel.

Vs. 12-17 This is the people's response to God and God's pronouncement against them.

Vs. 18-23 This is the people's response to Jeremiah and Jeremiah's response to God. Notice v. 23. Jeremiah is now feeling what God is feeling regarding the sin of the people. In all the years of preaching to and ministering to the people, Jeremiah has begun to understand God and has become more like God.

As we work in the harvest God matures our hearts too. Because of the Lord's mercy to us, we learn to show mercy and to be patient in teaching, reaching out and making disciples. Yet we also learn not to give dogs what is holy, nor to throw pearls before swine. We learn to love our neighbors and love our enemies. In all of this, we know that some will be saved and some will not. Those who are saved will be saved by God's mighty hand and His grace. Those who will be punished will have chosen their destiny and will deserve it.

1 Thessalonians 4-5:3

1 Thessalonians 4

Vs. 1-8 It is interesting that both Corinth and Thessalonica were known for loose living. Paul had to urge believers in both cities to concentrate on living holy to God and resisting immorality. The church today still needs to hear this. The sexual saturation of our culture - TV, movies, and especially the web - has made this even more necessary now than back then. Paul and the Spirit say that to disregard any of these commands is to disregard God and grieve the Holy Spirit within us.

It is interesting that all of these commands can be guided by the first line of the Lord's Prayer. If we remember we are to honor God's name in everything, we would be alert to our hearts and thoughts, and careful to how we respond to the situations that come into our day.

Vs. 9-12 This is an interesting mixture of thoughts. How do *love one another* and *live quietly* work toward being a witness to the unbelieving? I think that both of these have to do with giving testimony to our Lord. Loving one another has to do with our common salvation and mission in Christ. It shows the bond of being forgiven, and it shows the unity of living for a common Savior and mission. Living quietly is for working under the radar, contacting people for our Lord in the harvest. (1 Tim. 2:1-6)

Vs. 13-18 There appears to have been some misunderstanding of Paul's teaching, or there was some other teaching that contradicted what Paul had taught. It seems to me that someone was teaching that those who had died as believers in Christ would not be a part of the church uniting with Christ at the rapture. In fact the dead in Christ are raised first, and then the living church will be changed immediately afterward. (1 Cor. 15:51-52) Paul was speaking to encourage and restore the hope of being united in the resurrection at Christ's coming.

Just as a point of trivia, but when Jesus comes after the Tribulation, at His second advent, He will likewise raise all the Old Testament believers and the martyrs of the Tribulation first. And then all the believers scattered all over the world will be gathered to Jerusalem, but they will not be spiritually transformed like the church. They will enter the Millennial Kingdom as normal people who live and die and have families.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-3

This *day of the Lord* is the seven-year Tribulation. The beginning of this time is hidden, but once it begins, you can mark off the days until the return of Jesus. The beginning of this time will be marked by the gathering of the church to Christ and a revival of faith among Jews. There may be other events suggested in the Book of Revelation, but many people believe the rapture of the church and the renewal of faith in Israel will be the first visible events.

Psalm 81

Vs. 1-3 It is interesting that this psalm begins with celebration because the rest of it is pretty rough. I'm guessing this was written after the return of the exiles from Babylon. It says in Nehemiah 8:17, that this celebration of the Feast of Booths was the first time the nation celebrated the Feast of Booths since the time of Joshua, where people actually lived in handmade tents for the feast week. That should be sad, heart-wrenching, and unbelievable. What had the people missed by not celebrating this feast in this way? Everything. This feast was to remind Israel how God sustained them 40 years in the wilderness, and could do it again and again for them every day.

Vs. 4-10 This is a summary of God's working and salvation in bringing Israel out of Egypt.

Vs. 11-16 This is a summary of Israel's history and their exile. If they had only listened. They stopped listening when their cares and comforts became too important to them. They didn't keep the Sabbath. They didn't waste their time keeping a feast like the Feast of the Tabernacles. Yet in becoming consumed in their lives, they forgot God and couldn't hear His voice.

What stands out to me here is God's pleading for the people to listen to Him. God said this of Israel, and I'm sure He says it of this generation of people on the earth today. I wonder if He says this about the church. In our reading today, thinking about the effects of sin on us, on culture, on our response to God, it all points to the need to keep before the Lord and plead with God for ourselves and others in the harvest. Our hearts need to be kept aflame in His love, and we have a harvest to work in before the Lord returns.

Proverbs 25:6-7a

This sure sounds like something Jesus said about not seeking status. Apparently the Pharisees didn't read the proverbs.

OCTOBER 12

Today you are finishing 1 Thessalonians. If you celebrate with every book you finish and every book you begin, you'll enjoy your favorite seasonal treat once or twice a week. Any motivation you can bring to your day and week to keep reading will be worth it. As often as I have read these readings, I am continually being shown new things and understanding the Lord better and

better. I not only think I'm becoming a better follower, but I see how His Word balances my heart.

Jeremiah 19-21

Jeremiah 19

Where the illustration of the potter showed that God could change things quickly, based on the obedience or disobedience of the people, this illustration showed that the damage the people brought on themselves was irreparable.

Vs. 1-13 I'm guessing this was either during the time of Jehoiakim or during the early years of Zedekiah. Both of these kings were ungodly and led the people in worshipping everything.

The *blood of innocents* in this context are the children who were born as the result of Baal worship, who then were sacrificed to Moloch. (He is also called Molech, Milcom, Malcham and Chemosh among the Moabites.) It is easy to compare these practices and worship to the sexuality our culture promotes and the abortions that are necessary to deal with the unwanted results.

V. 5 I have never heard of human sacrifice being a part of Baal worship. I would guess that the altar (mouth) of Moloch was set up near the same place. I'm sure that in the minds of the people, the worship of Baal and unwanted children that came from it was closely associated with Moloch and throwing those babies into its burning mouth. It made a very complete worship experience.

V. 9 If you understand v. 5, you see that this was justice, not on innocent people, but on those who were involved in Baal worship. They were eating the children they had given birth to as the result of Baal worship.

Vs. 14-15 After Jeremiah returned to the city with those people and leaders who had gone with him, curious as to the Word of the Lord he would be declaring, Jeremiah entered the temple courts and finished the message. Notice Jeremiah's last words and then look at what happens next.

Jeremiah 20

Jeremiah was a well-established phenomenon in Jerusalem by this time. He was hated and tolerated and everyone knew their place. I'm sure that Jeremiah wasn't ready to have his education as a prophet of God suddenly take a giant step forward.

Vs. 1-2 This guy appears to have been the first to lay hands on Jeremiah. He beat Jeremiah and it looks like it was public. The mystique was gone. Jeremiah was no longer untouchable. Pashhur was a very common name. If you do a word search you'll find lots of them.

Vs. 3-6 Even if Jeremiah had wanted to go away quietly, he couldn't. The Lord put a word in his mouth that I'm also sure went public.

It is hard to say when this happened, but there are only two possibilities. After Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and died, his eight-year-old son, Jehoiachin, became king. In obedience to Jeremiah, after ruling for 100 days, Jehoiachin and his mother walked out of the gate of Jerusalem and gave up the city to Neb and he was taken to prison in Babylon. At that time, still in God's mercy (and I think Neb was being advised by Daniel), Neb left the city standing and the temple intact. But to humble Jerusalem and Judah, he took 12-13,000 leaders, craftsmen, and businessmen into exile. The false prophets, like Pashhur, had said this would never happen, but it did.

It could be that Pashhur was taken at this time. However, this was not the siege of Jerusalem that led to people eating their children. That came 10 years later at the end of Zedekiah's reign. If I were a guessing man, I'd say that Pashhur was taken with Jehoiachin to Babylon as a sign for the people that God meant business and to keep their hands off of Jeremiah.

Vs. 7-10 Jeremiah's humiliation and his calling. He was helpless to resist either. What a rich group of verses.

Vs. 11-13 Now if Jeremiah wrote all of this at one sitting, he was off of his bi-polar meds. I think this was all the reflection of a few days, or weeks. Jeremiah understood that in spite of his humiliation, God did judge Pashhur; and Jeremiah survived and was set free. He would need to remember this lesson because it would get much worse.

Vs. 14-18 Doesn't this sound like Job? Jeremiah, as a priest, would have had a copy available to him. It seems to me that it isn't so much that Jeremiah was lamenting what had just happened to him, but that God was using him to declare judgment on the people and that he was witnessing everything. It was a dark time to serve God.

Jeremiah 21

This chapter may be several years after the last chapter, showing the continuation of the prophecy of the broken flask.

Vs. 1-2 After Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin and the 12,000 into captivity, he left Zedekiah (Jehoiachin's uncle) in Jerusalem as king. This was actually an act of mercy by God, and again, I think Daniel advised Neb to be nice. But, because of the hope of Egypt's army and the fact that Babylon was so far away, Zedekiah rebelled. Zedekiah also had an army of prophets telling him that the Babylonians would be defeated by Egypt or Assyria and that the people taken in exile would soon return. There were even exiled false prophets in Babylon prophesying this and sending word back to Jerusalem.

It was totally ironic for them to ask that God would deal with them *according to all his wonderful deeds*. Not only had God just shown them mercy in Neb not destroying the city, but they were still just as idolatrous as ever. They were hoping that God would do to Babylon what He had done to the Assyrian army when they had threatened the city. But there couldn't have been a bigger difference in the kings and people of those two different times.

Vs. 3-14 Notice in this prophecy, there are different people addressed. You'll find these following, *and to*.

V. 14 Notice how God says He will punish them, *according to the fruit of your deeds*. This is referring back to their statement to Jeremiah in v. 2, *according to all his wonderful deeds*.

1 Thessalonians 5:4-28

Vs. 4-11 This is not saying that as *children of light*, Christians know when the day of the Lord is to begin, but that they know it will begin anytime; and so they will stay alert and keep working in the harvest.

Vs. 6-7 These verses suggest that although we shouldn't sleep, we can if we desire.

V. 8 Notice that this instruction to stay alert and awake sounds like the spiritual armor of Ephesians 6.

Vs. 9-10 The context of these verses is not God's wrath as in damnation, but His wrath in the Tribulation. Our salvation in Jesus is what keeps us from that time of testing on the earth. Christ will return to take His own, whether they are awake or sleeping. Paul just used these words meaning spiritually alert or spiritually lethargic. Even the lethargic will be taken to the Lord when He comes for the church.

V. 11 If you live oblivious to all of this, you really don't need v. 11. The Thessalonians needed it, not only because of the persecution and because they had apparently lost people, but because they kept trying to work in their city reaching lost people, making disciples.

Vs. 12-13 Support your local leaders/elders. Actually, since they were going through persecution, they needed to bind together with the leaders more than ever.

Vs. 14-22 These are a bunch of very important admonitions.

V. 14 This is caring for one another under pressure.

V. 15 Under persecution it would have been easy to lash out at neighbors or anyone.

Vs. 16-18 My cell phone, out of the blue, totally unexpected, utterly without provocation, died today. I know enough to get over it, and I'm giving thanks because I know God did it, or let it happen, for a reason.

V. 19 To miss vs. 16-18 would be to miss what God is doing and to quench the Spirit.

V. 23 How do you understand this verse? *Sanctify* means to set apart. Jesus asked the Father to sanctify us in the truth. His Word is truth. Notice that this is the close of a chapter and the Lord's coming is mentioned again.

V. 24 And then, how do you understand this?

V. 27 Apparently this was serious business.

We're blazing through these letters, so it is good for us to remember that these were written to disciples. The disciples in Thessalonica didn't have much of a Bible. Maybe they had a couple of letters. They might have had a copy of Mark's Gospel. We have so much more, but they were risking their lives and livelihoods daily in following Christ. They truly were taking up the cross of their death and following Christ into the harvest, reaching out to the lost and making disciples.

Psalm 82

Just like in Jeremiah, the rulers of the people, the shepherds, could lead the people astray and bend justice. That is the point of this psalm. Judges, rulers, elders are appointed by God and rule under Him. That means they are also accountable to Him.

Vs. 1-4 This is the charge against these leaders. God mentions what they should have done.

V. 5 Because of this, these leaders brought instability, ignorance and ruin.

Vs. 6-7 In John 10:33-35 Jesus quotes v. 6, meaning that if God called leaders "gods" (elohim, mighty ones) because he gave them the Word of God, how much more should Jesus have been called the Son of God and God the Son since He had been sent and consecrated by the Father.

V. 8 And as a result of that one Good Shepherd, God will inherit all nations.

Proverbs 25:7b-10

Vs. 7b-8 Don't be quick to assume what you think you saw was accurate and declare it publicly. Find out first.

Vs. 9-10 Don't be quick to assume you understand your neighbor's actions and then tell your thoughts to others. Go ask him first.

Now if we could just institute these in the church. God is always working, so we need to slow down, take a breath and do things His way.

OCTOBER 13

Another exciting day of seeing Jeremiah in action and beginning the fourteenth book of the New Testament.

Jeremiah 22-23:20

Jeremiah 22

The kings after Josiah went like this: Josiah, Josiah's son Shallum, Josiah's son Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim's son Jehoiachin, Josiah's son Zedekiah.

This prophecy to the kings seems to be made toward the end of Jehoiakim's reign. When Josiah died, the people made his oldest son Shallum (Jehoahaz, 2 Kings 22:30) the king. Pharaoh Neco took Shallum prisoner and made his brother, Jehoiakim, king. After Jehoiakim, Coniah (also referred to as Jeconiah or Jehoiachin) was made king. Jehoiachin surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar, and Neb made another son of Josiah the king, Jehoiachin's uncle Zedekiah.

Anyway, Zedekiah is not in view here, so the timing seems to be during Jehoiakim's reign, looking back to Shallum and looking forward to Jehoiachin.

Vs. 1-4 If this word was spoken to Jehoiakim, it definitely fell on deaf ears. We'll see Jehoiakim's true character in a few chapters.

Vs. 5-9 God knew that they wouldn't obey. What is interesting is that even in God bringing judgment to the people and destruction to Jerusalem, it would be a testimony to the nations.

Vs. 10-12 It should have been a major shock to see Josiah's son Shallum taken away. Unlike King Manasseh who repented and was returned from prison, Shallum would never return. He was a warning.

Vs. 13-17 Rather than fearing and respecting God and taking to heart what happened to his brother Shallum, Jehoiakim lived the good life and was a rotten ruler.

Vs. 18-19 As a result, no one would be sad to see Jehoiakim die. I'll bet they didn't even say, "Ah, my donkey!"

Vs. 20-23 This is a cry to the house of David and the entire nation. Notice the mention of the *shepherds*. The *shepherds* (leaders) will be the focus of the next chapter.

Vs. 24-30 God is saying that the taking of Coniah was a sure thing. He was actually evil, but even if he had been like a ring on God's hand, he would have been sent away. Jehoiachin (Coniah) was only 18 or 19 when taken as a prisoner to Babylon. Oddly enough, 37 years after he was taken, Nebuchadnezzar's son, Evil-Merodach (I think Merodach translates into "Knievel," in Babylonian) freed Jehoiachin, as proof of the blessing God had spoken on those who would surrender to Nebuchadnezzar. (2 Kings 25:27)

One interesting note here is that God says that none of Jehoiachin's descendants would sit on the throne of David. Joseph, Mary's husband, was descended from David through Jehoiachin. That would have made Jesus disqualified to sit on David's throne, but Jesus was the *physical* son of Mary, who was descended from David through Nathan, Solomon's brother, none of whose sons became kings. God held to this curse on Jehoiachin. It is interesting that Jesus did not come through the line of Solomon. Solomon was an idol worshipper.

Jeremiah 23

Vs. 1-4 This is the promise of judgment on the past *shepherds* of Israel and a promise for the regathering of the people under good shepherds.

Vs. 5-8 The house of David will once again become good shepherds. In fact, the shepherd in view here is the Good Shepherd, Jesus Himself. That a *Branch* is referred to has to do with a stump being left of a tree, and a branch would come out of this "remnant" and become a tree. Although different words are used for branch, the word Nazareth means "branch." When people

said, "Jesus of Nazareth" they were hearing "Jesus of Branch." God had put clues all over, for those who were perceptive enough to seek Him.

I think the days in view here are the Millennial Kingdom when Jesus rules over the world and the Jews will be regathered to Israel.

Vs. 9-10 This cry of Jeremiah is because of the false *prophets*, some of whom were priests and known by Jeremiah.

Vs. 11-15 In this judgment on the prophets and priests, there is a comparison between the false prophets of Samaria and Jerusalem. The main difference is that while the prophets in Samaria spoke in the name of Baal, the prophets in Jerusalem spoke lies in the name of the Lord.

Vs. 16-20 God will continually show these *prophets* are wrong by bringing disaster on the people. It is also interesting that Jesus strongly and repeatedly warned His disciples against false christs and false prophets. In the last days there will be lying signs, visions and good talking people. (Matt. 24:24)

With so much being said about the leaders leading the people away from the Lord, it is good to know that we are leading people to the Lord. Making disciples is never about us, it is about others growing deeply in the Word and growing to love and follow the Son. Disciples are not greater than their teacher. We need to have this depth in the Word and love for Jesus, so that we can imitate Him and those learning of Him can see it in us.

2 Thessalonians 1

This letter was probably written in Corinth immediately after Timothy returned from Thessalonica. The two big issues that seem to be present had to do with the Thessalonians holding up under persecution and there was a need for correction regarding some false teaching about the Lord's return.

Vs. 1-4 Their growth was evident in how they treated one another and how they stood firm in persecution and affliction. In their short time as a church, God had made them an example to other churches.

Vs. 5-6 In suffering, God tempers His people, proving their "worth;" that is, that they are really saved, and He deepens them in knowing Him. When those who mistreat believers see that persecution doesn't work, they see this as an omen of their coming judgment. I think Paul saw this during that time when he persecuted the church. Paul was convicted by the love and steadfastness of believers who would not deny Christ.

Vs. 7-10 At the judgment, there will be vindication and joy for those who have suffered, and there will be judgment for those who don't know God. It is interesting that as Paul mentioned this relief, he also mentioned the coming of the Lord and God's judgment on mankind. For some of the atrocities on this planet there will be no relief until we leave this planet. There will be no justice until people have a "face-to-face" with the Lord.

V. 9 Hell will be away from the presence or face of the Lord, and those who are in hell will have no sense of God's glory or might. Everyone alive has an internal sense of His eternal power and deity. We all enjoy God's work and presence. That will be removed for those who reject God.

V. 10 Jesus will be glorified IN his people who held on.

Vs. 11-12 Paul's prayer was that they would be strong Christians, in whom the power of Christ would be proven. As disciples we know we are to carry our cross, prepared for death, daily; but it is the Lord's choice to determine how our lives will bring glory to Him in the harvest. If it means being crushed for Christ to bring Him glory, then we praise God in the press.

What is interesting in these days of reading is that it is hard to find a day when the Lord is not pointing to the end of time and the fulfillment of redemption. Did you realize that? I think that's pretty cool. We are always being given the hope and perspective of what we are living for and that God will bring everything to a glorious ending and a new beginning.

Psalm 83

Reading Jeremiah, we understand that God does approve of our crying out for justice and for help from oppression.

Vs. 1-8 This long complaint may have come during the days of Hezekiah when the surrounding nations thought that the Assyrians would level Jerusalem. These nations would have been east of Jerusalem, across the Jordan; and they might have felt insulated from Assyria's threat. That this crying out is included in God's Word, and inspired by His Spirit, should tell us it is OK for us to cry out to Him too.

Vs. 9-12 This son of Asaph appeals to how God delivered Israel during the life of Gideon, as recorded in Judges 6-8. This goes to show that it is good to read the Bible and know the events that show God's deliverance and power.

Vs. 13-18 To me, vs. 16 and 18 are the most interesting verses. Even in calling on God to rebuke these nations, there is the thought that if God humbles them, they may seek Him. After seeking God comes the knowing of God, and in it all, God receives the glory.

Proverbs 25:11-14

All of these are good words and advice. Wisdom is using God's words here to guide the next things we do. Inherent in God mentioning these different people is His desire that we become like the positive examples and don't become the negative examples.

OCTOBER 14

Jeremiah 23:21-25:38

Jeremiah 23: 21-40

Vs. 21-32 God isn't finished with the false prophets. It is interesting to be reading this and then in 2 Thessalonians, to see that there will be lying signs and wonders.

Notice in this section how often you find *declares the Lord*.

As you read this, what is God really upset about? Along with that thought, there are two questions (vs.23 and 29) that help show the structure of this rebuke to the prophets.

Vs. 21-22 The goal of true prophecy was that the people should have turned from their ways to the Lord.

V. 25 During these days of threat, this must have been like a circus of entertainment, seeing false prophets run into the market place yelling, "*I have dreamed, I have dreamed.*" These guys only prophesied good news.

V. 29 God's Word does bring comfort, but in this world at this time, it is more often like this.

Vs. 33-40 Now God is going after those who were ridiculing Jeremiah for bringing bad news, not realizing that they were really ridiculing God. I guess they would go up to Jeremiah and say, "*What is the **BURDEN** of the Lord?*" I'm sure once this hit the street it was great fun and there were hundreds of variations. And let's face it, every time Jeremiah opened his mouth there was some clump of bad news that fell out. But, of course, the problem was that it was really God speaking. Poor Jeremiah. And it was unfortunate for the people that God pays such close

attention to the words people use. *I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak.* (Matt. 12:36)

Jeremiah 24

Vs. 1-3 This chapter is one vision. When Nebuchadnezzar took these people, he also took Ezekiel. The two baskets of figs represent the people taken into exile and the people left in Jerusalem.

Vs. 4-7 The *good figs*. Although this was judgment for some people like the guy who beat up Jeremiah and for Jehoiachin, going into exile was actually a blessing for some people. They would be saved. And there was more blessing awaiting these people that God had prepared before Jeremiah had said these words. Daniel, chapters 1-3, had already taken place before this deportation. Four godly young Jewish men, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, had already become upper echelon leaders in Nebuchadnezzar's government; and Daniel was his chief advisor. Neb had already been hit with the fear of God, literally; and the Jews were a protected people in his empire, exempt from worshipping anything but Yahweh. God is pretty cool.

V. 7 This still hasn't happened, but it probably will during the Tribulation and especially in the Millennium.

Vs. 8-10 The people who were unfortunate enough to remain with Zedekiah were *the bad figs*. Now, since Jeremiah and some other godly people were there, there were some people who would be saved, but very, very few. In v. 8 it mentions those dwelling *in the land of Egypt*. Some people had already gone to Egypt for refuge; and still to come, the survivors of Jerusalem would disobey the Lord and head down to Egypt, only to have Nebuchadnezzar's army nipping at their heels.

Jeremiah 25

Vs. 1-2 Notice that this is going back in time. Chapter 24 was after the death of Jehoiakim, and this chapter is in the 4th year of Jehoiakim (who reigned about 11 years). Four years after Jehoiakim was made king by Pharaoh Neco, Nebuchadnezzar showed up. Neb took some of the stuff from the temple to show that his god was bigger than God, and then took about 1-3000 people, including many of the younger men, to be trained in his service. Among these people were four teens: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (Dan. 1:6).

I'm thinking that Jeremiah spoke these words before Nebuchadnezzar showed up, because the 70 years wouldn't begin until Daniel and the others were taken to Babylon.

Vs. 3-14 Jehoiakim had reigned only four years, but was already known to be an evil king and a donkey of a man. Jeremiah was a veteran prophet and God had shown great kindness through Josiah. Now in these few short years, the people had not remembered Josiah or listened to Jeremiah. The people had fully embraced the sexuality of Baal worship and everything else they could get their hands on, to worship.

The reason for the *seventy years* is stated in 2 Chronicles 36:21, because they had never trusted God enough to give the land its Sabbaths. In *seventy years*, Daniel would be reading these chapters and praying for the return of the people in spite of the lions roaring in the background. It is because of Daniel 6 that the people get sent back and that they are saved in the Persian Empire from having to worship the Persian gods. What Daniel was praying in chapter 6 is actually found in Daniel 9.

Vs. 15-29 This is the vision of Jeremiah feeding the nations the wine of God's wrath. There is an "end times" feel to this. Figuratively speaking, Jeremiah's eyes had "seen the glory of the coming

of the Lord who was tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath were stored." Now God put it in a glass, and Jeremiah was serving it to the nations.

Vs. 30-33 This is God's wrath against the nations. There is a certain end-times feel to this as well.

Vs. 34-38 Again, God is declaring the *shepherds* (kings, priests, leaders) responsible and they will be punished.

Remember in all of this negativity, that God is using Israel to show mankind, us included, how desperate the sin within us is. Given the opportunity, we would all spit in His face and irrationally hate Him.

Reading this about the shepherds reminded me of the song "He Leadeth Me." I used to sing this all the time and I still love it. We are all meant to lead others as makers of disciples - guiding, encouraging, entrusting, and strengthening others to follow Christ. The real training for this is not a seminar or a seminary, but that we ourselves are led by Christ and His Spirit, reading His Word and working in the harvest.

2 Thessalonians 2

Some of the teaching we get here, thanks to this conflict, we find nowhere else in the Bible. That is very interesting and profound if you think about it. Poor Paul had to lose some sleep and have some agitation, but we get a treat. Funny how God keeps working like that.

Vs. 1-2 This was sort of like the old joke (for those who believe in the pre-trib rapture) that the rapture came and you got left behind. But here, no one was laughing. It was being said that *the day of the Lord* had already begun. The Thessalonians were shaken, because apparently what Paul had taught them hadn't happened to them. They were expecting something that didn't happen. Apparently too, they had bad preaching going on, possibly false prophecy, and a false letter from Paul.

As has happened in all centuries since this was written, people see their circumstances as being the fulfillment of the day of the Lord. The present Roman persecution was being explained as being that day.

Vs. 3-12 Paul apparently gave them some very thorough teaching about the last days. Why do you think he taught this to new believers, particularly to these new believers? So, according to Paul, what has to have happened so that they would have known it was really, really the day of the Lord?

It seems to me that because of the persecution the Thessalonians were experiencing, Paul needed to give them hope and to show them God's plan.

V. 3 The *rebellion* is "apostasy," a departure from the faith. You can also find this in Matthew 24:10, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:1 and 2 Timothy 4:4. Apparently it will be a world event coming up to the day. Times of stress will come and people will depart or adopt a "Christianity" that is nothing like Jesus. If you read Matthew 24:9 you will see that this rebellion will happen shortly after the Tribulation begins.

Vs. 6-7 The restrainer is removed. Obviously it is not the Holy Spirit Himself. People will be saved during the Tribulation, though perhaps very few compared to the 7 billion plus population. My opinion is that the restrainer is the influence of the Holy Spirit through the church. The church is taken at the beginning of the day of the Lord. Apparently the Thessalonians had been taught this and knew "who" or "what" the restrainer was. If you go back to 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and realize that the wrath to come is the day of the Lord, all seven years of it, then you see that the church is to be excluded *from* that wrath. It is the time of Jacob's trouble, where Israel, not the church, will be tested and proven. With the church gone, the physical influence of the Holy

Spirit will be removed from millions of towns, cities, offices, and places of decision. I think Israel will see this and be struck to the heart with "jealousy" and realize the truth of Christ. To see the interrelationship of the church and Israel and belief, read Romans 11, and particularly vs. 30-31, *Just as you were at one time disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they too have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may now receive mercy.*

V. 8 The revealing of the *lawless one* (man of sin). The antichrist will become known in making a peace agreement with Israel, but particularly in breaking that agreement after three and a half years, standing in the temple and declaring himself to be god.

Vs. 9-12 These will be incredible, lying signs and wonders, perhaps visible to the entire world via CNN.

Vs. 13-17 Based on what Paul had just said, it was impossible that the day of the Lord had come. They were chosen to give glory to Christ. They were to be established and comforted by this teaching and to keep witnessing for Christ, extending love and mercy in the harvest.

Looking at the teaching Paul gave these new Christians, they expected to be persecuted, and their hope in this dying world was Christ's return for them at some point in this harvest. Paul's/the Spirit's warnings about people falling away, holding a form of religion, but denying the power of it, wasn't hype. The only way to prove we are followers is to follow in the harvest, bearing our cross each day, willing to die for Christ. I wonder if it is possible that we have a brand of Christianity and church that would not endure if we were really subjected to helplessness, pain and persecution.

Psalm 84

If you could find that one place where there is perfect peace and comfort, where you could be accepted and at rest, wouldn't you want to visit it regularly? It isn't really a place, He's a person. But really, someday that person will be in a place we can get to Him, and I'll be happy to be there. For now, we seek Him in secret.

Vs. 1-4 This is the blessing of those whose desire is for the presence of the Lord.

Vs. 5-7 This is the blessing of those whose strength is in the Lord.

Vs. 8-12 This is the blessing of those whose trust and hope are in the Lord

Proverbs 25:15

So what does this say to the disciple in the harvest, bearing fruit with *patience*?

OCTOBER 15

Today you finish 2 Thessalonians and you get a good example of how Jeremiah and the Spirit organized his material topically rather than chronologically. For one reason or the other, treat yourself to something as you read.

Jeremiah 26-27

Jeremiah 26

This message was actually given in chapters 7-10. Now we will see the people's response to the message.

Vs. 1-3 The timing of this was at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, but it is evident from v. 21 that he was already reigning for a while and he was a very "no nonsense" kind of guy. So, Jeremiah was being thrown into harm's way, but God said He would protect Jeremiah.

Vs. 4-6 We are only given a snippet of the entire message here. The people had already slipped back into idolatry, and there was the warning that as God did to Shiloh, He would also do to the temple.

Vs. 7-11 Notice it was the priests and the prophets who are behind this.

Vs. 12-15 Jeremiah was faithful to proclaim God's Word and to warn the people. Remember, the point of these words was to turn the people back to the Lord, not to tickle their ears.

Vs. 16-19 This is referring to the prophet Micah whose book we will be reading. Hezekiah was a godly king and he accepted the rebuke like a godly man.

Vs. 20-23 We know nothing about this prophet, but he accomplished God's will by dying for the truth. When you look at how they disposed of the prophet's body, it is interesting that God said through Jeremiah that Jehoiakim would be buried the same way. I guess this is where that piece of justice originated, except that Jehoiakim wouldn't even make it into a common grave. They would dump his body with the dead donkeys.

V. 24 There were still some good people around. Thank God for *Ahikam the son of Shaphan*. It should be noted that these were good people who had been influenced by Josiah's revival. In fact, the parents of Daniel & Co. were raised during Josiah's reign; and those boys were born toward the end of Josiah's reign. Daniel was from that era, and became one of the most godly men in the Bible.

Jeremiah 27

The Word of the Lord fell on deaf ears during Jehoiakim's reign. Now, in the time of Zedekiah the option was not "obey Me and be saved," but "obey Me and submit to Nebuchadnezzar."

Vs. 1-7 This is a message to all the nations. This prophecy had a visual aid attached to it. There was no email and there were no cameras, but there were probably representatives of those countries who came to Jerusalem and saw Jeremiah and heard the message. As you look at v. 7, it is interesting that that is exactly as long as the Babylonian Empire lasted.

Vs. 8-11 This message is still to all the nations. That is why fortune-tellers and sorcerers are mentioned.

Vs. 12-15 What an interesting message and test to give Zedekiah. Jeremiah will tell him this privately just before Zedekiah is captured. He should have listened.

Vs. 16-22 This was a message for the priests. In listening to the prophets they had the false hope that all the stuff taken into exile from the temple would be returned soon. Actually, God was going to let Neb take much more. There is hope in what God says here, but I'm sure the priests (remember how much they liked Jeremiah in the last chapter?) were totally not happy.

In the harvest, the truth has to be told so that it can give people the opportunity to know they are wrong and need to turn to God.

2 Thessalonians 3

Vs. 1-5 It is interesting that Paul was writing this from Corinth, asking for their prayers and God's blessing. Corinth is the only city I can think of where Jesus appeared to Paul and told him to hang on. Paul had already faced church-related worry and suffering in other cities, and now Corinth would be added to that burden.

V. 5 Notice how love and steadfastness are interwoven with following Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 6-12 Apparently some people quit their jobs thinking the Lord's coming was around the corner. Paul & Co. had set an example for the Thessalonians in working and caring.

Vs. 13-15 You can find similar warnings in 1 Corinthians, Romans, and 1 Timothy. Notice that this correction is only for believers, to coax them back into following Christ.

Vs. 16-18 A closing of the letter, marked with the proof that this was Paul.

Even in the harvest we need to love one another as Christ loved us by encouraging and correcting one another. There are lots of ways to do this; but when it becomes a necessity, there are the words of the prophets, correcting people so they will return to the Lord.

Psalm 85

We're not sure when this was written. Several occasions suggest themselves. It might have been after the civil war with Absalom when the kingdom was shaken. Or it might have been when the people returned from exile and were struggling to reestablish the nation.

Vs. 1-3 This looks like it could be talking about how God was patient with the people in the wilderness or during the time of the judges.

Vs. 4-7 This is the prayer for restoration. God had shown judgment, and it was difficult to revive the people and begin again. The appeal to God's steadfast and loyal love was made so that the people could rejoice in seeing God's hand at work.

Vs. 8-9 They desired to be led and to hear the voice of the Lord.

Vs. 10-11 If the Lord were to speak, this is what would happen.

Vs. 12-13 This is their confidence in faith that the Lord would hold true to His Word. We can also pray this at many times in our lives. We change; our circumstances change, but God is always the same. He is gracious, forgiving, and full of loving kindness.

Proverbs 25:16

So, to what do you think this should be applied? Is God just against us eating too much honey? It seems to be a caution against all excess. Not only should our needs be under control and restrained; but, if you link this thought to the next verse, v. 17, we shouldn't overuse the kindness of others. Being content with God and the life He has given us seems to be the idea. I immediately think of *Give us this day our daily bread*. That's really all I need. My energy is better spent looking to the Lord in the harvest.

OCTOBER 16

Today you begin 1 Timothy, the fifteenth book of the New Testament. It gives us a look into the church and the lives of two disciples, after the history recorded in the book of Acts. In other words, find something sweet with which to celebrate.

Jeremiah 28-29

Finally some action and adventure in Jeremiah; and the further we go, the more action there will be.

So, last chapter, God told Jeremiah to make a yoke, put it on his neck and then tell the nations and King Zedekiah, that in spite of what they might have heard about instability in Babylon, God was requiring all nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah 28

Vs. 1-4 Hananiah was about to get into real trouble.

V. 1 Notice that the time is given very exactly.

Vs. 5-11 This false prophecy was given in Jeremiah's presence, in public, and Jeremiah was made to look like a fool by this smooth talking, dynamic preacher.

It is interesting to me that Jeremiah's only retaliation was the word God gave him. Even after the yoke was smashed, Jeremiah didn't lose his mind. This speaks for his submission to God and to his maturity. It brought to mind that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit only spoke on the Father's authority, and then, they only spoke what they heard. As a disciple the Lord is impressing me with this. People don't need to hear my take on life; they need to hear the Lord. I should only say what He wants me to say, since I'm under His authority.

Vs. 12-17 You might wonder why God even allowed Hananiah to speak, but the people wanted to believe a lie. They could always have believed Jeremiah. Notice in this section the occurrences of *you*. God was not happy with Hananiah.

V. 17 The people heard of this prophecy against Hananiah. Where Hananiah projected two years for his prophecy, it didn't take God two months to fulfill his word on Hananiah.

I wonder if anyone took this to heart.

Jeremiah 29

This is a very interesting chapter. Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles in Babylon. Just think of that. Nebuchadnezzar allowed that. The people were organized in Babylon. By this time Daniel had been in Babylon about 10 years. For the past seven years, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have been top government officials. Nebuchadnezzar had already developed a respect for Yahweh, bowing to worship Him. It is possible that Daniel 3 had already occurred. If so, Nebuchadnezzar had worshipped Him again, but I'm guessing, by this chapter, that that event was still in the near future. Anyway, that is all to explain why this communication would have been possible. God had already made a safe place for His people in Babylon.

Vs. 1-14 These orders by God to the exiles give a lot of information and hope.

V. 3 Notice Elasah the son of Shaphan. Shaphan was one of the officials who found the only existent copy of the Bible during the early years of Josiah. His heritage can be seen by looking at "The Line of Shaphan," Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 1164.

This was a very godly man and three of his four sons were also godly.

Vs. 15-23 There are lots of observations to be made here.

V. 15 God would take care of these prophets. The people already had false prophets in Babylon, so God was going to raise up Ezekiel in the fifth year of the taking of Jehoiachin. Then they would know that a real prophet was among them. Since these prophets were prophesying against Nebuchadnezzar, both Neb and Daniel would have been concerned about their words, though for different reasons.

V. 22 This is why I think that Daniel 3 hadn't happened yet, but I don't know because I wasn't there. Here is my thinking. When you see Neb's arrogance against Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, I'm guessing it is because he had already roasted these two "prophets" and Yahweh did nothing. God was setting up Nebuchadnezzar for a shock that would protect the Jews throughout his entire empire and become the top of the world's evening news for several months.

Vs. 24-32 If you understand what is happening here, there is a second letter Jeremiah/God is sending back to Babylon. Some guy name Shemaiah heard the first letter in Babylon and got mad and sent a letter to Jerusalem saying they should rebuke Jeremiah. So God sends a letter back to the exiles in Babylon saying not to listen to Shemaiah, and that Shemaiah would get whammied. Interestingly, in contrast to the heritage of Shaphan, Shemaiah will have no descendants.

It might be hard for us to identify with this conflict and the false prophets, but we live with it too. Politicians do this all the time, saying things are fine with Fanny Mae and Freddy Mac when they

were totally bad. Now we are paying the price for decades of abuse. Yet we're not that aware of political things. On the spiritual side of life we need to be very aware. Not only are there spiritual cults and counterfeits, we need to make sure, as we work in the harvest, that we are giving the whole counsel of God and not just what is easy for us to say. The false prophets in Jeremiah's day were "positive" and likeable and gave the people hope. You can see how it would be a lot more fun to give people that message than the one Jeremiah was giving. Our message is not just about getting one's life or family together and hanging out with God. It is also about a coming kingdom and a King. It is about judgment and the need to turn to God. It is about being forgiven or having to face God's wrath for eternity. Those are just the facts.

John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

1 Timothy 1

1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are called the *pastoral epistles*, because they were written to two pastors, Timothy and Titus. These three letters were written after Paul was released from Rome after the history we find at the end of Acts. Apparently Paul was released after his house arrest in Rome and hearing in front of Nero. Then for perhaps five years he was free. Then the persecutions of Nero heated up and Paul was captured and for a second time was imprisoned in Rome. That is where we find Paul in 2 Timothy. While the first imprisonment was very civil and Paul was under house arrest in a nice apartment, the second time he was in jail, he was in a deep, dark, dank Roman dungeon awaiting judgment and death in 2 Timothy, which was his last letter.

In 1 Timothy we find Paul still free and traveling urgently to the churches in Macedonia. He left Timothy in Ephesus to repair whatever had happened there. Now he was sending Timothy a letter with instructions. Although 1 Timothy and Titus are similar in the instructions on choosing elders and setting up order in the church, it is alarming that Timothy was having to do this in a well-established church like Ephesus. What awaited Timothy there was stress and, it looks like, having to rebuild the leadership structure in the church. In Acts 20, Ephesus seemed to be pretty strong. Here it looks like major problems had torn the church apart. As usual, as a result of this disaster, we get some great teaching. It is also very possible that the Roman persecutions under Nero were beginning to heat up and had resulted in churches being persecuted and losing their leaders. In 2 Timothy, Paul appears to be weeks before his death. Paul died in 67 A.D., executed by Nero. Three years later the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, fulfilling Jesus' pronouncement of judgment on that generation of Israel He had spoken to, who had rejected Him.

Although 1 Timothy and Titus cover some of the same ground regarding church structure, the letters to Timothy are much more personal in tone, pointing to the unique relationship Paul had with this disciple. Rebuilding Ephesus is in the forefront of Paul's letters to Timothy, yet they are also very much about Paul building into Timothy. Hardly anything Paul says is just for teaching or guiding the church. Everything Paul says seems to have some message to Timothy to strengthen him and clear his vision for the task of making disciples, who will make disciples, who will make disciples long after Paul is gone.

V. 1 This is an unusual greeting for Paul, unique for Timothy. What is Paul directing Timothy's attention to? *God our Savior* is unique, as is *Christ Jesus our hope*. Notice how there is a focus on the gospel and the harvest right from the first verse. This would be the emphasis of Timothy's work, and it was something Ephesus had lost.

V. 2 Paul apparently led Timothy to Christ. This is not Paul's usual "grace to you and peace" benediction. Timothy needs all of these in his fight.

Vs. 3-4 You notice the urgency in this letter immediately. We'll see that the confusing influence that tore this church apart had a very Jewish bent to it.

V. 4 The RSV says, *the divine training that is in faith*. There is a pattern of life, of building and working forward in the harvest that is in view here. There is a training that takes place every day in following Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 5-7 You could begin v. 5 with "whereas" and end the verse with a comma, not a period.

You see, once again, it was legalistic, hard, conservative Jewish teaching that was creating difficulties. We'll see this clearly in chapter 4.

Vs. 8-11 The point here is that Christians are to be focused on Christ and the harvest, not on the law. The law focuses on condemnation; grace focuses on Christ, forgiveness and His coming. This focus on the law had probably stopped the church from being salt and light, and it may have also blown the leadership of the church apart through judging people according to the law.

Vs. 12-17 Aren't we glad this happened in Ephesus, so we would have this testimony and look into Paul's walk with Christ? Maybe the Lord allows stuff like this in our lives for the same purpose.

Vs. 12-13 I sense the burden and weight of this on Paul.

V. 14 For ministry, I believe that Paul received a supernatural equipping and gifting of faith and of love in Christ. I think this working of the Spirit turned this scrawny Jewish boy into Captain America, I mean Captain Gospel.

V. 15-17 Even near the end of his life, Paul never forgot what he had been and how/why God had saved and equipped him. It wasn't for himself, but for Christ, for others, for the harvest.

Vs. 18-20 Paul is charging Timothy to wage war. Paul was in the battle and Timothy was to stay in the battle. He was to remember and be inspired by what God had said about him.

V. 20 Hymenaeus gets mentioned in 2 Timothy. False teachers were on the rise. "Handing over" these men was to exclude them from the safety and protection of the church and its fellowship.

These words to Timothy are some of the most complete on keeping the church focused on the harvest and making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. The harvest and the making of disciples is a part of everything Paul is saying in these letters. If the church falls, so does the commission we were entrusted with.

Psalm 86

As you read the psalm, look for words to underline, especially *O Lord, you, and your*. It gives the psalm an interesting emphasis as you read.

Vs. 1-7 As we have seen in David, the desperation of his life was used by God to make him the man he was. David cried out and sought no other hope but in God. Through all of these experiences, he saw over and over that God was loving, faithful and mighty to save.

Vs. 8-10 In keeping with His promise to Abraham and His faithfulness to Israel, not only was God great above all others, but all nations were destined to worship Him.

Vs. 11-13 These are what we always see expressed by David. He loved God and His truth. He promised to praise God, and he rested in God's *steadfast love*. Verse 11 is interesting and sounds like this "uniting" was bringing peace and understanding to his heart.

Vs. 14-17 Though David had powerful enemies, he was busy looking to the Lord in hope, remembering how God had constantly helped and saved him.

Proverbs 25:17

Amen.

OCTOBER 17

One thing you notice reading The One Year Bible is that it is hard to find a day when God is not projecting your vision forward to the time when Christ returns and the plan of redemption will be complete. God is always interested in strengthening our hearts and giving us a lasting hope as we work each day in the harvest.

Jeremiah 30-31:26

Some people call chapters 30-33 the "Book of Consolation." Almost right in the middle here, God gives the nation a view of their distant hope and His everlasting love.

Jeremiah 30

Vs. 1-7 After the promise to restore the entire nation, Israel and Judah together, v. 7 projects ahead to "Jacob's" ultimate distress at the end of the Tribulation.

Vs. 8-9 In this final deliverance, Israel will no longer be threatened, and they will be led by a resurrected king, David. Ezekiel 34 also mentions the return of David.

Vs. 10-17 This is hope mixed with an explanation of why God needs to punish them to heal them. Notice the mention in v. 17 of Zion. That will be important. Notice also that the way these promises are stated, the restoration of vs. 10 and 11 have to be for the Millennial Kingdom.

V. 12 Notice the revisiting of the theme of an incurable wound. This is also in v. 17. Redemption in Jesus and the resurrection encompass that cure.

Vs. 18-22 This will be the ultimate restoration of the people, and of course, before that, there will be events that foreshadow this; but Israel will never be in true peace until the Messiah rules on earth.

Vs. 23-24 *In the latter days*, probably of the Tribulation and the kingdom.

Jeremiah 31:1-26

V. 1 This should probably belong to the last verses of chapter 30. In order for God to be the GOD of all the clans, they all have to be believers. This is still in the future and referring to the Millennial Kingdom.

After this statement come the declarations of the Lord.

Vs. 2-6 The rebuilding of Israel. Jesus said that there would be a time when those in Judea would need to flee to the mountains in the wilderness (Matt. 24:16, Rev. 12:14). Notice the *everlasting love*. It is still everlasting for Israel's future. Notice that the Lord is in Zion.

Vs. 7-9 This is the regathering of Israel. They have probably felt this in every age when they have been scattered.

Vs. 10-14 This is the future redemption of Israel. Notice that this declaration went out to the nations. The result is great joy in Israel.

V. 15 This is a famous verse, but what is it doing here?

Here is my thought on this. In the plan of redemption the moment God put His hand on Abraham, he and his family and the nation of Israel became servants of the world, examples to the world of sin and God's character and forgiveness. God has put them to hard work for us. They will weep, but there will be joy and reward.

Rachel's destiny was a part of this story. She died near Ramah giving birth to the only one of Jacob's children born in the land of promise. As Rachel was dying she tried to name the child "son of my sorrow," but Jacob named the child, "son of my right hand," Benjamin. Rachel wept in death, losing her children, her sad life and death being a part of God's plan of redemption.

During Jeremiah's days in that same area around Jerusalem, many would die. Jeremiah 40:1 indicates that Ramah became the area where Nebuchadnezzar gathered the people to take them into exile. There would be people parting, going into exile who would never be seen again.

When Herod destroyed the children around Bethlehem trying to kill Jesus, once more Israel suffered tragedy and violence because of its work in the plan of redemption. It is also interesting that it was from this area that Joseph took Mary and Jesus, fleeing into Egypt to escape Herod's deadly brutality.

Vs. 16-17 The nation has wept, but there will be a reward for their work. That is quite a profound statement.

Vs. 18-20 Israel (designated by the name Ephraim) repents and God welcomes him. Doesn't this sound like the prodigal son?

Vs. 21-25 God brings them back and restores the holy hill of Zion in millennial blessing.

V. 22 Usually it is the man who seeks the woman. Here, Israel, as a bride, seeks the man, the Lord.

V. 26 Poor Jeremiah. What a stressed out guy, always bringing bad news and being pushed by the Lord and punished by the people. But this was a good vision of hope from the Lord, and it brought him peace and comfort, knowing that the end of Israel's work would be joyously rewarded.

1 Timothy 2

So then, since Paul had been chosen by grace to be an apostle, and in view of the distress of the times and in view of the call of God on Timothy's life, Timothy was to reestablish the foundation of the church.

Vs. 1-7 This is a general pronouncement for the conduct and focus of the entire church, and there are some famous verses here.

This is where we get the well-known command to pray for rulers, but notice that the point of this prayer is so that we can work in the harvest under the radar.

This is the second time Paul uses the phrase *God our Savior*. He used it in the first line of the book and now here. Paul is making sure that the church is established in reaching out to a lost world.

So, if this is to be the general focus of the church, praying and working in the harvest, Paul gives some specific instruction to men and women.

V. 8 Men are to pray, *lifting holy hands*; that is, with a godly perspective of life and God's work in this dying world. They shouldn't be given to *anger or quarreling*. Anger and quarreling over what? Anything. Not over the price of gas or the political party. Their perspective is to be in going to God and having a spiritual perspective on life in the harvest.

Vs. 9-10 Women are also to be focused on the harvest. Good works as in Ephesians 2:10 are what God has prepared for us to do for our neighbors in opening doors of opportunity. Like men, women are not to be consumed by the issues of life, in their case, focusing on looking fine.

Now, I want to suggest something here. When Paul talks about men and women, sometimes he uses a kind of alternating reference, sort of like men-women, women-men, men-women. You see

this in 1 Corinthians 7:2-4 and 7:12-14. I think that Paul uses alternating references to men and women as he changes his topic in the rest of this chapter and in chapter 3. I would say it looks like this:

Topic: Focus in the harvest, Men-prayer / Women-good works

Topic: Leadership of the church, Women-submission / Men-serve as elders

Topic: Serving the church Men-as deacons / Women-as deaconesses

In the Greek there is no chapter break between chapters 2 and 3. I believe Paul is talking about the guiding leadership of the church beginning in 2:11.

Vs. 11-15 A woman's role in the authority and teaching of the church is to learn quietly in submission. I think the words *teach or to exercise authority* are key to understanding what Paul says here and why he introduces the elders in 3:1. Elders are the people who are responsible for the teaching in the church (they determine, protect and oversee the entrusting of that truth) and they exercise authority in the church. I don't think a woman is to be in the position of an elder, having responsibility for teaching like an elder; nor should she be in a position to exercise authority in the church as an elder exercises authority. I think the limits on a woman's ability to teach and have authority are in the context of what an elder does. Elders determine the "teaching" of a church and make sure it is protected and entrusted accurately. Elders have the authority in a church to oversee this teaching and to call people to account if they have deviated in teaching or in behavior. Teaching and authority, I think, is meant in this context.

Vs. 13-14 Paul's/the Spirit's reasoning here is biblical and not cultural, based on God's decision in the creation order and in the events of the fall.

V. 15 "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." (Alexander Pope) But making an attempt, here goes. In creation, God created Adam and Eve differently. A man is *saved* (from damage) by doing what God has given him to do, and a woman is *saved* by doing what she was meant to do. Each has received roles of leadership and service. To deny these roles is to put ourselves where we were not meant to be and, therefore, not to discover the fullness that God has for us. For most women, not all, God's plan involves bearing children. In the job of being a mom there is not only fulfillment, but plenty of leadership and service. Women for whom God hasn't designed motherhood can find fulfillment, a role of leadership, and service in other ways. The point is that God has designated a role for men and women, and only in staying true to those roles, do we develop "safely" the way God wants us to develop.

I remember wrestling with v. 15 and feeling the Lord had given me some insight into it. So I went to my mother-in-law, Barbara Youderian, and asked her what she thought v. 15 meant and she not only said the same thing, but she said it much better and gave me a great example. I sat there feeling like a kindergartner.

This chapter began by focusing the church and the behavior of everyone on the harvest.

Psalm 87

This is a very short and amazing psalm. We have just read something like this in Jeremiah.

Vs. 1-3 Someday this city will be the center of the earth because of the king who will be reigning there.

Vs. 4- 6 Jerusalem has been judged again and again. It was the scene of a famous murder and everlasting redemption. God's everlasting love is directed toward these people whom He has used as an example to the world of lost humanity. Someday it will be a high honor to hear that someone was born in Zion.

V. 7 The Septuagint gives the idea to this verse that everything that brings joy, refreshment and life is in Zion. That sounds like Revelation 22:2, *through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*

Proverbs 25:18-19

Amen and "ouch!"

OCTOBER 18

With everything going on in the world, you might almost think that reading Jeremiah, 1 Timothy, The Psalms, or Proverbs would only reinforce the gloom. Today might be a case in point, but take notice of how each of these gives a realistic view of life, yet they also give a lot of hope in looking toward the future. Everything about following Christ now, every day, in this harvest is confirmed. Now is not a great time in this world, and so we work with the Lord, sowing, reaping and making disciples, who make disciples. The fullness of hope and rejoicing will be in the future. Yet even so, every day we have the taste and firstfruits of knowing Christ and receiving His comfort and blessing. We have this every day, because we walk with Him every day and look into His Word every day. You might want to listen to "Everyday," by Hillsong.

Jeremiah 31:27-32:44

In Jerusalem's darkest hour God gave Jeremiah a far off picture of their ultimate restoration.

Jeremiah 31:27-40

The structure of this section is marked by the phrase *Behold, the days are coming.*

Vs. 27-30 Here God will replant Israel and Judah.

Vs. 29-30 The *sour grapes* message will be seen again in Ezekiel as a way the present generation blamed the previous generation. God didn't have much patience for that. During the future time of renewal, no one will use that saying. In Ezekiel God will condemn anyone who says this.

Vs. 31-37 This new covenant was initiated with Jesus' sacrifice and the giving of the Spirit, but its complete fulfillment will be the acceptance of Israel under that covenant in the Millennium. Much of this is in Romans 11 and it makes sense.

Vs. 33-34 These promises are still future, but what amazing promises. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 8 to persuade the people that going back into Judaism was not an option because the new covenant was better. This promise is one of the reasons the people listened to Peter on the day of Pentecost. In Acts 2 Peter referred to this promise as spoken by the prophet Joel, but the people saw this promise in all of the Scriptures dealing with God's future blessing of Israel. The people understood that only the Spirit of God could give them this heart and this renewal. The believers of Jesus had received the Spirit and had experienced this promise.

Vs. 35-37 God pledges His promise on the creation. In other words, this promise is absolutely solid. In Romans 11:29, Paul mentions one other thing that confirms this promise.

Vs. 38-40 This is the promise to rebuild the city, which was about to be destroyed. Jerusalem was destroyed again in 70 A.D. by the Romans. The city is still there today and without a temple. The future completed city will have the temple from which Jesus will reign.

Jeremiah 32

Vs. 1-5 Now I know this doesn't seem like a good thing, but if you were the only prophet speaking the truth in a city that hated you and where the people were going to be starving, being

locked in prison might actually be a good thing. Seriously, I think this was God's work and that there is some grace in this.

Vs. 6-15 Normally this would not have been a wise move, since Babylon already controlled everything in Israel. It would have been like selling property in East Berlin after the Russians took over. Babylon owned everything and all ownership had no legality. I can see the sellers snickering when Jeremiah signed the papers. But God was making a point. I have a suspicion that when it was all said and done, Jeremiah settled down on this piece of land and enjoyed some much needed R&R.

We are also introduced here to Jeremiah's secretary and personal scribe, Baruch. We'll see later that Baruch must have been a well-known person; and as a result of his work for Jeremiah, God spared him from the multiple disasters that rolled over Jerusalem and the Jews.

Vs. 16-25 This is amazing praise from Jeremiah. He realized the grace and mercy in what God was promising. Jeremiah contrasted this mercy with all the sin the people had committed. Buying that land in such a bad time was a sign that God would restore Israel in the future. Isn't v. 25 an amazing declaration of hope?

Vs. 26-35 God restated the reason for His judgment on Jerusalem and Judah. Verse 35 didn't describe an act; it described a culture of distorted minds. We've mentioned before the reasons why Baal worship and Molech worship were connected. Notice how God mentions both *the children of Israel and the children of Judah*.

Vs. 36-41 In spite of Israel's failures, God promises to bring the entire nation back. Notice *the Lord, the God of Israel*. Notice that even though the people will be brought back in 50+ years, the ultimate fulfillment of v. 39 is in the Millennium.

Vs. 42-44 This promise goes back to the beginning of the chapter and ties in to Jeremiah buying the land.

Gloomy? Sure. Hopeful? Incredibly so. And so we don't lose heart, as we work in the harvest with the Lord, making disciples, who make disciples. We just need to stay in the Word every day and continue to follow every day.

1 Timothy 3

So, in reestablishing order in this church, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 2, that all the people should pray for the government, in order to live quiet, respectful, godly lives under the radar so they can work in the harvest. Then Paul said the men should pray to maintain a godly perspective on life in prayer, and the women should focus on doing good works for those around them. The women should not be given the authority of establishing the teaching and guidance of the church, rather, that belongs to....

Vs. 1-7 ...the men who are the elders.

V. 1 I would say, from my experience, to *aspire* means they are actually involved in the lives of other people for the sake of the harvest and the Great Commission, coming alongside people in the church to encourage them to do likewise. I think to aspire is already to be doing it in some measure.

V. 2 I believe "one woman man" meant the same back then as it does in the US culture today: marital and sexual stability and faithfulness.

V. 3 *Not a drunkard*. This doesn't even say he can't get "merry" (see Ruth 3:7) on occasion, but drunkenness should not be a regular state, and wine cannot be an addiction.

Not violent means literally "striker," that is, someone who has fits of anger, losing his cool.

Not mentioned here, but putting all Scripture together, this person needs to be active in reaching the lost and making disciples. Too often you have this squeaky clean guy as an elder, who isn't involved in the harvest and doesn't know which end of the scythe to hold. These "executive elders" often have no natural desire to involve themselves in making disciples, who make disciples. Elsewhere, Paul says that we should look for examples and models (Philippians 3:17). I can't imagine making a person an elder who is not an example or a model of what it means to follow Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 8-13 Servants in the church.

V. 8 Paul addresses the men first with three characteristics similar to the elders.

V. 11 This is a very unfortunate translation. Although *wives* can mean "women" or "wives," it is the same word Paul used in chapter 2 and was never translated "wives" there. Also, here it is translated *their wives*, but that is not accurate since there is no genitive here, no case of ownership or possession. Honest to the Greek would be "the." I understand the King James doing this since it was translated in a culture and time when women would never have been accepted in this position, but the translators of the ESV had no excuse here. I think this poor translation is a result of the King James and the cultural prejudices of that time.

There were women deacons. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is called a "servant" of the church at Cenchreae. The word is deaconess in the Greek. Why should this be a problem?

Also, why would there be some special condition for the wife of a servant of the church and not for the wife of an elder of the church. Elders' wives would have much more information and have much more influence over their husbands and the affairs of the church.

V. 12 is now using the masculine to describe all deacons, the same as we do rather than saying "him or her."

Vs. 14-16 Now, there are some very famous verses here, and the priority of the church is strongly presented; but this all really just underscores the vital importance of everything Paul has said since 2:1. The magnitude of these verses means we should go back and carefully follow all of chapters 2 and 3. If we don't, these are just nice flowery verses, and the church and the harvest suffers.

I still like the image of the church being a group of laborers gathering at some place in their part of the harvest. They meet to gain strength and encourage each other, get something to eat and then they go back out into the harvest.

Psalm 88

This is said to be the saddest psalm in The Psalms. It is possible that this psalm was linked with Psalm 89, possibly written by the same guy. The next psalm is very positive, and in tandem with this one, they would have made a nice part of the worship service.

Vs. 1-2 This is the plea to God, crying out to Him.

Vs. 3-7 This isn't just trouble; it sounds like depression. He is faced with many troubling situations and feels like God's wrath is focused on him. That is so "normal."

Vs. 8-12 Not only does he have bad situations, but his friends have become like traitors. This sounds like Job. The writer's plea to God is that once he is dead, God won't be able to use him in declaring God's praise and love. Therefore, he doesn't want God to let him go into the pit. Along with this is probably the sense of not wanting to be put to shame for having given praise to God and having put his hope in the Lord.

Vs. 13-18 It is odd to leave a psalm on such a down note. The crying is still there, the danger is still there and the sense of abandonment and desertion is still there. There is no final affirmation of trust and confidence in God's deliverance. However, the next psalm is coming.

Just a couple of observations:

First, we have seen in Job and even in Paul that great things come out of deep personal distress. If we are servants and slaves of our loving Father, we have to allow Him to do this to us for His glory. Having said that, we have to come through it the right way. It doesn't glorify God to give up, yell at your wife, kick the dog and defect from the faith.

Second, the very fact that the Holy Spirit inspired this psalm and its words should tell us that these words are what we need to imitate and model in our crying out to God. God is teaching us how to cry out.

Psalm 40:3 says, *He put a new song in my mouth.* God himself put that new song there, but only after He had led David through a similar experience.

We cry out and wait patiently. When He is done, He will put a new song in our mouths, a song of praise to our God.

Proverbs 25:20-22

I think Paul used all of this in Romans 12.

V. 20 It is a command to *weep with those who weep.* Being witty and happy isn't always the best thing.

Vs. 21-22 Read Romans 12:19-21 for the full story, and then add the promise found here of reward.

OCTOBER 19

Today the readings in Jeremiah and in the first part of Psalm 89 link together. This is one of the side benefits of reading The One Year Bible. It is interesting to see how the promise to David was to inspire hope in the people. We know who that Son of David is, and He is the One who gives us hope too, as we follow Him in the harvest.

Jeremiah 33-34

We are inching closer to the fall of Jerusalem. There will be one notable look to the past; but from now on, everything will be fairly chronological, leading to God's unrelenting punishment of Jerusalem and Judah. It is instructive to see that interlaced with hard words of judgment, there is a reminder of the hope that will still save Israel.

Jeremiah 33

However, we are still in that section called "The Book of Consolation." It is always a good idea to underline, circle, or somehow mark words and phrases. Once you notice certain words, the structure and logic just pop out. And besides that, you stay awake.

Vs. 1-5 Notice both *the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah* and *thus says the Lord.*

As we have seen so often, there is a description of some event, in this case a bad one, followed by a declaration, in this case a good one.

The houses were broken down in the center of Jerusalem, and the stones were taken to build up the walls where the Babylonians were trying to get in. The holes where the houses had been would be used as places to dump bodies. That was a bad thing.

Vs. 6-9 The ultimate fulfillment of this will be after the Messiah returns. Notice the mention of *health and healing*. This is a contrast to the first five verses. The city would be called by God's name in the future.

Vs. 10-11 *Thus says the Lord*, but what is the focus of this?

Vs. 12-13 *Thus says the Lord*, but what is the focus of this?

Vs. 14-16 Here is how God will bring this blessing, through the Branch, the Son of David. Notice in v. 16 how the land, Judah, and the city are addressed, referring back to what was just said about the city and the land in vs. 10-13.

Vs. 17-18 *Thus says the Lord*, but what is the focus of this?

Interestingly, this doesn't say that a descendant of David will always sit on the throne, but that David will never lack descendants who could sit on the throne. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David.

Vs. 19-26 These are very definite promises of God. The ultimate fulfillment of the covenant with David was unconditional, making it a promise from God's side. God initiated it. The same was true of the covenant with Levi which probably refers to the covenant of peace with Phinehas in Numbers 25:7-13. Also, the covenant with Abraham was unconditional. God chose Abraham and made a promise to him. Since these are based on the very character of God, they are more stable than creation itself.

Jeremiah 34

It is interesting to see how God made promises and gave hope as an encouragement for faith and obedience, but also as a test of faith.

Vs. 1-5 This appears to be a word to Zedekiah because of the good thing they had just done in releasing the slaves. So, to really understand what is happening with the rest of this, you need to read v. 21. This explains why the people went back on their actions. The Egyptians came against the Babylonians, and the rulers and people thought they were OK again and recaptured the people they had set free. God was probably the one who stirred up the Egyptians and created this little time of confusion.

Vs. 6-7 This is a small historical note as to the stress of this particular time. There were only two other cities besides Jerusalem that hadn't fallen to Babylon. It looked like the end.

Vs. 8-16 What you see in this event is that the people obeyed God for themselves, to relieve the pressure. As soon as they "made" God answer them by their good deeds, they didn't need the good deeds anymore. They got what they wanted. Now, with Nebuchadnezzar leaving, they had to rebuild Jerusalem and they needed those slaves again.

Vs. 17-22 God would call the Babylonians back to finish their work against Jerusalem. Since the people had broken a covenant, God would punish them. This obedience and then lapse back into disobedience was a small, visible reminder to them that their punishment was just.

V. 18 Remember when God made the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 15; animals were cut up and a lane was made through the body parts. Normally, the parties who made the covenant walked through that lane and swore the covenant saying that if they didn't keep the bargain, they should end up looking like those animals. In the covenant with Abraham, the promise of the new covenant, only God walked through that lane, taking the full responsibility for the covenant. This is why the ultimate fulfillment of that promise doesn't depend on Israel.

Here, many of the people who violated this covenant would soon look like road kill and probably be the bodies thrown into those lots where houses had stood in 33:5.

Israel only ever needed to be faithful. God would work out the rest because of His promise. In the work we do in the harvest, it is good to remember that in ways we do not know, behind the scenes, with amazing depth and wisdom, God is working out His purpose. Even our mistakes and lack of clarity are used by Him to accomplish His purpose. God has made a promise. He doesn't ask us to be perfect in all points, just faithful in following in the harvest.

1 Timothy 4

Having told Timothy how the foundation of the church is made secure, Paul warns him of the coming resistance and how to deal with it positively.

Vs. 1-5 Many people wonder what this teaching was or is; but the point is that Paul is telling Timothy and us, there will always be resistance. This challenge would look religious, very conservative and righteously judgmental, but it would be self-focused and isolating. I think what we read in chapter 1, about people becoming inwardly focused on the law and self-righteousness, rather than focused on Christ and grace and the harvest, comes into play here.

Vs. 6-8 This is a challenge to Timothy to wage the good warfare from chapter 1. If Timothy did his job right, at times, he would be in opposition to false teachers and to the prevailing opinions and moods of the people.

Interestingly here and even more so in 2 Timothy, Paul strongly warns Timothy to stay out of arguments over stupid stuff. I think this was Timothy's "youthful passion." He was good with his mouth and thought that he could win every argument. Paul directs Timothy to teach, not to argue.

Train yourself for godliness, I think, means to mindfully understand that you are being led by the Spirit into all circumstances and to respond in those situations in a way that honors God. You mess up sometimes, but you keep training. In the Greek, the word "godliness" does not have the word "god" in it. It means to give honor in everything. God is the assumed recipient, or as it says in the Lord's Prayer, *Hallowed be thy name*.

Vs. 9-10 This is the charge to Timothy and it is based on the gospel again. God is called the Savior for the third time. It seems that Paul is saying that it is this mission that has moved them to set their hope on God and to live following Christ into this harvest.

The words, *trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance*, have only been used one other place in this letter, and there it was a very emotional declaration for Paul. I think this is an equally emotional declaration here also.

Giving up "stuff" to give the look of being serious and suffering and making God happy seems religious. But following Christ as a disciple, setting our hope on Him, giving ourselves to the work in the harvest to reach the lost and make disciples, who make disciples, is the real deal. It is what we have been called to. It isn't religion. It is following Him, and it is full of grace. It involves suffering and putting aside things here, but even in the case of putting things aside, it is the Spirit directing us and showing us what does not fit into our lives on this earth so that we can follow in the harvest and do the work we are commissioned to do now.

Vs. 11-16 Notice the emotion and urgency in this. It pours out of vs. 9-10. Look at the crisp, short commands. This is the positive of what Timothy is supposed to do. He isn't supposed to waste his time countering the silliness; he was to teach and model what was healthy, sound and godly.

Notice the emphasis on getting the Word into people. The best way to grow disciples or protect people from error is to get them into the Word. The Word is used by the Holy Spirit to be our meds, our defense, our nourishment and our strength. It is truth and it consecrates us to God, to His service and to reality.

I think vs. 15-16 are very important. How many of us as disciples make this our hobby and passion? We need to perfect and get good at what God wants us to do in the harvest, and to live to be an example to others. Not many people take this to heart. We dabble, thinking we will keep God happy if we look semi-serious about actually getting good at being harvesters. If Christians put as much effort into their jobs as they put into their commission, they would probably be fired or working for minimum wage. Doing what you are doing now, reading through the Word every year, is a good place to begin.

V. 16 is important for all of us, not just preachers. We often let ourselves get out of shape emotionally, physically, sexually, etc., and we get tripped up. Some translations insert "your" before *the teaching* because of the word *yourself* that precedes it. Often too, we teach one thing and don't heed our own words. If more teachers, preachers and disciples did what they taught, they would *save* themselves from a lot of problems.

Save, here, obviously isn't salvation from damnation, but salvation from damage and becoming shipwrecked.

I think that reading the Word every day is a given. But beyond that, think of skills that would be good to learn for the harvest, that would be like a gift you could give to the Lord. Ask the Lord if this is something He would like, and if so, throw yourself into it. You might be surprised how the Lord will open doors for you to get good at that skill and use it to bear fruit, seeing lost people saved and making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. Begin now by faith, and in a year or two you'll be surprised to see what the Lord has done. A line quoted in Oswald Sander's book, Spiritual Leadership, has always inspired me, "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they, while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night." It's time to toil.

Psalm 89:1-13

This is the first of three days in Psalm 89. In some respects, this is a very redemption-oriented psalm. The *steadfast love* of the Lord runs through it. The promise to David is messianic. The might of God in the creation and among the angelic hosts shows that God is in charge of everything. And somehow, in the middle of all of this, He regards us and loves us. What can we do but sing of God's love in the harvest?

And remember how much about David we just read in Jeremiah 33.

Vs. 1-4 It is interesting that not only did God make a promise to David that all of Israel could hold on to, but God Himself made David's life a visual statement of God's *faithfulness* and *steadfast love*.

Vs. 5-10 God's power and faithfulness are seen in creation. He controls the angels and He controls the raging of the elements. The most threatening powers are under God's control.

Vs. 11-13 The creation belongs to God and the creation gives praise to God. We should too.

Proverbs 25:23-24

I wonder if being that person with the *backbiting tongue* also makes you liable to marry the *quarrelsome wife*? In any event, I think the Lord is cautioning us not to be these people.

OCTOBER 20

Reading The One Year Bible every year gives you perspective and helps you make connections. People often point their finger at the Old Testament and say that it is full of war and that God created a militant nation. Really? Eventually you notice that except for the seven years of conquering the land of Canaan, Israel never fought offensive wars. The taking of the land of Canaan had a long history. For over 400 years that we know of, God tried to redeem those people

through witnesses like Melchizedek, Abraham and Isaac. Israel's war was a God-decreed judgment of a deeply perverse, children-killing culture. After the conquest was over, all of Israel's wars were defensive.

Abraham never took land, although he could have. Isaac could have taken land, because he had a greater force than Abimelech; but instead, he put up with Abimelech's men pushing him around. Jacob's sons destroyed Shechem, but Jacob and God both described it as murder. David and Solomon could have set up an empire, but neither conquered. David defended himself and Solomon was a builder. After those men, you have Israel engaged in a north-south civil war, defending itself from its neighbors, and then trying not to be overrun by Assyria and Babylon. Guided by God, Israel was very non-aggressive. Most of what we read in the Old Testament about war was largely the result of Israel's sin and God allowing them to be chastened by their enemies. Most of what we read is about Israel's failure to follow God. They lost their protection because that protection was based on their relationship with God. Their purpose in God's redemptive plan was to be small and blessed, and all nations would come to them because of God's obvious presence among them. Redemption was always the plan and it was very non-aggressive.

Jeremiah 35-36

These two chapters are looking into the past, citing two very telling examples of why God would judge that generation of people in Israel. One example shows respect and faithfulness and the other shows an extreme lack of respect and faithfulness.

Jeremiah 35

Vs. 1-11 This is the story of how the Rechabites honored their great, great, great, great grandfather. Just to frame the story for you, here are some fun facts.

The Rechabites are a family going back to the early days of the Exodus, having a connection with Moses' father-in-law and also with the tribe of Judah. Apparently they became scribes during the 40 years in the wilderness and settled in the town of a godly man to ply their trade. The name of the town was Jabez. (1 Chron. 2:55)

We met Jonadab, the son (descendant) of Rechab, back when Jehu became king. Jehu destroyed the house of Ahab and asked Jonadab to help him kill the prophets of Baal. This was back in 2 Kings 10. Jonadab was apparently a godly man and one of the remnant of 7000 men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. That was about 240 years before this chapter in Jeremiah, about the same length of time between now and the founding of the United States.

Jonadab lived at a very crucial and devastating time in the northern kingdom and history of Israel. I believe he understood what would happen in the future and made these rules for his family to protect them and keep them from adopting the ungodliness of the culture. Both the abstinence from drinking wine and not living in houses meant they would be nomads, living away from cities. They had no houses and no vineyards. You could see this as the difference between Abraham and Lot. When Lot moved down to Sodom and fell into the "good life," he got infected. Abraham always lived in tents and had his own community.

What makes this more interesting is that Jeremiah, a true prophet of God, called them into the temple of God and offered them wine. How much worse can a temptation be? But for them it was no temptation.

The real issue here is that Israel and Judah had become like the people of Canaan whom God had sent Israel to judge and drive out of the land. Baal worship and the sacrificing of the children from that worship had become a cultural norm. The people were corrupt. Jonadab gave his

descendants rules to keep them uninfected and they held to these rules. Israel had already been judged and taken into exile. Judah was in the process of judgment.

Vs. 12-17 God used this family as an example for the people. They had honored their father and taken his warning seriously. Judah, in spite of all they had seen and heard, did not honor their Father.

Vs. 18-19 I take this as an eternal promise given by God to this family. This means that somewhere on earth, at this moment, there is a descendant of Jonadab, the son of Rechab, who is a follower of Jesus.

Jeremiah 36

This chapter shows a very key event. King Jehoiakim was a disgrace to his godly father and to God. Josiah, Jehoiakim's father, wept and followed and honored the Word of God when it was read to him.

Vs. 1-3 This event, early in the career of King Jehoiakim, was designed to give the people of Judah a chance.

V. 2 Notice that this is really God's command to write the book of Jeremiah. I wonder if Jeremiah had already written out notes. This book would be almost everything we've read: chapters 1-12, 14-20, 22:1-19, 26 & 35.

Vs. 4-8 This apparently is the first time Jeremiah used Baruch. Notice again in v. 7 that the intent was to see if there were open hearts. Baruch was apparently known, godly and brave. Since this was early in the reign of Jehoiakim, there was still the afterglow of the godliness that had been a part of Josiah's revival. There would be some people who might respond positively.

Vs. 9-19 These men knew they were in trouble because of the Word of the Lord, and because they would have to take this message before their donkey (referring of course to his burial) of a king.

V. 11 This man is Michaiah, the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan. Shaphan was one of the men who discovered the last copy of the OT and brought it to Josiah. These men still honored their father.

Notice that they advised Jeremiah and Baruch to hide.

Vs. 20-26 Compare this with how Jehoiakim's father, Josiah, responded upon hearing the Word of the Lord.

2 Kings 22:18-19 But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, ¹⁹because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place, and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD.

Vs. 27-32 God didn't think this was funny. The scroll was renewed; the judgment was official; Jehoiakim and his descendants were excluded from serving as kings. His son Jehoiachin was king for only three months and spent the rest of his life in Babylon.

Among other things, this chapter shows us why Jehoiakim was given the burial of a donkey. *With the burial of an ass he shall be buried, dragged and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.* (Jeremiah 22:19)

In seeing God work through Jeremiah, you see that God was both fair and realistic. He offered the chance for people to be helped, but understood that most would not come to Him. We see this

realism in how the Lord taught His disciples and what He says to us. *Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.* (John 15:20)

Our work in the harvest brings blessing because we do find people who will come to Christ, receive forgiveness and become disciples, who make disciples. We understand that many will not come to Christ, but we work on for the sake of those who will, and because we know the best is yet to come. And besides, following in the harvest is where we find and grow in the Lord.

1 Timothy 5

I'm sure at this point, Timothy was somewhat weighted with these instructions, and the weight would just increase. Looking at the instructions Paul gave him, it looks like Timothy was either the pastor, or he was invested with apostolic authority. While Timothy was responsible to be an example and model, it looks like Paul was assuming Timothy had the authority and right to declare and make these decisions. Poor guy. It gives me the sense that there had been some disaster or split and that Timothy was rebuilding.

Vs. 1-2 In doing what Timothy was told to do, Paul was advising him how to relate to the groups in the church. Timothy had to win confidence as he led; and remember, Paul just told him to be a model to all.

Vs. 3-8 There was no social security or social services in those days. Thirty years earlier in Acts 6, widows in the church had been an issue. It could also be that church widows were on the rise because of Nero.

Vs. 9-10 The issue here was not whether or not to help them out financially on occasion. This seems to be an official position in the church given to widows. If you look at all of the other things mentioned, the enrolled widows would be serving the church. Apparently the younger widows had abused this service of visitation and service by gadding about, becoming gossips and busybodies. Look at Titus 2:3-5 to get a positive perspective on this service.

V. 9 Literally, she had to have been a one-man woman. Again, I think with all the other rules here, it is saying she was a faithful and focused wife, not that she couldn't have been married to two men, both of whom died, for example.

V. 10 She had to be comfortable in serving others and had to have a reputation for doing it.

Vs. 11-15 Reading this about the younger widows gives you the impression this office of widows was an official church position; and that, in the case of the older widows, it was assumed they would focus on serving the church and not focus on marriage. Apparently Paul had some experience with this problem, where the younger widows were guilty of abusing the position, "gadding about," checking out the available guys and getting themselves in trouble.

V. 16 It was a pretty narrow category of woman who could be enrolled, but apparently they had a lot of widows.

Just taking a think pause here, imagine: Timothy was the one who was supposed to enforce this, being responsible for telling one widow "yes" and another, "no." Imagine what it would have been like trying to explain why a widow didn't qualify based on character or experience. How would you like that? Also, Timothy got to tell the younger widows that the church would not enroll them and that Paul (actually God) said they should go out, get married and have kids. Poor Timothy.

Vs. 17-18 Again, Timothy had the responsibility to make these decisions and see that this was done. I can't imagine that saying "yes" to one man didn't offend another man. O Weh!

Now it gets worse.

Vs. 19-20 Apparently there had been cases of elders being accused of sin, and some of them had been stubborn and didn't repent. Notice that "sin" itself didn't disqualify an elder, but to persist in sin did disqualify an elder. In the case of a repeat or stubborn offender, Timothy was commanded to put them under discipline **publicly** for the express purpose of instilling fear/respect in the other elders and in the congregation. O Weh!

V. 21 This is a very strong charge to Timothy and you can see why.

V. 22 Practical matters: Go slow in putting men or women forward. In time of need this is not easy. O Weh!

V. 23 I always laugh here because no one knows what this verse is doing here. This is just me, but I don't think Timothy's stomach was the problem. I think it was his head. Look at everything Paul has just told Timothy to do. Think of all the stress and all of the potential conflict and yelling. I think Timothy couldn't get calm. I don't think it was the bacteria in the drinking water that was causing him distress. I think Timothy's stress in his mind and soul gave him a bad stomach. I think the wine was for the stress, and therefore, for the stomach.

Vs. 24-25 This is some calming advice from Paul. Sometimes you just don't know if you've put the right person in a position. You do your best and they can still turn out to be a fraud and a fake. You have to know you tried to do the right thing, face the music and take them out of that position. O Weh! On the other hand, if you take the time to slowly look at a person's life, you'll also see, eventually, if they are bearing fruit for Christ.

Poor Timothy. O Weh! We get to do this in the harvest. O Weh!

Psalm 89:14-37

We'll be in Psalm 89 one more day and there are lots of things to observe and underline.

Vs. 14-18 You notice in v. 14 that *steadfast love and faithfulness* are mentioned, and then in v. 18 an earthly king is mentioned. That king would be David and David learned and taught the people God's *steadfast love and faithfulness*.

Vs. 19-37 This is like one long run-on sentence of God declaring His sure, unconditional steadfast love and promise to David. Underline where God says, *I*. Notice how often God's love is mentioned. Notice too, how God makes sure we understand that this covenant cannot fail. These are amazing verses.

One thing that stood out to me in this reading was v. 17, *for you are the glory of their strength*. I would say in all the things that we face in following Christ, it is all worth it if in and through it we learn that our glory is in Christ and He is our strength.

Proverbs 25:25-27

V. 25 This brings peace.

V. 26 This doesn't bring peace; you only think it does.

V. 27 This never brings peace. Just like the action of v. 26, this comes back to haunt you.

News from the far country takes time and waiting. The other two are immediate; they consume us and eventually they destroy peace personally and in a group.

Just for fun, let me share a rare translation of v. 27. The Hebrew is very hard to understand and there are various translations. Most of the translations suggest that the second half of v. 27 is negative because the first half is negative. Martin Luther did something completely different with his translation of verse 27. He made a contrast between the first and second halves of the verse. The second half of verse 27 is actually only three words, "seeks, glory and glory" (glory also can mean weight or honor). In English, Luther's translation would read, "but he who searches out

weighty things, to him it brings honor, or shows that he is honorable, a person of weight and worth." The idea is that eating honey is easy. It suggests giving in to comfort. In contrast, setting one's heart to understand important things shows that a person is honorable and diligent. I won't go into a lot of detail here, because Luther is the only one I found who translates it this way, but there is good evidence for this translation. For example, Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9 was this kind of "weighty" man.

For me, I think that for everyone on this planet, including believers, it is easy to go the easy way. To enjoy the sweetness and to forget or merely dabble in the weight of this life is what most people choose. But if a disciple is a person of "weight" (honor), they search and consider this life and their place in God's plan, following the Lord, reaching out to the lost and making disciples, who make disciples.

OCTOBER 21

Today you get the adventures of Jeremiah, and this is the last day in 1 Timothy, which means you'll begin 2 Timothy tomorrow. All of these readings are full of the heart of God, real life drama and encouragement which we need for the harvest.

Jeremiah 37-38

Jeremiah 37

This actually took place before Jeremiah bought the property in chapter 32. Today we find out how Jeremiah got put in jail back in 32. But the point today is to show how God saved Jeremiah, to show what a noodle Zedekiah was, and to show how God, even in this late, dark hour, gave Zedekiah a chance to save himself and the city.

Vs. 1-5 This is some background. This would have also been the time when they had set the slaves free, thinking they were all doomed. But now the Babylonians had withdrawn from the city to fight the Egyptians, and so the people re-enslaved their former slaves.

Vs. 6-10 They were hoping for good news from Jeremiah, but God assured everyone that Nebuchadnezzar would be back. In fact, God said that if only wounded soldiers were left, they would take the city.

Vs. 11-15 So this is how Jeremiah got thrown in prison. His visit home might have been to decide over the estate of a relative. Since they threw Jeremiah into prison, in chapter 32 we saw how the family had to come to Jerusalem and see if Jeremiah wanted to redeem that property from a deceased relative. The family probably thought Jeremiah was dumb for doing this since the land was already under Babylon's control, but God told Jeremiah to do it. He used that "redemption" event as a sign for the future hope of Israel.

Notice that they beat Jeremiah.

Vs. 16-21 This is the first of two interactions Jeremiah would have with Zedekiah. Notice v. 19. It is interesting that although the false prophets had lost credibility, the people still didn't want to listen to a true prophet of God. They irrationally thought that if they could kill the messenger, the judgment of God would also go away.

Again, even though Jeremiah was locked up and in danger, he might have been in more danger if he had been out with the starving people.

Jeremiah 38

Vs. 1-4 Being in the king's court gave Jeremiah the freedom to preach and get his message out. That didn't make these guys happy.

Vs. 5-6 We'll see in a few verses what a scared man Zedekiah really was. Interestingly enough, they wanted to kill Jeremiah, but not be responsible for his death. This cistern would have been like a deep room under a house that held rain water. The water was gone but the mud was still there. Rather than kill Jeremiah or just throw him in, they lowered him into the mud so he wouldn't be killed in the fall but would die of "natural" causes like suffocation or starvation. Nice guys.

Vs. 7-13 So you find this Ethiopian eunuch, a God-fearing Gentile, saving the day. Did you know that there were two Ethiopian eunuchs in the Bible and both were God-fearing men? This is quite an adventure. The ESV says 30 men, but some other versions say three. Who knows? Thirty might seem like over-kill, but some of them probably were for lifting, while others were to ward off the bad guys. After this, Zedekiah did a better job of protecting Jeremiah.

Vs. 14-26 This is quite a portion of Scripture. Zedekiah was a weak, scared man. If he had listened, I'm sure the Lord would have done exactly what He promised. Zedekiah and the city would have been saved. This is very sad. Zedekiah and many people will pay for this disobedience. In four chapters, we will see another group of people make the same mistake of asking Jeremiah for God's Word and then disobeying it.

Vs. 27-28 Zedekiah had reason to worry, but had no faith to obey.

The kind of faith and resolve, we are taught by the Spirit, gives us the willingness to obey and follow the truth even if it means our death. That is why as disciples in the harvest following our Lord we also bear a cross and never leave home without it. It shows that we belong to Him and hear His voice.

1 Timothy 6

Vs. 1-2 Notice that Paul is concerned here with how non-Christians viewed God as a result of the behavior of the saved slaves.

Vs. 3-5 There is a lot to observe here.

Notice that Paul didn't have an open mind regarding these issues or these people. Timothy was to teach them and anyone who taught otherwise was not only in the wrong, they were evil.

It looks like there were available copies of the Gospels and Jesus' teachings. In fact, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke would have been finished and in circulation. There were already teachers disagreeing with Jesus.

Finally, it looks like some people saw Christianity as a good way to make a living.

Vs. 6-10 This looks like the difference between people who are following Jesus in the harvest and those who are living for themselves in church. Since Paul had access to the Gospels, I'm sure this teaching matched what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. *And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.* (Luke 8:14) Can you see this verse in what Paul is saying here? I think the thorns are there also.

Vs. 11-12 Timothy was to be fully devoted. I think this teaching is meant to be imitated by all of Jesus' disciples who are following Him in the harvest. There are several sermons packed into these two verses. Notice in v. 11, at the end of the list is *gentleness*. The person who is the deepest in the Lord has the greatest security and control in the storm.

There is a conscious fight in following the Lord in the harvest every day. It is work to pick up the Bible, and it is work to carry the message into the field. That is why the Lord said we needed to take up the cross, our resolve to die for Him, every day. *Take hold* is the same as putting on the

helmet of salvation. It is living securely in that reality. You can take a lot of beating and strain if you know you'll live forever with the King.

Vs. 13-16 This is the primary and strongest charge to Timothy in the book. There is a lot to see here. If you look at what Jesus said to Pilate, you understand that Jesus claimed to be the King. Actually, if you put all of the accounts together, Jesus was fairly chatty. He never defended Himself, but when it had to do with His kingship, He spoke. Notice too that the coming of the Lord is mentioned in this charge. It is never to be out of our sight.

Vs. 17-19 This wasn't meant to insure salvation for the rich, but rather to show who was the real Lord and Master of their lives. Notice that this fits into what Jesus says about riches in the Sermon on the Mount. *Take hold* means living in the reality of. If we have other things that are more important to us, then the reality of the spiritual life, the Lord's leading and our mission on earth, become strangely dim and foggy to us.

Vs. 20-21 Paul wouldn't have cautioned Timothy like this if he hadn't seen the possibility that Timothy could get off track. All of us can become unfocused or distracted or caught up in something that leads us away from our work in the harvest. Just like us, Timothy was in constant need of grace.

Whatever had happened in Ephesus and whatever was brewing in that post-Acts period of time was used by the Lord to give us this book and the one that follows. We are seeing a first-generation disciple working with a second-generation disciple, making disciples for the future. There is a lot of great Scripture in this letter and in the next, but what is most obvious is how the love of Christ had made Paul into this very passionate and wise maker of disciples. The same will happen to us if we stay close to the Lord in His Word and in the harvest.

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (1 Cor. 6:17)

Psalm 89:38-52

Now we get to the real pain of this psalm. It looks like it was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. We are about to read about this destruction in Jeremiah. This psalm could have been written in Babylon or in the days of the first groups that returned to the ruined Jerusalem after the exile.

Vs. 38-45 If you want to follow the trail of destruction and judgment, just underline *you*.

Vs. 46-48 This is a short description of our helplessness in this universe without the Lord.

Vs. 49-52 As he waited on God to restore and fulfill His promises, the psalmist never forgot the *steadfast love* of the Lord and to bless the Lord for His *faithfulness*. God had made a promise to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, and to David that a Savior would come; and it was guaranteed to happen because all of those promises were anchored in the very character and person of God.

Vs. 50-51 This morning I was reading how Jesus was mocked while He hung on the cross, while pouring out His soul for our redemption and paying for our sins.

Proverbs 25:28

Amen.

OCTOBER 22

Today reflects a lot of dark times in the plan of redemption. In The Psalms we get Moses' reflections of 40 years leading a dying generation through the wilderness. In Jeremiah, Jerusalem is destroyed and the last of Israel is taken into captivity. And then it gets worse. In 2 Timothy, we find Paul in prison in Rome awaiting death, and I think Timothy is shaking in his sandals. It

might be a good idea to get a bowl of something sweet to eat (candy corn... pumpkin pie...) as you read through these portions.

Jeremiah 39-41

Jeremiah 39

Vs. 1-14 This is a summary of the events. This happened just as God said it would.

V. 11 Notice that Nebuchadnezzar knew quite a bit about Jeremiah. There could have been a lot of sources for this information, but in terms of his desire to be kind to Jeremiah, you only have to look at the book of Daniel. Daniel had now been Neb's chief advisor for about 17 years. Nebuchadnezzar had not only worshipped God twice, but he had made it a law in his empire that Jews had complete religious liberty to worship Yahweh only.

Vs. 15-18 This is a flashback just before the Babylonians broke into the city. God tells Ebed-melech (see chapter 38) that he will be spared from the destruction of Jerusalem. Anyone who followed the Lord was spared. That says something about God and about the people. You of course noticed that Ebed-melech is the first of two very famous and honored Ethiopian eunuchs in the Bible. Notice that Ebed actually trusted in the Lord. I think his faith saved him.

Jeremiah 40

Vs. 1-6 We will not read this word of the Lord until Jeremiah 42:9. All of this is historical narrative of what happened after the Babylonians left and why the leaders and people came to Jeremiah to inquire of God. God's judgment on the ungodly wasn't finished, and what you see in chapter 42 will either shock you or you'll just say, "I should have known that was coming."

Apparently Jeremiah was rounded up for deportation to go into exile. When Nebuchadnezzar told Nebuzaradan to free Jeremiah, Nebuzaradan had to actually hunt for Jeremiah. His words to Jeremiah in vs. 2-3 show you what the leaders of Babylon understood about what God was allowing to happen to Jerusalem. I believe this is the influence of Daniel. God made Daniel a man with incredible impact. We'll see that he was the godliest man on earth at that time. The presence of such a person on earth has only happened a few times in the history of this planet. Through Daniel God protected His people in the Babylonian and Persian Empires, both preserving them and sending them back to Israel. That Nebuzaradan knew all of this about God's judgment and about Jeremiah probably means that Daniel had explained everything to Nebuchadnezzar and the other leaders. Daniel, as a boy before he was taken into captivity, would have known Jeremiah; and Daniel, as a prophet, would have been connected to Jeremiah by the same Spirit. It never says that Daniel accompanied Nebuchadnezzar on his journeys, but Daniel was his top/main/chief personal advisor, so it is possible that Daniel was there when Zedekiah had his eyes put out. It could also mean that Daniel actually met Jeremiah. Since Daniel was probably from the nobility, and Zedekiah was the son of Josiah, they might have known each other too.

Vs. 7-16 Some people suggest that it would have taken over a year to set up a government, but Gedaliah was an experienced government leader who came from godly stock. He would have known how to organize things. In a way this was no different than Nebuchadnezzar installing a new king, except that he destroyed the city and the temple, took all of the bronze and gold, and most of the people. What was left behind would have been very easy to organize and run.

V. 12 Notice that there was plenty of blessing.

Notice v. 14.

Jeremiah 41

Vs. 1-3 Ishmael had been an Israelite captain in the army. During the siege, many groups of Israel's army were outside of the city, probably hiding in the surrounding countries. I don't think Ishmael was trying to take over. I think he was sent as an assassin. The nations around Israel, including Egypt and the Ammonites, had made a treaty to fight together against Babylon. The reason Gedaliah had to die was that he wanted to obey God (whether he was godly or not) and serve Nebuchadnezzar. This is why he was killed. It is like the governments the US has set up in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their leaders become targets for assassination because they are no longer supporting the surrounding countries.

Vs. 4-10 This shows that Ishmael was a murdering opportunist. These 80 men were murdered for their supplies.

V. 10 Apparently Jeremiah was alive among the prisoners who were being taken to the Ammonites (Jordan). Poor Jeremiah. And this was nothing. Things were about to get exponentially worse.

Vs. 11-16 Unfortunately for Ishmael, Johanan liked Gedaliah and didn't like Ishmael. So now we have a happy ending, right? Johanan is a hero, right? Jeremiah is finally safe, right? O Weh!

Vs. 17-18 Now we have the stage set for the Word of the Lord mentioned in Jeremiah 40:1.

2 Timothy 1

Paul is in jail in Rome. Nero has gone officially nuts. Paul isn't under that nice house arrest like before; instead he is sitting in a deep, dark, dank dungeon facing death.

Vs. 1-2 If you look at a couple of Paul's normal greetings in Ephesians and Philippians, you'll see that the first verses of 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy are different. I think that Paul is really emphasizing here that the reason we risk our lives in this dark world is because of the promise of life in Christ Jesus.

Vs. 3-8 Several sermons could be preached on this. This is very tender and Paul is trying to strengthen and rouse Timothy. I think Timothy was fearful because of the storm of persecution that had suddenly broken upon the church by Nero. It is one thing to talk about persecution. I think Timothy was in shock.

Vs. 8-12 Notice that this begins and ends with not being ashamed. Notice the tight logic and connection of these words and how one thought flows into the other, building an eternal perspective in the gospel.

Vs. 13-14 Very personal words for Timothy to keep on going and to keep working in the harvest.

The faith and love that are in Christ Jesus is what Paul received as a spiritual enablement in 1 Timothy 1:14. This phrase is a good one to ponder.

V. 15 The storm that hit Paul scattered the flock. Apparently it was a surprise and a blow to Paul that these two guys deserted him. Timothy would have known them too. Remember, Paul had some physical ailment and probably needed more than one person to attend him. We know from the end of this letter that Luke was the only one who stayed with Paul. This is the same thing that happened to the disciples the night Jesus was arrested. This could happen to anyone, but really, if we are trained in Christ, shouldn't we be willing to die for Him in the harvest? What was it that Jesus said about taking up our cross daily? The cross meant death. After the initial shock, we need to take hold of the spiritual reality of this life and fix our eyes on Christ.

Vs. 16-18 Because of the tone of v. 18, I wonder if Onesiphorus survived. I'm not sure and I've read suggestions that he died. Timothy was later told (2 Tim. 4:19) to greet his household, but that could have just meant his family. I think he might have survived, but, imagine if the

government was looking for Christians to lock up and you went to visit the apostle Paul in jail. That would be like wearing a t-shirt that said, "Hey, arrest me too!" That would be nuts, right? But Onesiphorus was a disciple who, apparently, was nuts for Jesus.

Psalms 90-91

Wow, this is a mega reading. Psalm 90 is by Moses, but Psalm 91 is anonymous. Reading them together you wonder if Moses wrote Psalm 91 also. Psalm 90 could be Moses' reflection on 40 years in the wilderness leading the people, and Psalm 91 could be Moses' reflection on 120 years being led by God on earth. Remember as you read these, that they were both songs of worship, not just theological declarations.

Psalm 90

Vs. 1-2 God was their dwelling place in the wilderness, but when they remembered the entire history of what had happened on earth from Adam to Noah to Abraham, God was the dwelling place of all generations. What an interesting thought that with all the decaying around us, God is eternal and everlasting.

Vs. 3-4 This is the life of man on earth without God. He has seen men come and go.

Vs. 5-6 This is the glory of man on earth without God.

Vs. 7-8 The effects of sin still ravage us. Even though we are saved, we still struggle with sin and this decaying body.

Vs. 9-11 This is a summary of the preceding verses. Life on earth isn't really something to die for or live for.

Vs. 12-17 And if we understand the desperate situation of life on this planet, then there is reason to rejoice in knowing the Lord. He is the only one who makes life of any value, who gives any lasting joy and who will make our lives count for anything in His redemptive purpose in this life on earth.

Psalm 91

Vs. 1-2 Notice the theme of dwelling. These are two pretty famous verses and great declarations of our hope in the Lord.

Vs. 3-6 If this is written by Moses, this could be a reflection on the conflict with Pharaoh. God didn't just protect Moses and Aaron, but His *wings* covered millions of people and led them out of Egypt.

Vs. 7-8 This is God's comfort to those who trust in Him. This might be a reflection of the peoples' fear, knowing that Pharaoh was after them, and then seeing how God saved them after passing through the Red Sea.

Vs. 9-10 Notice again the *dwelling place* and the freedom from the plagues. Those plagues could have been what happened to the Egyptians. There are other things that plague those who do not have God as their dwelling place.

Vs. 11-13 This is the promise God gives to His people. Satan knew these verses well and used vs. 11 and 12 to try to convince Jesus to throw Himself off the pinnacle of the temple. (Matt. 4:5-7) God will save us as He sees fit. God was about to save Paul by taking him to heaven in 2 Timothy.

Vs. 14-16 Actually, as I read this I think of Jesus in Isaiah 53 and as He suffered on the cross. It might be that as Satan quoted vs. 11 and 12 to Jesus, Jesus was thinking of these verses. Dwelling with God in His presence is the best place we could ever be. What a blessing to know Him and know His love and pleasure.

Proverbs 26:1-2

Amen.

OCTOBER 23

Jeremiah 42-44:23

As mentioned before, one thing that shows you the Bible is the Word of God, and not the official national literature of Israel, is that no national literature ever describes its rulers and people in this way. After yesterday you might have thought that things couldn't get worse. Today they do.

Jeremiah 42

Vs. 1-4 God has an interesting way of showing people their depth of rebellion. This seems like a good thing. They want to know God's will and they want to seek Him through Jeremiah.

Vs. 5-6 The people took an oath that they would obey.

Vs. 7-22 The only clue that there is something wrong is in vs. 18-22. There would be no need for this warning if there wasn't a danger. I think in the ten days they waited for Jeremiah, they worried, had discussions, and made up their minds what they needed to do. It must have seemed so obvious and they thought for sure that Jeremiah would confirm it.

God promised them blessing, but not according to the direction they wanted to go. Poor Jeremiah. O Weh!

Jeremiah 43

Vs. 1-3 Why is this not a surprise? Interestingly, they blamed Baruch for this. Apparently, Baruch was a well-known man outside of his association with Jeremiah, politically or financially or socially. All of chapter 45 is devoted to Baruch, all 5 verses of it. That chapter dates back to his first involvement with Jeremiah, implying that Baruch had hopes of greatness in life. God told Baruch back then, almost 20 years earlier, that He would give Baruch his life as a prize of war, but that there would be no greatness to be found living in those times in Israel.

Vs. 4-7 They took Jeremiah and Baruch along with them at "gunpoint." They must have thought that going to Egypt made sense and that no danger would follow them since Egypt was a world power and they had now traveled between 100 and 150 miles further south and away from Babylon.

Vs. 8-13 Even as God says this, we still don't grasp how lost and perverse this group of refugees was. That will come in the next chapter. It is almost as if God was going to curse Egypt for them being there. God showed the Jews where Nebuchadnezzar would set up his tent and his throne. Even in this dangerous situation, God gave Jeremiah a word that put him in harm's way. Jeremiah had been the only one of the many prophets who spoke to Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, who had been right. The people knew this, but there is an irrationality in sin that chooses to think that there is a way to "get around" God.

Jeremiah 44:1-24

Vs. 1-10 This all seems like a general declaration against the people's rebellion for disobeying and running to Egypt until you get to v. 8. These people were sick and would never change their hearts. These circumstances revealed publicly what God knew was concealed in their hearts.

Vs. 11-14 God was promising to give these people a very special attention. His judgment would come on them first because they set their hearts to go to Egypt. That was their recent decision and act of disobedience. Notice that there would be some survivors. Anyone like Jeremiah and Baruch who had been taken captive by them would be saved.

Vs. 15-19 Here the people are declaring their own sickness and guilt. Deeply anchored in their hearts was a rejection of God and a devotion toward everything else.

Vs. 20-23 We understand the truth of this and God's justice in punishing these people, but they didn't. As we work in the harvest we see this quite often. We present people with the truth, and even when it is obvious to them, sin often gains the upper hand and leads them away. Even though people understand what they are doing makes no sense, they will choose what makes no sense, rather than coming to God. There is an invisible spiritual resistance deeply seeded within us. Thankfully there are some people who hear the voice of truth and welcome it. That is our joy in the harvest, seeing them come to Christ and then become disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

2 Timothy 2:1-21

In this entire letter there is a sense of urgency and importance. Try to sense that in this chapter as you read.

V. 1 *You then, my child.* So what is *then* referring to? I think it is all of chapter 1, particularly the need to stand and suffer for Christ. It is like saying, "in light of this reality, do this."

What does it mean for a disciple to *be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus*? What do you find in Christ that is grace? Some of this is referring to what was said in chapter 1, but just thinking about what we have in knowing Jesus is amazing grace, and dwelling on it is meant to make us strong.

V. 2 Not just teaching, but entrusting truth for the next generation. This is part of making disciples, who make disciples.

Vs. 3-7 This isn't just for the "professional" Christian; this is for every disciple. Yet, especially for those in full-time service, this is a call to a very focused life.

Notice the call, again, to suffering for Christ and the gospel.

V. 6, I think Paul is referring to working hard and trusting God for both fruit and daily provision.

V. 7 is quite a promise and I think I've seen the fruit of this many times.

Vs. 8-13 I think this is a call to Timothy to be a disciple and know what he's living for. The gospel is at the center of this, and Paul's life is the example.

Notice that the last part of this "saying" or "poem" is actually something Jesus told His disciples on at least a couple of occasions. Actually, you can find parts of this throughout Jesus' and Paul's words.

Matthew 10:33 - *but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.*

As mentioned in the Gospels, being denied before the Father may refer to not being given the help needed at a certain time. Since a person is already "helping" himself by not confessing Christ, there is no need for Jesus to appeal to the Father for special provision for that person as he gives testimony, since that person is avoiding giving testimony and therefore saving himself.

V. 13 is a comfort of sorts. If we belong to Christ, we are unconditionally saved and even if we are unfaithful, He will hold on to us. Remember, this was the beginning of a very bad time for Christians in the Roman world.

Vs. 14-18 It's too bad that we only read to v. 21 today.

Notice that there are two cautions here to avoid quarrels, and in the middle, Timothy is told to focus on his understanding and presentation of the truth.

V. 15 This is a call for every disciple to know the Word well.

The *irreverent babble* is defined as being the false teaching of Hymenaeus (remember him from 1 Tim. 1?) and Philetus. But the *quarrel about words* (v. 14) is not something we understand. I wonder sometimes if some of this isn't the theological hair-splitting that goes on over issues like free will and election. The focus for Timothy was to teach well what was understandable and to remember that his behavior was always supposed to honor God in the harvest.

Vs. 19-21 We don't always know who is a true believer, but God does. Remember in 1 Timothy 5, when Paul tells Timothy not to approve of people too quickly? This is an extension of that. I'm sure that these two men were well-known. There are always people in the church who are believers, but not following. There are believers who are focused on themselves and their standing in the group. God will even use them, but then, in spite of themselves.

Do you see what Paul is saying in this illustration? Some disciples submit to God and are used for noble purposes, and some believers resist God and are used for purposes in redemption, but in a utility kind of way. Back in that day the vessels for ignoble use were used for garbage containers and toilets. I don't think any of us want to be used for that in God's house. But, between the lines, I think that's what Paul and the Spirit were thinking about H&P.

As disciples in the harvest, the lines become more distinct if the church is focused on following Christ in the harvest by making disciples, who make disciples. Those who live for themselves and resist growth in Christ begin to stand out. We also find a lot of believers who never fully involve themselves in the harvest, whom God uses incidentally here and there. They are still believers and beloved, but their focus is elsewhere.

Psalms 92-93

Psalm 92

In my Bible it says this is a song for the Sabbath. Imagine taking the day off to reflect on the Lord and enjoy His provision while everyone around you is ignoring this opportunity to slow down and be thankful. I think that thought is held in some of the things said here.

Vs. 1-4 The benefit of taking time to meditate on the Lord was renewing one's trust in God's *steadfast love*, His *faithfulness* and the wonder of the works of His hands. These are all things we need in the rush of life and that we forget in the rush of life.

Vs. 5-9 In meditation there is a sense of perspective, of knowing and understanding the ways and thoughts of God. It puts life on earth in the framework of the plan of God. In the Lord's Prayer it says, *Your kingdom come, your will be done*.

Vs. 10-11 This *fresh oil* is blessing. This person (David?) had been blessed because of his meditation on God during times of danger and stress.

Vs. 12-15 A life lived like this, taking time to go slow and honor God, is summed up in vs. 14 and 15.

This psalm sounds more and more like David. The blessing of meditation on the Lord is that even in old age, there is freshness of heart and mind. And there is the heart willing to testify to the faithfulness of God.

Psalm 93

This is a short song on God's majesty and might, and fits to the Sabbath reflection of the last psalm. It is called an enthronement psalm because it describes the ultimate victory of God, as the Son sits on the throne.

Vs. 1-2 The Lord reigns in majesty, might and everlasting immovability. This is to bring confidence and stability to those who follow Him.

Vs. 3-4 This image of the waters represents all that is chaotic and in rebellion against God. The Lord still reigns above them.

V. 5 God has decreed. We don't understand why things happen, but we trust the Lord and that what He has allowed to be will ultimately work out at the end of the age, to prepare for Him a holy house of faithful followers.

Proverbs 26:3-5

V. 3 I think I can look back and say that when I have gotten the rod, I deserved it for being a fool.

If I understand these verses correctly, they go like this...

V. 4 Do not answer the fool in a foolish, mocking way, lowering yourself to his level.

V. 5 But do make a wise response to a fool to correct and stop what he is doing.

OCTOBER 24

Jeremiah 44:24-47:7

Jeremiah 44:24-30

Vs. 24-28 You might need to go back to yesterday and read 44:15-19 to remember the context that brought about these verses.

V. 25 The people declared their own sin. They just didn't think it was sin. Too bad God isn't for religious tolerance. Maybe He needs sensitivity training. Oh wait, **He is the Creator and the ONLY GOD.** This is why people today don't come to Christ. It is a relationship with very personal requirements, like listening to Him and knowing Him. If we create our own God, we control the requirements.

I read this earlier in John 3:18-21, *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* ¹⁹*And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.* ²⁰*For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.* ²¹*But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."*

This is what was functioning in Jeremiah's day too. Creation is an anchor for our hearts knowing that there is one Creator who is always the same and always present. He is present even when we don't understand. We saw this in Job.

V. 28 God is saying here that He will allow some people to return to Judea. I'm sure Jeremiah was one of them, and, as we'll see in the next chapter, Baruch made it too. I doubt that any of those men (and their wives) who let their wives make offerings for the queen of heaven returned from Egypt.

Vs. 29-30 The people had a new hope: Pharaoh Hophra. God decided to use this king as a sign to His rebelling people. This actually happened to Pharaoh Hophra, but it wasn't the result of the Babylonians. He was killed by political infighting before the Babylonians got there. God again was showing the people that He meant business and that Jeremiah was His man.

Jeremiah 45

V. 1 Notice that this goes back to when Baruch began to work for Jeremiah. We just read about this in Jeremiah 36. It was God's encouragement to Baruch. God told Baruch back then how things would fall out.

Vs. 2-4 Notice that God declares four times in this chapter He is the Lord. God was telling Baruch that He could protect him. He had used Baruch over these 17 years and He would and could keep him safe.

V. 5 The reason this chapter is given here is that although Jeremiah and Baruch were in a very bad place in Egypt and a war was coming, and the Babylonians would find them again, God would save them. I think that both Jeremiah and Baruch died of old age back in Israel.

Jeremiah 46

V. 1 This introduces a section of God's pronouncements against the surrounding nations.

Vs. 2-12 This part of the prophecy was given at the time of Egypt's first defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. This Pharaoh Neco was the guy who killed King Josiah and put that donkey of a king, Jehoiakim, on the throne. Apparently when Neco met Nebuchadnezzar, most of the Egyptian army was killed. From this point on Egypt would have to hire mercenaries to join their army and fight their battles.

V. 12 Apparently the retreat of the frontline Egyptians was hindered by the Egyptians who were still coming forward. It created such confusion that the Babylonians had easy pickings.

Vs. 13-26 This was now again present day with Jeremiah in Egypt and Egypt about to be defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. Notice that v. 21 talks about Egypt's hired soldiers being ready for slaughter.

V. 17 This is funny. Apparently this Pharaoh was all talk and no action.

This judgment against Egypt was not only because of Pharaoh Neco killing Josiah, but Egypt encouraged everyone to break their treaties with Babylon and to support Egypt in its fight against Babylon. King Jehoiakim and King Zedekiah did this and it gave the people false hope. It also made the messages of the false prophets more believable. God was punishing Egypt for being a false hope to His people.

Vs. 27-28 This is much like a father confirming his love toward a child before handing out the punishment.

Jeremiah 47

Vs. 1-7 This is the judgment against the Philistines. It is interesting to see that God used the Egyptians to punish these enemies of His people. Eventually Nebuchadnezzar would take care of Tyre and Sidon. They would never be the centers of wealth and trade they had once been.

Poor Jeremiah. His life had been used by God to bring messages to people, most of whom chose judgment. We will still hear lots of crying out by Jeremiah in the book of Lamentations. Yet even in this misery, Jeremiah learned what every disciple learns, to praise God in the storm. This might be a good time to listen to "Praise You in This Storm," by Casting Crowns.

2 Timothy 2:22-3:17

Remember the urgency in Paul's writing and that Timothy had apparently been shaken. Paul is trying to refocus Timothy and give him courage under fire.

2 Timothy 2: 22-26

Vs. 22-23 With everything that Paul has already said about discussions about words and foolish talk, Paul will say it again. It took me a while to catch on to what Timothy's *youthful passion* was, but it is clear in this context. Timothy was predisposed to arguing and jumping into controversies. Verse 23 has the hint of correction in it.

V. 24 Paul's words to Timothy were very pointed. Timothy was the *Lord's servant* and apparently was falling into quarrelling.

Vs. 25-26 Notice that this context has to do with discussions within the church. People within the church get captured by Satan. Only a cool head could patiently teach and nurture them to safety, if that were even possible.

What Paul is saying here is very important. I haven't been in a church where there were not these kinds of people in the church creating difficulties. It takes a lot of wisdom and maturity to deal with them and keep the church focused on the harvest.

2 Timothy 3

Vs. 1-5 Now this definitely seems like a list of those bad people outside the church who smoke and drink and swear. But just for your consideration, remember back in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul mentioned that before the *day of the Lord* there would be a rebellion. That word means, "a falling away," or apostasy. In 2 Timothy 4, Paul will talk about itchy-eared Christians accumulating teachers for themselves who say what they like to hear. I think this list is also talking about the church and those who profess belonging to Christ. Verse 5 seems to indicate that this was in the church.

Vs. 6-9 This is an example of the list Paul just gave, and the problem was within the church.

Vs. 10-13 This is not what you would want to use for an advertisement for discipleship, but this is a great description of following Christ in the harvest. Only a disciple would be strengthened by these words. Verse 12 is a promise for every disciple. O Weh!

Paul had been a model for Timothy in all of these things, but what kind of model is it when your mentor is about to die in prison? But wait, our Lord died on a cross and told us up front that if we wanted to follow Him, we needed to deny ourselves, take up our death (cross) daily and follow Him. Paul was a great model and Timothy needed to take up the cross.

Vs. 14-15 Timothy's heritage in the gospel.

Vs. 16-17 Timothy's strength in the work of the gospel was the Word. What do people think of these verses when they themselves are so infrequent in the Word? If the Word were a tool, how skilled would we be with that tool? If it were a video game, would we have it mastered? And the reality of it all is that we can't grow in our relationship to God without being in it.

One interesting thought here is that if it had not been for this church catastrophe in Ephesus and Timothy's need for encouragement, Paul would not have said these very famous verses. God still works His purpose in the storm.

For me this is very pointed. Paul is bringing everything down to one focus: to the Word of God and a life lived by that Word. The foundation of our life in following the Lord as disciples is knowing and living in His Word. We get all wrapped up in famous preachers and media, but it is this book that is alive and gives us the breath of the Spirit.

Psalm 94

Again, it is no coincidence that we have a psalm like this as we're reading about the destruction of Jerusalem. We understand God better than ever, both in His judgment of His people and His

mercy to His people. To think, God has endured all of this to see us (and mankind) come to Christ and know what *steadfast love* really means.

Vs. 1-7 God was being called upon to judge everyone who had harmed God's heritage, both those within and outside the nation.

Vs. 8-11 Although Israel just seemed like a forgotten nation, they have been an example to mankind in God's redemptive plan. They have never been forgotten and God will use Israel and all the lessons to be learned through them to discipline the nations.

Vs. 12-15 God will discipline His people, but He will still fulfill His plan for His heritage.

Vs. 16-23 The question of *who* in v. 16 is answered in vs. 17, 18, 19, 22 and 23. It is the Lord. And in God helping and saving His people, He teaches them His *steadfast love*.

Proverbs 26:6-8

I think God is saying we should really try not to be fools. The core of being a fool is not to "do" God's Word. Even for churches in the harvest, we sometimes violate these verses, trying to be so inclusive that we honor the half-hearted, the arrogant and the lazy. People are changed by the Word of God, not by putting their names on a plaque or in the bulletin. Alas, we need wisdom.

V. 7 is funny, but not very politically correct, but who has the guts to tell God that?

OCTOBER 25

Today you will read Paul's last written words. It is interesting that the Lord worked it out so that Paul's final words would be written to a disciple, and they are great words. Also, I'm sure if you take everything Paul has written and rearrange the letters just right, you can make the sentence, "Go out and enjoy a pumpkin spice latte as you read today."

Jeremiah 48-49:22

This section today records God's punishment of three neighboring nations who were also "relatives" of Israel. Moab and Ammon were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. Edom came from Esau, the son of Isaac and brother of Jacob. All of these nations played a role in the corruption and demise of Israel, but Edom's actions during the time of the destruction of Jerusalem put them into a special category.

Jeremiah 48

This is the judgment on Moab. I have no idea why so much space is given to them other than they may have had the largest and most ungodly influence on Israel. Their influence goes back to the wilderness and Baal Peor and Balaam. That was a crucial, defining event in Israel's wanderings in Numbers 25, and it is referred to again and again in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Also, Solomon was greatly influenced by his wives from Moab and Ammon. It was Solomon who introduced idolatry into Israel and into the family of David. It is probably because of this idolatry that Solomon and his sons were not in the physical line of Christ, the line of Mary, as given in the Gospel of Luke. Chemosh, Molech and Milcom were names for the same god, and these were the gods who were worshiped by throwing babies into their open mouths of fire. The babies came as the result of the "X-rated" worship of Baal and his wife Ashtoreth. It was the sex apparently that lured the old king into this spiritual defection. As the text below shows, Solomon worshiped these gods and this came by the influence of his wives from Moab and Ammon. Again, this is probably the reason why Moab is given such eminence in this judgment.

1 Kings 11:5-7 *For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. ⁶So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and*

did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. ⁷Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-8 This is the declaration of destruction and distress that will come on Moab. Notice the reference to Chemosh in v. 7.

Vs. 9-10 Moab will flee but the pursuers will not give up.

Vs. 11-13 Moab lived in relative ease, never having to change, also meaning that they never repented from idolatry. Chemosh is there again.

Vs. 14-20 This is the taking away of Moab's pride, both in removing its heroes and destroying its cities.

Vs. 21-25 This again is the summary of Moab's humbling.

Vs. 26-27 And this is the reason for God's judgment. It is interesting that God promises this judgment, but the armies that did it were not from Israel. Moab was destroyed by God, using other nations, not Israel.

Vs. 28-33 The people of Moab would become homeless.

Vs. 34-39 This is the mourning and crying of the people of Moab.

Vs. 40-46 This is God's declaration of judgment and suffering. And here is Chemosh mentioned again in v. 46.

V. 47 Yet at the end of the age, in the Millennial Kingdom, there will be blessing for Moab. Go figure.

Jeremiah 49

Vs. 1-6 This is the judgment on Ammon.

V. 3 Milcom was another name for Molech or Chemosh (the sacrifice of babies).

V. 6 Yet even for Ammon, at the end of the age, in the Millennial Kingdom, there will be blessing.

Vs. 7-22 The judgment against Edom.

Vs. 9-10 This hints at some of Edom's sin. During the destruction of Jerusalem and destruction of the surrounding cities, the Edomites were like the grape pickers and thieves, Babylon's little helpers. The Edomites picked everything bare.

You'll notice that there is no mention of restoration for Edom. We'll read more about Edom in the book of Obadiah, but Malachi 1:4 says it all.

If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.'"

No millennial blessing here.

Notice again that God Himself pronounces judgment, but Israel was not His tool for punishment of the nations. God allowed the nations to punish one another. Israel was purposed for the redemption of the nations; and, as we've seen, they themselves were judged and punished.

2 Timothy 4

Vs. 1-2 The day I memorized this, it was like being given a privilege by the Lord. Next to the Great Commission and Acts 1:8, I believe this is the greatest charge to us in the NT. It's hard to

get back to the old, strong roots of conviction; but this charge, this truth, and this confidence in the Word of God has to be alive in our hearts in each generation until Jesus returns. It is the Word, and nothing but the Word, that the Spirit uses to give light and life. We are here to shine in the darkness and to give testimony to the truth.

V. 2 Notice that Timothy is cautioned again to teach with *complete patience*.

Vs. 3-4 Again, that sense of urgency.

V. 5 This was a personal charge for Timothy, from teacher to disciple. Notice the call to suffer and to reach out. Somehow I think those go together.

Vs. 6-8 Paul was confident that his time was short.

Vs. 9-10 Timothy needed to get to Paul ASAP. Demas may have been the only person to desert Paul, but it seems fishy to me that Titus and Crescens were mentioned in the same breath.

It could very well be that when the great panic struck the group, as the Romans did what they did and grabbed Paul, that in sheer fear, the group scattered. Demas, apparently, was motivated by something more than fear. And too, it may be that Titus and Crescens had already left and were on assignment when the hammer fell.

Vs. 11-13 Luke was still there, good old Luke. Paul needed help and I think it may have been more than a one-man job.

Mark is the guy who deserted Paul early in the book of Acts, but now Mark had written the Gospel of Mark. He was a cousin of Barnabas.

If Timothy was working in Ephesus, one of the things on his mind would have been leaving the work unattended to go to Paul in Rome. Therefore, I think, Paul told Tim that he had already sent Tychicus to him, to take over for him.

V. 13 Paul needed the cloak for the dark, dank, dirty, dismal dungeon. It is interesting that Paul wanted the Bible too. He needed the encouragement of the Word right to the end. Apparently they didn't have "compact" versions back then.

Vs. 14-15 We don't know who this Alexander was, but God did. Timothy was ordered by the Spirit to avoid him.

Vs. 16-18 Paul appeared before Nero and the other judges. In 64 A.D. Nero burned Rome and began his persecution of the Christians, whom he made the scapegoats for his madness. This was now 67 A.D., and though Paul had managed to serve "under the radar," God brought him "front and center" now to bear witness before the Gentiles. Look at what Jesus told the Twelve when He sent them out:

Matthew 10:17-20 *Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts, and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Vs. 19-22 These are very interesting short bursts. I find it interesting that God didn't allow Trophimus to be healed.

For a second time, Paul asks Timothy to come quickly.

Though we will read more of what Paul wrote, these are Paul's last recorded words on earth, in the harvest. And they are from a faithful disciple to a disciple.

Psalms 95-96

Psalm 95

Vs. 1-5 What a joyous call to worship.

Vs. 6-11 And this is an interesting way to tell people that if they are His sheep, they need to follow. When we get to Hebrews, we'll hear some of these words again in reference to entering God's rest.

If you are interested, the group, "Sons of Korah," have a great song for this psalm. It is almost word-for-word to the NIV. It gives you an idea of how this psalm might actually have been sung in worship.

Psalm 96

Vs. 1-6 This psalm is full of testimony to the nations based on the new song of salvation that the Lord had put into the hearts of His people. This is the way God does it. Those who know Him, His love and His presence are the ones who are compelled to share Him in the harvest.

Vs. 7-9 Notice how redemptive this song is. All nations are called upon to come to the Lord and give glory to Him.

V. 10 The good news for everyone is that the Lord reigns. And we know the One who is on the throne.

Vs. 11-13 The curse on creation will be lifted when the Lord comes. Though judgment is mentioned here, no one who sings this psalm has any fear of the Judge. There is only the joy of His coming.

Proverbs 26:9-12

This all looked pretty good. I was smiling and agreeing with it all, until I ran into v. 12 and hurt myself. 😊

OCTOBER 26

Jeremiah 49:23-50:46

Jeremiah 49:23-39

Vs. 23-27 This is God's judgment on Syria, represented by Damascus. Syria had plagued Israel and had played a role in Israel's demise.

Vs. 28-33 This is a judgment against the nomadic tribes descended from Ishmael. You often hear people say that the enemies of the Jews came from Ishmael, and they say that Israel's enemies came as the result of Abraham's relationship with Hagar. It is obvious that what Abe and Sarah decided with Hagar was a poor decision, but Israel had plenty of enemies without these guys. The people who became the Babylonians (Iraq) and the Persians (Iran) were there long before. The enmity is really a spiritual thing and goes back to the garden and God's working with Abraham, a man who came from what today would be Iraq.

Vs. 34-39 Elam is what was to become the Persian Empire. Today it is Iran.

It is hard to say when this happened, or whether it has happened yet. It certainly didn't happen with Babylon rising in power. Nebuchadnezzar married a Persian princess and made the hanging gardens of Babylon for her. There were good relations between Babylon and Persia. Read Daniel. When Persia took over Babylon it was basically bloodless and Darius the Mede ruled in the city of Babylon as the co-ruler of the Persian Empire. Persia certainly hasn't been an empire since Alexander defeated them, but Alexander didn't destroy much either. Note that God will set

up His throne there. That would mean judgment. Also, in the latter days, God will restore them. That is restoration during the Millennial Kingdom. This has led people to believe that this destruction will take place during the Tribulation.

Jeremiah 50

Vs. 1-3 Generally speaking, this long declaration of judgment on Babylon hasn't been fulfilled yet, in the terms described here. This has also led people to believe that the total fulfillment of this will not happen until the Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom. There is a lot written about Babylon in Revelation that sounds similar to some of what is said here.

Vs. 4-5 Notice that this is definitely talking about the Millennial Kingdom.

Vs. 6-7 God's judgment is on the nations for not showing compassion to Israel, even though they knew Israel belonged to Him and were being punished by Him. Actually Egypt, Babylon, and Persia hosted Israel and will receive some blessing for that in the Millennial Kingdom.

Vs. 8-10 This is the declaration of punishment against Babylon.

Vs. 11-16 Verse 13 hasn't fully happened yet, so many people think this is pointing to the time of the Tribulation and that the Babylon mentioned in the book of Revelation might be the real city of Babylon.

Vs. 19-20 Again, this is millennial blessing. Because of the punishment mentioned just before this promise of blessing, that punishment would just precede the fulfilling of the promise.

Vs. 21-46 This description is much larger than what took place when Persia defeated Babylon. That was almost a friendly takeover. What is said in these verses is still looking for a future fulfillment.

A couple of thoughts:

Although God humbled Nebuchadnezzar, the kings after him did not respect God. Chapter 5 of Daniel shows a lot of disregard for God and what He had done. When Persia took over, it was through the events of Daniel 6 that Cyrus sent the Jews back to Jerusalem. God created a new respect for His name and a sense of fear regarding forcing the Jews to worship anyone but Yahweh.

It could be that in the time of the Tribulation, both Iran and Iraq play a larger role in world affairs and as a result are put down by the antichrist. In order for the antichrist to make a world-recognized peace treaty with Israel, certain hostile nations, especially Islamic and anti-Semitic nations, will either change their attitude or be put down. With Iran tinkering around with making a nuclear weapon, you wonder how all of that history will play out.

In the meantime, we need to keep focused on the harvest before us. Our task is following our Savior into the harvest He died to redeem, making disciples, who make disciples. We don't need to be consumed with the events that are slowly coming to the horizon. As to what is going to happen and when it's going to happen, remember what Jesus said to the disciples in Acts 1:7-8, *He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Titus 1

Vs. 1-3 To my knowledge, this is the longest introduction of any of Paul's letters. Notice how much "gospel" Paul puts in here. It sets the tone of the letter and shows Titus what kind of foundation needs to be laid in this church.

V. 4 Apparently, Paul led Titus to Christ.

Vs. 5-9 Paul and Titus had traveled together and Paul left Titus in Crete. This is all after the events recorded in Acts. Notice that Paul gave Titus apostolic authority. Titus was to appoint elders. There was no congregational voting here.

V. 9 Notice that the elders had the authority to protect the teaching of the church.

Vs. 10-16 Once again, there was pressure for the Gentile Christians to adopt customs and teaching from the Jewish law. This new church in Crete needed to have these false teachers strongly rebuked, and Titus was the man. In contrast, Paul never told Timothy to rebuke anyone in Ephesus, probably because they had a better core of leaders with whom Timothy could work.

In order for this church to reach its harvest, it had to be unified around Jesus and His mission, and therefore the need for order and correct teaching. That's the same with us. If the church is not bearing fruit for the Lord in the harvest, making disciples, who make disciples, we are doing something wrong and are focused on the wrong stuff. Sometimes before we become fruitful, there needs to be correction, in our hearts and in the group.

Psalms 97-98

I appreciate more and more that there is a "price" to pay to be able to sing these songs from the heart. In Psalm 98 it mentions *a new song*. From Psalm 40 you see that it is the Lord who puts that new song in our hearts. Only He can do it, and I think it gets there by Him proving us in the harvest, following Christ.

Psalm 97

Vs. 1-5 The Lord reigns and even the creation obeys and bows before Him. What chance does puny man have before Him?

Vs. 6-7 This is just like Romans 1:18-22. How can we disregard the Creator and worship images and creatures and stuff?

Vs. 8-9 Zion rejoices because Israel's only hope is the Creator, and He will take His seat in Zion and rule the earth. Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He. *All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* (John 1:3)

Vs. 10-12 Love, not slavish obedience, has always been the key to knowing God and knowing His joy and blessing.

Psalm 98

Vs. 1-3 That *new song* begins with salvation, and we learn new verses of that song as we follow Christ in the harvest, experiencing grace after grace, deliverance after deliverance, seeing new spiritual life come into existence, learning how deep and wonderful God is. But, we can never forget our salvation. Notice that v. 3 is in the past tense. That hasn't happened yet, but it will.

Vs. 4-6 The celebration of the saved should be with all their heart and passion and skill.

Vs. 7-9 The celebration of the creation will join in to the song as the King approaches.

Proverbs 26:13-16

We have either met this guy, or we've been this guy in some area of our lives. God is certainly for rest, but He is not for this kind of behavior.

OCTOBER 27

Jeremiah 51:1-53

More on the judgment of Babylon. Reading all of this, the question I have is why so much space is given to Babylon. Babylon did take the last of Israel into captivity, and they did enter the temple and destroy it. These things alone would put them in a special category.

Also, God put a lot of time into His work in Babylon and says some very big, good things about Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar built one of the seven wonders of the world, and God humbled Neb and revealed Himself to Neb in ways He has never done with other Gentile rulers.

I tend to think that there might also be something about Babylon that typifies the pride and rebellion of man. The Tower of Babel was built there; Nimrod became a great man there, and mankind was unified there in its rebellion, forcing God to judge mankind yet again. (As a result of that curse we have the German language. ☺) There must be something going on beyond the words in Jeremiah. I say this because some of these words against Babylon haven't happened yet, and in Revelation there is a very significant chapter about "Babylon" as represented in a woman sitting on a beast. There is apocalyptic meaning associated with this empire.

To show you what I mean, look at these references: Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 17:5 and 18:1-21. Much of what is written about Babylon in Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel is repeated in Revelation. The fulfillment is yet to come.

As you read this section, look for structure and things to underline.

Vs. 1-5 Notice that this section mentions that in spite of God's judgment, Israel and Judah are not forsaken.

Vs. 6-10 Notice the references to leave Babylon. Verse 10 seems to be a key verse. God used Babylon to accomplish His work and purposes, and now He would vindicate Israel and restore Zion. Again, when you get to the first five chapters of Daniel, you will see a lot of God's grace being given to Babylon. To reject God's grace, as is seen in Daniel 5, is a good justification for judgment. They did have a chance to change and worship God.

Vs. 11-14 So, who is it who really is bringing the ruin of Babylon? God doesn't use His people. He uses the ambitions and pride of other nations to defeat the proud. Israel, God's redemptive people, are not used in His judgments.

Vs. 15-19 Notice that Jeremiah as a man and prophet declares God to be the true God who is bringing this judgment. Notice how God is referred to in the third person.

Vs. 20-26 Now notice that God is speaking in the first person. This judgment has not fully taken place and is probably reserved for the time of the Tribulation.

Vs. 27-33 This is the poetic description of the battle against Babylon in those future days.

Vs. 34-40 This is Israel's case against Babylon.

Vs. 41-44 This is the taking of the city. Verse 41 sounds like a verse from Revelation 14:8 and 18:2.

Vs. 45-46 In spite of this destruction, Israel is to take courage. During the Tribulation with all the destruction and all the forces at play in the world, that might not be an easy thing for Israel to do. Trust is never easy.

Vs. 47-49 It is interesting to think of this. The Babylon of Jeremiah's day would be punished *for the slain of Israel*. Regardless of who the Babylon of Revelation is, they will be punished because the blood of the saints was found in her. (Revelation 18:24)

Vs. 50-53 Babylon's destruction is guaranteed, and v. 51 is one of the reasons for it.

In reading all of this about judgment and thinking about Revelation, I think of Jesus on His throne, taking the book of judgment. He earned the right to open that book by dying for mankind. He is the only man of all mankind who is worthy to judge mankind. That generation on the earth will behold His glory in His wrath. In heaven, we will bow and worship Him as the Lamb who was slain and lives forevermore.

Titus 2

Some of what Paul tells Titus sounds like things from 1 Timothy, just very brief and condensed.

Vs. 1-6 In 1 Timothy 5 Paul told Timothy how to address different groups. Here Paul tells Titus how these groups are supposed to behave. It is interesting that older people in the church are to be models for the younger people in terms of faith and following Christ. This holds true especially for the older women. This teaching of the younger women looks like more than what accidentally happens over a cup of coffee. It is planned discipleship.

Vs. 6-7 Very brief compared to 1 Timothy 4:11-16.

Vs. 8-10 This is directed to slaves.

Vs. 11-14 What a great declaration as to how our lives should reflect the truth of the gospel. These are the first verses I memorized back in 1875 as an Awana leader. (I might be 100 years off.)

Notice the *good works*. In any time and in any culture, I think this is how the church reaches out, by loving our neighbors for the sake of Christ. This is much deeper than meets the eye and it is very neglected in terms of the harvest. Not only did Jesus list loving your neighbor as the second greatest commandment (Matt. 22:39), but Paul mentions it twice in the last part of Romans (13:9, 15:2).

V. 15 Apparently this thought was supposed to keep everyone focused on the mission of the church. This sounds like Paul's words to Timothy, *Let no one despise you for your youth*.

Psalm 99

Vs. 1-5 The king is very clearly the Lord who reigns in Zion over all the people of the earth. It is hard to read the Bible on any day in The One Year Bible without bumping into the final redemption of man with God reigning over all. I think the Lord wants us to keep that before our eyes in the harvest.

Vs. 6-7 God worked through these great men during crucial times in Israel's history to bring Israel justice and peace. But even though you had these leaders, God's presence and lordship were still visible. He was leading.

Vs. 8-9 Notice the actions of v. 8, answering, forgiving and avenging. The Lord is the King who is exalted and holy and to be loved and honored.

Proverbs 26:17

Amen.

OCTOBER 28

This is a red letter day. You'll be finishing two books, Jeremiah and Titus. I don't mean to get you fat, but I think it would be an appropriate time for a treat of some sort.

Jeremiah 51:54-52:34

Wow, the end of the book of Jeremiah! You did it!

Jeremiah 51:54-64

Vs. 54-58 This is the end of the pronouncement of judgment on Babylon. Remember, most of this is yet to come.

V. 57 The night Babylon was taken, that brilliant and serious military strategist and king, Belshazzar, knowing his city was surrounded, decided to get everyone stinking drunk and celebrate to the gods. It was a desperate religious act, trying to find a god who would respond to their desperate need. The Persians could have taken the city with two boy scouts and a blind German Shepherd. To be fair to Belshazzar, he did get a response from "the other side." At one point King Belshazzar brought out the drinking vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem and fed wine to his wives while praising the gods of gold and silver. Yahweh took exception to that and publicly wrote a message to him in the plaster of the wall. Belshazzar died that night. Trivia question: Who was in charge of the empire of Babylon (the last Babylonian ruler) the night the city and empire fell? A Jewish exile named Daniel. Keep this in mind.

Vs. 59-64 So Zedekiah and Seraiah both went to Babylon in the fourth year of Zedekiah's reign. It could be that this is the event of Daniel 3. This would have been the 12th year of Nebuchadnezzar and that fits nicely into the time frame. If so, Zedekiah was on hand to see three Jewish men risk their lives to follow God, and he would have seen Nebuchadnezzar worship the God with whom Zedekiah was in rebellion.

Just for trivia, if you do a word search on those words describing who Seraiah was related to, *the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah* (Jere. 51:59), you find that Seraiah was the brother of Jeremiah's assistant, Baruch (Jere. 32:12).

Seraiah read the prophecy against Babylon and threw it in the Euphrates. Five years later Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. Seraiah was killed by Neb, and Zedekiah was severely punished by him.

Interestingly, this is the end of the prophecies of Jeremiah. Yet, we'll read more from Jeremiah in Lamentations. What follows now is all history.

Jeremiah 52

Tradition says that Jeremiah wrote 2 Kings. This might have been added here by Jeremiah as an historical summary of the final events.

Vs. 1-3 Zedekiah was a spineless man, ruled by those around him and by fear. His own lack of faith destroyed him. He rebelled against Babylon because of his officials who wanted to join an alliance with Egypt and the other surrounding neighbors to oppose Babylon.

Vs. 4-11 The reason the Babylonians could breach the city was because the famine was so severe, that no one could stand anymore to defend the walls. We have read this about the flight and punishment of Zedekiah.

Vs. 12-16 This is the end of Israel, beginning with the destruction of the temple, going to the destruction of the city and finally the taking away of the people. Thankfully God had already been working for several years to preserve His people in Babylon.

V. 14 When they burned the temple, the gold on the walls flowed into the cracks in the foundation. To get the gold, the foundation blocks had to be moved. This led to the total disassembling of that building. The foundation stones were valuable and well cut and were probably hauled away to be used for other buildings. When Zerubbabel showed up years later, he had to re-cut stones for the foundation of the temple.

Vs. 17-23 This was the total humbling of Israel. These items had been their pride. God promised Hezekiah that all of these would be removed to Babylon. See 2 Kings 20:17.

Vs. 24-27 Now this is what you did when you conquered a people. You found their leaders and you put them to death. Seraiah, whom we met in 51:59, died here. So here is a question. I mentioned that Daniel was the last ruler of the Babylonian Empire the night the Medes and Persians took over. Why didn't they kill Daniel? Why did Daniel become a beloved and key ruler under Darius the Mede? We'll figure it out together when we get to Daniel. God's amazing grace and working would be the short answer.

Vs. 28-30 Although the main deportations took place at a set time, Neb was always taking people into exile. Some of them lived in the surrounding area and some people obeyed and got out of the cities. Because of the next verses dealing with Jehoiachin, I tend to think that these minor deportations are those who obeyed and willingly surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. That would also account for the low totals here. Not many of the people were willing to obey God.

Vs. 31-34 I've seen it suggested that this is a sign that the exiles would eventually return to Jerusalem. That may be. But clearly it is a delayed fulfillment of God's promise, that if anyone left the city and surrendered to the Babylonian army, they would be taken into captivity and God would honor them. (Jeremiah 21:9) This is what Jeremiah told Zedekiah to do when Zed asked him to inquire of the Lord for him. Zedekiah didn't do it, because he didn't believe it and was afraid of his Jewish enemies. Jehoiachin, the king before Zedekiah, walked out of the gates of Jerusalem with his mother, was imprisoned, but for his obedience, was honored.

I'd like to think it was Jeremiah, 27 years after the fall of Jerusalem, who wrote these notes. I'd like to think he settled down on that acreage he bought in Anathoth, married some sweet young thing and lived in peace, writing out 2 Kings and enjoying the sunsets at night.

Jeremiah had suffered in his service for God. He was hated by most people for bringing them a message of salvation they didn't want to hear. And for all of this, he helplessly watched his people give themselves to disobedience and destruction. Yet even with this, he was much closer to God than anyone around him. When we read Lamentations 3, we'll see the deep faith and maturity of Jeremiah in the midst of all the suffering.

Titus 3

Wow, the end of Titus!

Vs. 1-8 This is an awesome passage of Scripture. At this time, Nero was beginning to light the fires of persecution. To me, the section has to do with people being salt and light in the harvest.

Vs. 1-2 This is keeping our hearts and attitudes in tune with Jesus and His love, so that we can work in the harvest. Getting lost in "civilian affairs" and being anxious and vocal about elections is a way to repel others needlessly from Christ.

Vs. 3-7 We always need to remember that we, too, were lost and in rebellion to God, hating and being hated. It was His complete love and mercy that saved us in spite of who we were.

V. 8 The main way to show the love of Christ is *good works*. Even in persecution a disciple needs to remember why he is here, and it is very hard to slander a neighbor for being a Christian when he helps your elderly parent rake leaves. There are lots of things the Spirit shows us to do in our own neighborhood, if we know our neighbors and we live in the harvest. Notice that these *good works* are tied into our salvation in Christ. In fact, notice that this entire section has to do with living a life as an ambassador of Christ in a dying world. The spiritual perspective and power to live like this comes from the gospel and our own salvation, through the grace of God.

Vs. 9-11 Whatever focuses the church inward, taking on a self-righteous life of its own, is brought about by warped people. And it takes away our compassion for the lost in the harvest.

V. 12 I like this guy Tychicus. Suddenly he's everywhere. He's also mentioned in Acts, Ephesians, Colossians and 2 Timothy.

V. 13 Titus was supposed to make sure that the church supported these workers and sent them out with their back-packs full.

V. 14 One more urging of the people to be involved in *good works*, which I think means being in the harvest following Christ.

V. 15 Isn't this an interesting sentence, *Greet those who love us in the faith*? That "faith" embraced the entire spiritual perspective of life in Christ in the harvest. There is a kindred spirit of those who know what it is all about and are working hard in the harvest.

Psalm 100

Wouldn't it be great to get through something indescribably hard and dangerous, something that had been filled with difficulty and sadness, and then to stand on the other side of that "something" and celebrate the goodness and salvation of God? We get glimpses of this, and it is ultimately where we are heading.

Vs. 1-2 This will happen completely when Jesus takes His throne.

V. 3 These are just a few words, but the depth of what they mean is endless.

V. 4 That we can enter His gates and courts is enough cause for praise and thanksgiving.

V. 5 This is the declaration of David. God's *steadfast love* and His *faithfulness* are often found in tandem, and they are always found when we seek the Lord.

Proverbs 26:18-19

Wow, what a declaration from God. That little sin is the tip of a madly sinful and violent heart. Little sins have a way of seeming innocent, funny and acceptable. Those of us who have known people like this know that it definitely isn't funny.

OCTOBER 29

Lamentations 1-2:19

Happy days are here again...not. This is Jeremiah's lament over Jerusalem after it was destroyed. He refers to what he saw before and during the siege by the Babylonians. I'm not sure how "artsy" Jeremiah and the Spirit wanted to be, but of the five chapters, chapter 3, right in the middle, is a very personal pouring out of Jeremiah's heart. Surprisingly (or not), out of the crying out of chapter 3, we have gotten many good songs.

Lamentations 1

Vs. 1-10 Verse 1 sets the tone for this chapter and this section. It describes the humbling of this once beautiful princess, Jerusalem. This part of the lament is for the city. Notice the references to Zion and Jerusalem, and notice that the city is referred to with feminine pronouns. Just for fun, underline, circle or highlight them.

Vs. 11-22 Jeremiah and the Spirit personalize the crying out of Jerusalem in the first person. The first part of v. 11 explains the situation and transitions between the third person and the first person. Notice the repetition of *I*, *my*, and *me*.

Lamentations 2:1-19

Vs. 1-10 Now notice all of what God did. It wasn't the Babylonians; it was God. If you circle *He* and *His*, you might run out of ink; but it is a good exercise.

V. 6 is ironic in that, because of this judgment, God made Zion forget the festivals and Sabbath, meaning that they couldn't hold them. In reality, they had forgotten these things themselves, and that neglect was part of the reason for their judgment and the downward spiral of their culture.

V. 7 The people never expected God to do this, but He Himself promised this, if their hearts were rebellious and their worship was useless.

Just an aside, unless the ark of the covenant had already been destroyed or hidden, it was probably lost here. It is funny that other items in the temple are mentioned as being taken in Jeremiah 52, but an important item like the ark is not mentioned. Actually, none of the furniture in the Holy Place is mentioned either. It is just assumed that it was taken to Babylon.

V. 9 This mention of the prophets is ironic since Jeremiah was the only true prophet. The others were frauds who lied and strengthened the people's rebellion against God.

Vs. 11-19 Now Jeremiah is writing about his own heartache during this destruction. How many different things can you find in these verses that caused Jeremiah sorrow and anguish? There are at least five.

Vs. 18-19 It was easy to suggest that the people should cry out to the Lord, but the hearts of these people were very sick. Think of the people who took Jeremiah captive to Egypt. In spite of every word of Jeremiah coming true, they still thought that worshiping other gods would help. In one of Ezekiel's visions, we'll see another view of the depth of the corruption of the people's hearts. These people Jeremiah is writing about here were lost, blind and ignorant. It is doubtful that they could call on the Lord.

Like Jeremiah, our job is to faithfully follow the Lord into the harvest. As we present the Word and the love of Christ, He will draw men to Himself. We work to make disciples, who make disciples. It is more than tragic to see people disregard the Lord and lose their souls, but when it comes to that, it is their choice. We work in the hope of reaching and helping those who will reach out to our Lord.

Philemon

This letter was written by Paul, in prison in Rome under house arrest, during the time he wrote Ephesians and Colossians. Philemon was, apparently, a well-to-do Christian in Colossae, who had a church in his house and who had lots of slaves. One of those slaves apparently ran off with some stuff and tried to hide out in Rome. Rome was about 1000 miles from Colossae as the bird flies, and for a slave like Onesimus, probably at least 1500 miles by foot. And then Rome was a city of thousands. What a place to hide. But wouldn't you know it, someone in Rome (maybe Tychicus or Timothy or Luke) recognized him and brought him to Paul. Talk about bad luck. Then wouldn't you know it, it got worse. Paul led him to Christ. Oh, brother. Now, although Onesimus did wrong and fled, in Christ, he had to go back and fess up. Also, although Philemon had the right to punish this slave and even have him put to death, Onesimus was now a brother in Christ. And if that weren't complicated enough, when Philemon looked at Onesimus, he noticed that there was a note pinned to his shirt from Paul.

Vs. 1-3 Philemon was a worker. It is thought that there was a church in his house. It could be that Apphia was his wife and Archippus was his son. Archippus is also mentioned in Colossians 4:17 and may have been a pastor.

Vs. 4-7 It is interesting that Paul was not only moved that Philemon was growing in Christ as a disciple, but it looks like he was a good friend and had been a source of comfort and encouragement for Paul personally.

V. 6 Notice that Paul says that by sharing his faith, Philemon was growing into the fullness of knowing Christ. I really think this is how it is meant to be. If we are not involved in the harvest, we can't grow in really knowing the Savior.

V. 7 Philemon had a ministry to workers in the harvest, strengthening and helping them. His actions were from his evident love for Christ and His people.

Vs. 8-14 Introducing another of Christ's people to love: Onesimus. From v. 13 it seems that Paul would have been happy to have kept Onesimus, but there had to be due process of forgiveness and asking permission. The very fact that Paul is being so diplomatic shows there might have been something going on behind the scenes. It may be that Onesimus stole something when he left or was a real problem to everyone and deserved severe punishment. Paul seems to be going out of his way to defuse a situation that might have gotten the better of Philemon.

Vs. 15-16 Paul adds a little eternal perspective and some sovereignty of God into the equation.

Vs. 17-20 I don't think Paul is being manipulative here, but rather fatherly. It seems that Paul also led Philemon to Christ. It is important for parents to see their children do what is right. Sadly, stuff doesn't always go right in the home or in the church. Paul is guiding him, and again, it seems that Paul was being persuasive because he felt like he needed to be.

Vs. 21-22 This sounds a little like Philippians, where Paul had a feeling he would be released soon.

You just finished another book of the Bible!

It is kind of comical to think of Onesimus trying to escape from Philemon and slavery, and hiding in the super city of Rome. He had the "bad luck" of running into the hands of God. It is hard to escape from the long arm of the Lord.

Psalm 101

If I were a guessing man, I'd say this was written after David became king of the entire nation and just after he brought the ark of the covenant into the city of David. David's confidence and purity of heart seem to be "pre-Bathsheba." David seems to be saying that because of his confidence in God's *steadfast love*, he can be firm with those who are sinful and perverse. It might get him in trouble to be just, but his hope was in God. He knows that the *steadfast love* of the Lord will pull him through all the anger of men associated with this stand he is taking.

V. 1 What an interesting combination - *steadfast love and justice*. David learned both of these as he ran from Saul and waited on the Lord for the Lord's justice and vindication. In spite of all the hatred and warfare aimed at David, God fulfilled the promise of bringing David to the throne.

V. 2 This is the next part of the declaration of this psalm. It is hard to know if David is saying *you* to God or to the blameless way. David knew it was important to meditate on God and to keep himself pure before God. David wanted this to be true of those in his house.

Vs. 3-5 David was resolved to keep the dishonest and evil away from him.

V. 6 In contrast to the evil and faithless, David would protect the faithful in the land.

Vs. 7-8 We don't hear of David judging Israel, other than from his throne when people were brought before him. He never led wars against the wicked in Israel. During the time of the judges and the time of King Saul, lawlessness was allowed to grow. These wicked people were lawless and robbing and harming others. David would bring justice and order to the land. This need for justice is how these verses should be understood. Notice that David's desire was also to keep evil out of the city of the Lord.

Reading David's desires here, but knowing David's life, brings sad thoughts. Knowing what happened in the book of Jeremiah brings sad thoughts too. For us as disciples, knowing all of this should humble us and make us grow close to the Lord as we work in the harvest.

Proverbs 26:20

Think of this proverb in terms of what you just read in Psalm 101. Interesting connections.

OCTOBER 30

This is another big day because you are beginning Hebrews.

Lamentations 2:20-3:66

Lamentations 2:20-22

Even though God had warned the people that this is what would happen if they rejected Him, and even though He did everything He could to try to help them, it was still hard for Jeremiah to watch it all take place. Remember that rejecting God isn't just a "right or wrong" thing. The further a person or culture walks away from God, the sicker the heart becomes and the more distorted behavior becomes in that sickness. They had become a sick, cancerous society.

V. 20 Notice that two sacred things were violated: the "holiness" of a mother and child and the "holiness" of the priest in the temple. When sin rules there is no holiness or safe place.

V. 21 The young and the old were like the pride of a city, a sign of prosperity and wellbeing. The young men and young women were like those who are fruitful and bring the future. All were killed. The mention of dust is interesting because you'll see that again in the psalm.

V. 22 This was a tragic, long foretold, grand event.

Lamentations 3

Vs. 1-20 This is Jeremiah's "a ministry in review." No one would envy him. When I read v. 1, I always see, *I am the man who has seen affliction*. As you go through this section underline *he* and you'll find several divisions in The One Year Bible text. Each of these divisions shows another poetic image of how Jeremiah felt. It will give you a deeper appreciation of Jeremiah's years as a prophet and this trauma of seeing all of the prophecies of judgment fulfilled before his eyes.

As we follow the Lord in the harvest, if we are close to Him and bearing fruit, we should expect to identify with some of what Jeremiah experienced and felt. Paul had a hard service. Jesus said that a disciple was not above his teacher. Jesus was not treated kindly by those He came to save. Yet, the flipside of the suffering was the blessing. Jesus was blessed as foretold in Isaiah 53. Sharing the blessings of the gospel drove Paul on in his service. And we're about to see that Jeremiah was blessed too, because of what he learned about the Lord Himself.

Vs. 18-20 This seems to be as deep as you can go. Poor Jeremiah.

Vs. 21-24 This seems to be as high as you can go. And, you realize that Jeremiah could only say this with such reality and conviction, because God had shown him Himself through all of what Jeremiah lived through in vs. 1-20. As the old song goes, "you must go through the valley, to stand upon the mountain of God."

Vs. 25-39 These seem like proverbs Jeremiah has learned in all of his long work with the Lord and with the people. Some of this is written in retrospect, thinking of how the people could have been more open to the Lord and allowed themselves to be corrected and guided by Him. The ESV does a good job of grouping the thoughts.

Vs. 25-27 This is what Jeremiah learned and what the people rejected. This is something that every disciple in the harvest has to learn, often through trial.

Vs. 28-30 Submitting to the Lord is not easy. We need to recognize that our sin has to be dealt with and we need to be humbled. Learning to live according to the new man and not the old often comes through mistakes and God's correction. I have met many believers who will never do this because of their pride and their vision of following Jesus that says everything is about them and their welfare.

Vs. 31-33 And this is the hope we learn by allowing God to humble us as we learn to follow. His love and faithfulness are proven again and again in our lives. These lessons were deeply impressed on the soul of Jeremiah.

Vs. 34-39 Verses 34-36 either express the injustice going on in Israel, or they were charges brought against the Lord for allowing His people to be punished by Babylon. But, God is true and doesn't approve of that kind of stuff. Verses 37-39 give the answer that since God is the *Most High*, He can't be charged with evil but He punishes evil. That punishment shouldn't be called unjust.

Vs. 40-42 Therefore Jeremiah calls the people to repent.

Vs. 43-47 Because God has done this....

Vs. 48-51 ... Jeremiah will continue to weep and intercede for his people and to live before the Lord. When I read this I think of the life of Daniel, who lived with this same resolve and intensity before the Lord, praying for his people.

Vs. 52-66 Yet Jeremiah suffered for following God. The very nation he is crying for, at least that generation of them, made Jeremiah's life and service hard. But God was with Jeremiah and saved him and judged them. Underline *you* and you will see that Jeremiah agreed with God's judgment of that generation.

What helped Jeremiah survive, and what helps us in the harvest, is that our reward and nourishment is following the Lord. The Lord Himself is the reward, not people, not results, only Him. He gives us energy and hope and joy that cannot be taken away.

Hebrews 1

The letter to the Hebrews was probably written after the events in the book of Acts (62 A.D.) and before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (70 A.D.). No one knows what church this might have been. Though it could have been a letter that circulated to a lot of cities and churches, it seems to be addressed to a particular group in a particular place. The main issue in the book is one we've seen come up in a few of Paul's letters, that is, the temptation to bring more Jewish law into the practice of following Christ. It seems that these Jewish Christians were being pressured by the local community to slip back into the observance of the law.

The letter has a "sermonic" sense to it. Although the argument is very logical, there is a feel to what is said, as if a formal, public exposition is being made.

No one knows who wrote Hebrews. Paul would be a good guess because of the very logical writing and the very deep knowledge of the Scripture. Of all the NT writers, Paul is the only one we see with this bent. People say that some of the style and word usage is different than Paul's; but if this were a public sermon, that might account for the differences. The other best guess is Barnabas. Barnabas was a Levite and it would explain the vast knowledge of the OT. Other guesses range from Timothy to Apollos, although Timothy, himself, is mentioned at the end of Hebrews.

From beginning to end, remember that this group of converted Jews had once been very alive and willing to suffer for Christ. Now, after these years, the rising of persecution had them reeling and wondering if maybe a little "law" would really hurt, especially if it made the persecution go away.

Hebrews 1:1-14

Vs. 1-2 As you read this you sense that this is a formal beginning to a sermon. And you notice that a comparison is being made. Also, it says we are in the last days.

Vs. 3-14 So, as you read this you already know that Jesus is "better" than everything else, but what do you think might be some of the underlying problems that are being addressed? If anyone thought Jesus was just an angel made by God into a god, this section speaks against that. In this section you see Jesus as fully God and fully man, born in the flesh, but eternal. Also, if Jesus were just to be regarded as a good teacher or one of many prophets, that would also be totally wrong.

Vs. 3-4 This is the summary of Jesus in His divinity, His position as the human "Son of Man." The fact that Jesus sat down and took that place was necessary to fulfill prophecy and to show that a son of Adam could assume lawful, sinless authority over the world of men.

Vs. 5-6 Jesus is the Son who is worshipped. As Jesus said in His temptation and confrontation with Satan, only God can be worshipped. God said so.

Vs. 7-9 Notice the contrast. Angels are ministers of God, but in v. 8 God calls Jesus, God.

Vs. 10-12 And this Son is eternal. Hold on to these verses because you'll see them again very soon.

Vs. 13-14 Jesus sat down at the right hand of God. That is amazing. The angels were created to serve those who would inherit eternal life. Think of this too in terms of Satan overstepping his authority. I believe that he was supposed to serve man, but through rebellion found a way to have authority over mankind when Adam and Eve sinned.

Every day as I read the Gospels, I'm always humbled by the very real challenge everyone had looking at that "unbeautiful" and unattractive Jewish man, that tree root visible in the dry ground. They watched Him work a wonder and heard Him say God was His Father. How could that little Jewish guy be the one of whom it is said, *All things were made through him and without him was not any thing made that was made* (John 1:3)? Only by the grace and Spirit of God can we be privileged to understand this, and know and serve Him in the harvest.

Psalm 102

Vs. 1-11 It looks to me like Jeremiah wrote a psalm. No, actually it looks like this was written after the people returned to Jerusalem after the exile. They were low and despised then too. It will take getting to v. 12 to see that this comes from the returned exiles.

Vs. 12-17 Notice the focus on rebuilding Zion. Look at v. 14 and remember the dust in Lamentations 2:21. There is a future feel to these verses because someday all nations will honor the Lord in Zion.

Vs. 18-22 This is being written for the next generation so they will praise God. Sounds like they are interested in disciple making too. This section also ends with a view to the end of time when the King rules.

Vs. 23-28 This is their present despair and their future hope. What if I told you I can prove from this section that that hope is in the redemptive plan of God and in the work of Jesus? How? Look at vs. 25-27. Now look at Hebrews 1:10-12. Who are those verses in Hebrews talking about? Kind of interesting, huh?

Proverbs 26:21-22

The destruction spoken of in these verses is incredible. The image of fire is obvious, but the morsel that goes down deep is ten times worse. When a lie becomes imbedded in a heart of a person or a culture, it may never come out.

OCTOBER 31

Lamentations 4-5

Alas, it is our last day in Lamentations. Rejoice!

Lamentations 4

Vs. 1-10 Jeremiah describes the change in people and the city because of the devastation of judgment. What is interesting, especially in terms of the treatment of the children, is that the people had already changed. The people had either been offering their kids in sacrifice or were accepting of the practice. The destruction and desperation of judgment just revealed the heart beneath the civilized veneer.

Vs. 11-20 In this section we see that the punishment of the people and the success of the enemy was under the Lord's direction.

V. 13 Notice that the prophets and priests, who should have led the people, shed the blood of the righteous in the city, in its gates. This means that the people they killed were the people who stood against their sin. Although this was done by the leaders, the people approved.

V. 14 Jesus said it. When the blind lead the blind, both fall into a pit.

V. 17 This is the watching of those who had not loved or followed God. Actually, they were looking first to Egypt to help them. When Egypt didn't work, God was the backup plan. People get religious when there is a threat and they have no more resources, but they have no understanding of God either. To suddenly get religious doesn't fool God. They were so used to worshipping Baal and every other god they thought they could hold on to, but thought they could reach out to Yahweh at the same time.

V. 20 This is referring to King Zedekiah. You don't put your hope in men, particularly ungodly ones.

Vs. 21-22 We mentioned this before and will see it again. Edom was judged for their excessive joy in the destruction of Zion and was also taken into captivity. Israel returned and was restored. Edom never again became an established nation.

Lamentations 5

This chapter is different from the others, although it doesn't appear so in the ESV. It is written, not as a "poem," but as a prayer.

Vs. 1-18 This is an appeal to God to look and have compassion. Notice that Jeremiah says everything in the first person plural. He is praying on behalf of God's people.

Vs. 11-12 Although Babylon was guided to punish Judah, and although Nebuchadnezzar, I believe, understood that God wanted him to do this, the violence was excessive. God never is happy about this. Another example of excessive violence by a God-ordained man was Jehu. (2 Chron. 22:8, Hos. 1:4) The Babylonians overstepped their bounds also by taking young children by the hand and swinging and smashing them against buildings and rocks. In judgment, God said to Babylon in Psalm 137:9, *Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!*

Vs. 19-20 Another appeal to God.

Vs. 21-22 The final appeal. At this point, it looked like the nation was lost forever and the death and destruction would have intensified that feeling. But there were the promises to Adam and Eve, and to Abraham and to David. There were the promises of salvation and national restoration in the book of Isaiah and in The Psalms. Notice that this plea for restoration was not to happiness or prosperity, but to God Himself. This will be fulfilled in the coming of their Messiah.

Hebrews 2

In reading this section, notice that it still sounds sermonic. Also, notice how the author is using the OT. He had a great understanding of the OT and how it spoke about Jesus.

V. 1 This is a warning, one of about five in the entire book. The author is summarizing everything he has just said about Jesus and God speaking through Him. The message is that if you don't regard the importance of the message and the Messenger, you will drift away. In a way, if you wanted to get picky, it is saying that the message and the Messenger are so important, that if you focus your faith and practice on anything else as the primary focus and essential object of faith, you are in danger of drifting away. I know we tend to look at people who are in obvious error and agree that they have gotten lost. However, I wonder if focusing on the Christian culture, its music and meetings, isn't a log in our eye. I just read a report from people who had visited the underground church in China. Those disciples are doing far more with far less in their harvest fields than we in the West are doing in ours. It seems that the message and the Messenger are their only focus and it burns in their hearts. To be a believer in China means you are a disciple. In the West, being a "believer" can mean a lot of things and exclude any need to follow Christ in the harvest. People can get lost in their Christian culture and drift away.

Vs. 2-4 Do you get the argument here? If those who were following the law took the message seriously that had been delivered by angels, they had better take seriously this message delivered by the Son. Point: don't go back into the law.

Vs. 5-9 Some Jews believed that at the end of the age, the world would be subjected to the good spiritual armies, Michael and his merry angels. The author shoots this idea to pieces. Everything will be subjected to Jesus. While Jesus is fully God, He is also fully man, bone of our bone, the Son of Man. He is the only human capable of righteously ruling the earth and judging both mankind and the angels who were to have served mankind.

V. 9 The full subjection will come yet. Wait for it. For Jesus came first to be a sacrifice for sin.

It could be that some were using the argument that now since Jesus came, things had become no better than they were before in world affairs. Surely God would have changed the political world. Right? The Jews never understood that He needed to die for sin first. Even Jesus' disciples missed that. *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"* (Luke 24:25-26)

Vs. 10-18 In order for Jesus to *taste death* for everyone, He had to be immersed into the entire human experience. Jesus had to be subject to the same lost world and gravity and temptation as everyone else.

V. 16 Notice that argument about angels again. The mention of Abraham refers to the redemptive promise to Abraham and to those who are saved by faith, à la Romans 4.

V. 17 Jesus had the actual experience so that He could be a high priest to us, with full understanding of what it meant to be a human. The flip side is that no one will be able to say to Him, "How would you know what it felt like? You're God."

V. 18 I've heard people expound on this temptation and how Jesus felt all temptations far deeper because He was perfect. I've never really understood all of that. But there is a very real point here that this audience might have understood. They were being frightened and pressured to return to Judaism. Jesus was under constant pressure to do the same. Because He healed on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders hated Him. (John 5:16-18) He didn't live according to the tradition of the

elders (Luke 11:38), so they despised and shunned Him. Jesus definitely knew what it was like to be hated and cast out because of not adhering to the traditions of men regarding the law.

As disciples, following Christ in the harvest means that we might upset the local culture too, even the Christian culture. There will always be a pressure to be quieter and more harmless, so that others can feel more comfortable and secure in their way of life.

Psalm 103

Remember David? Doesn't it seem like a long time since we've heard him crying out? But remember that David's life was not very easy. And then, he himself complicated it, destroying most of his family, and alienating many of his friends. Still, David was a great man because unlike so many of the kings after him, when he was humbled, he still loved God with all his heart. Here he is telling Israel to *bless the Lord*. Regardless of the challenges in our lives, following Christ in the harvest means we learn to bless the Lord in all circumstances.

Vs. 1-5 What a beautiful way to say so much with a few words. Knowing David's life and how he learned this, I wonder if he wrote this in his later years, looking back.

Vs. 6-12 I'm impressed by the mentions of God's *steadfast love* in combination with the mentions of God's anger and removing of sin. This must have meant a lot to David in those later years. David, his family, and friends suffered much as a result of his own sin. Yet God used David as an example of His mercy and grace.

Vs. 13-14 This isn't just poetry coming from David. It is his understanding of God's deep love and compassion.

Vs. 15-19 And here are the reflective thoughts of a godly man, pulled from the fire and restored by the grace of God. After all the treachery and instability he had known among those who ruled Israel and through all the trouble that he, himself, had created, David knew that it was the Lord who was in control.

Vs. 20-22 Not only does God rule over the nations, but even the spiritual world is called upon to give Him praise. Notice that the angels are addressed in different ways. Notice also that the psalm comes full circle as David repeats v. 1 to conclude this song of praise.

Proverbs 26:23

You get it, right? The glaze hides what is underneath. This would be like putting whipped cream on a cow pie. In what context do you think of the word *fervent*? Yeah, me too. It reminds me of some of the fervent insincerity I have seen in religious settings where people are practical strangers to the Word and are not following Christ in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples, but they “love” Jesus and a good worship service.