

MARCH 31

We've made it a quarter of a year! Don't worry about getting behind, just keep toning those "read the Bible every day" muscles. Eventually it will get a lot easier. Remember, put the Bible somewhere where you can see it and just read a page or two in passing. Some days it might not work, but some days I've done this and have been able to catch up a day.

This also means that you've read about a quarter of the Bible. That's something to celebrate. I'd suggest taking your Bible (and favorite friend) and going out to McDonalds, getting a Senior Coffee © and their Cinnamon Melts ☺ and enjoying today's reading.

Deuteronomy 16-17

Deuteronomy 16

These are the feasts again. Thanks to Laura, I'm seeing *at the place (He) will choose*, all over the place. I never saw that before. Remember, these feasts and festivals were meant to focus their hearts on God and His love and deliverance. This was not just for their celebration and joy, but also for their protection. This was a way for God to be sure they would always remember what He had done for them.

What also stands out to me more and more is how God keeps mentioning that He brought them out of Egypt and their slavery and made them the most honored nation under heaven.

Vs. 1-8 Israel was to celebrate the night God delivered them. This would launch them into the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread, reminding them how God led them out of bondage. The final day was to be a Sabbath celebration. This feast was to have been attended by all the men, and it could only be attended in the place where the Lord made His name dwell. That would be at the tabernacle. It would be a national gathering.

Vs. 9-12 The *Feast of Weeks* was the Feast of Firstfruits and took place seven weeks and a day from the Sabbath celebration that ended the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was a celebration of God giving them fruit and blessing. This was Pentecost and a day to remember the freedom God had given. In the New Testament, this was also the day the church was born and the Holy Spirit began to indwell those who believed in Christ.

Vs. 13-15 This feast called the *Feast of Booths* or *Feast of Tabernacles* began with the Day of Atonement. For seven days the people lived in tents, remembering the years in the wilderness when God fed them and made them a nation. Remember Nehemiah 8:17. The people never celebrated this feast after Joshua died.

Vs. 16-17 This would have taken a lot of faith for all the men to take their families, leave home and spend a week in Jerusalem. But, it would have been their salvation, and the thought of their salvation would have been fresh in their minds.

Vs. 18-20 The mention here of the judges and officials seems logical since these guys would be models of obedience to the community and they would make sure that the people held to these feasts. You could imagine someone giving a judge a bribe to let him stay at home, instead of going to the feast and wasting his time.

Vs. 21-22 These things were not only planted or put up near altars but they were everywhere. The judges would see that this didn't happen. It didn't matter how artistic and beautiful the poles were; Israel was not to imitate the Canaanites.

Deuteronomy 17

V. 1 Since God was giving the best to Israel, they were to be bold and liberal in giving the best in return.

Vs. 2-7 To understand this section, we need to remember that for the past 38 years, Israel has been averaging 400 funerals a day. Why? Because someone rebelled against the Lord and many were swept with them into bitterness and sin. This wasn't an open license to conduct "witch hunts," but rather this was a way of keeping the nation pure. If any Israelite wanted to live in another country, and eat pork chops, and worship other gods, and not hold the Sabbath, all they had to do was leave and they were free. It was a big world and Israel was only a small piece of real estate. No one had to live in Israel.

Notice that vs. 4 and 6 indicate that there was a process. This wasn't to happen quickly; in fact, if it did happen it was to be a testimony to the nation to obey the Lord.

Vs. 8-13 If the situation was beyond them and they needed an answer, they just had to go to the place the Lord chose to set up the tabernacle and ask the priest. What was so special about the priest? He had a special pouch on his ephod (bib apron) where he had the Urim and Thummim, remember? Amazingly, you never hear of Israel using this except on a couple of occasions. Probably, they didn't believe it, or didn't want God's answer, and didn't want the hassle of having to travel all the way to the tabernacle.

Vs. 14-15 God knew the people would need a king someday. In fact, Jacob's blessing of Judah in Genesis 49 shows that the kings would come through Judah.

Vs. 16-17 Solomon, the wisest man in the world, broke all of these. In fact, the first thing Solomon did was make a marriage alliance with the Pharaoh of Egypt. Building an army showed a lack of confidence in God and pride in one's own leadership. And, as it says here, to get horses, you had to go back to Egypt. Gathering wives was also forbidden and Solomon had them in excess. When Solomon grew older, his wives influenced him to build altars to their gods and sacrifice there. Just think of that. Solomon built the temple to Yahweh as a young man.

Vs. 18-20 When it says "law," it is probably referring to the five books of Moses, or maybe only Deuteronomy. Under the supervision of the Levites, the king was to make his own copy of the law and he was to read from it every day of his life. I doubt that the wisest man in the world did that. I would say that David definitely did this when he was king in Hebron for seven years, and that Psalm 119 was a byproduct. I would also bet that Josiah made a copy of Deuteronomy.

So what would writing out and reading the first five books of the Bible do for a king? At this point, we can ask that of ourselves. What does it give you? You get creation, the fall, and the redemptive plan of God working through Noah, to Abraham, to Israel. It gives you a perspective of life and this world, and it fills you with mission. More than everything else you see God's love in working to free men from sin and death.

Notice too that the king was to read from his copy of the Word every day of his life. We know of no kings who actually did this, even David. My personal guess would be that Josiah read every day. Still, in what we will read we will see the incredible drifting of the nation under the kings. This drifting might have been stopped if they had read the Word every day. Simply said, if it was important for the kings of Israel to have been in the Word every day, how much more important is it for us as disciples of our Lord to meet with Him, at His feet, in His Word, every day. That is how we continually grow in love for Jesus throughout our lives. And this is how the Holy Spirit gives us the joy of heart and the strength of heart to get up and keep following, every day.

As I was reading this morning, I thought of how important it is for us as disciples to be in the harvest and remember that God has rescued us. The further we get from the harvest, the less we remember what it was that God freed us from. Our salvation seems like a dusty trophy on a shelf. In Deuteronomy God constantly reminds Israel that He is the Lord their God who led them out of slavery. The same is true for us, as Jesus tells Simon the Pharisee, he who is forgiven little, loves little (Luke 7:47). How do we remember the value of our own salvation and where we were? By

making disciples of lost people, we are constantly reminded of what it was that God freed us from and how needy we are of His grace and help.

Israel needed to go to the feasts to remember they were saved. As disciples, we need to be led by the Lord to the foot of Calvary (the Lord's Supper) and to follow Him into the harvest.

Luke 9:7-27

As you read all of this section, you can see how the parts fit together.

Vs. 7-9 Herod's question shows that everyone was wondering who Jesus was. Especially now with the Twelve going out and working miracles, there was more questioning. Eventually this will lead Jesus to pop the question to the disciples regarding His identity.

Vs. 10-11 The disciples returned exhausted and Jesus took them on a trip to a lonely place. Apparently they stayed too near to the shore and the crowds saw Jesus and ran there before them.

Vs. 12-17 This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. What you miss in Matthew, Mark, and Luke is that immediately after Jesus fed the 5000, the people and many disciples left Him as mentioned in John 6:60-71. As the crowds and many of His disciples were turning away from Him, at that moment in John 6, Jesus asked the Twelve if they were going to leave too. Peter came up big in John 6:68.

Vs. 18-20 Notice that Luke mentions that before Jesus questioned His disciples, He was praying. Only Luke mentions that. When it says Jesus was praying alone, but the disciples were with Him, it probably means that because of the proximity of the crowd, Jesus was very near to the disciples as He was praying alone. I think Jesus usually found a quiet, private place, but this time the crowd prevented that. Jesus asks the disciples directly, *"Who do the crowds say that I am?"* Peter shines again and Jesus makes him the pope (JUST KIDDING!!!).

John doesn't have this specific questioning of the Twelve, "Who do men say that I am?" that Matthew, Mark, and Luke have.

Vs. 21-22 Notice that Luke leaves out Jesus' words of blessing to Peter in Matthew 16:18-19. Believe it or not, in Acts, there is a lot of tension in the Christian church, especially coming out of Jerusalem. You see this in Acts 11, 15:1, and in Galatians 2:12. It might be that because Luke hung with Paul, and Paul was being constantly hounded by Christians from the "circumcision party," that Luke didn't want to confuse his Gentile readers with Peter being the "big boss" and Jerusalem being the center of the world.

Vs. 23-27 Just before these words, Peter rebuked Jesus and Jesus rebuked him back. Luke left that out too. Since Jesus had just lost many disciples, these words to the Twelve would have taken on more meaning. There was a price in following Jesus. There would be glory; but they, like us, would always be tempted to stand out of harm's way and fail to announce their allegiance to Jesus and to His words.

We are always tempted to keep quiet, but our joy in our salvation can get us past that. It says that perfect love casts out all fear. If we are alive in the love of our Savior, who can we fear?

Psalm 72

This psalm is supposedly from Solomon. If so, it sounds like Solomon was having a good day. Some think that this psalm has a prophetic element looking at Jesus' millennial reign because of the absolute language used that couldn't be referring to Solomon.

Since so much is said that would be self-aggrandizing if written by Solomon, I wonder if it wasn't written by David, perhaps the final thing David wrote, to make sure that the people would accept Solomon as their king. There was a great deal of tension and political intrigue when Solomon became king. Notice that it mentions a "king of Sheba," not a queen. And it does say that this psalm was the last of the prayers of David.

V. 1 Looks like this could be David asking God to bless his son.

Vs. 2-11 Look at all the requests for blessing that begin with the word *May*.

Vs. 12-14 Israel and her king were to show compassion for the needy based on their slavery and God's grace to them.

Vs. 15-17 This sounds like Deuteronomy. As a result, the people and the king would live long and be blessed.

Vs. 18-20 Again, this sounds like David to me. The Lord is to be blessed and glorified in all the earth.

Proverbs 12:8-9

In some versions, v. 9 is expressed differently, indicating that there's something in the Hebrew that isn't clear. There seems to be a wordplay being made on the word *despised* in v. 8, so that it is immediately reflected in the word for *lowly* in v. 9. Also, it isn't clear if the good man in v. 9 has a servant or is, himself, a despised common worker.

The proverb might look like this;

⁸*A man is commended according to his good sense,
but one of twisted mind is despised.*

⁹*Better to be despised as a lowly servant and do your work
than to play the great man and lack bread.*

It seems that it is better to be despised for being humble, having good sense and doing your work well, as opposed to looking like a big man, saying things that are foolish and being secretly poor.

