

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.